

Honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

First of all, let me wish you a warm welcome, a pleasant stay in Sarajevo for our guests, and productive work for all over the next day and a half.

In 2006, UNICEF marks its 60th year as the world's leader for children, helping to build a world fit for children. UNICEF works in 156 countries and territories, supporting child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS.

The United Nations established UNICEF in 1946 to meet the emergency needs of children in post-war Europe and China and soon broadened its mandate to address the long-term needs of children and women in developing countries everywhere. In 1965, UNICEF received the Nobel Peace Prize and in 1989, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely accepted human rights treaty in history. This Convention was ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on this day in 1993.

November 20<sup>th</sup> is also Universal Children's Day, which the United Nations has been celebrating since 1954. It is meant to be observed as a day of worldwide understanding between children devoted to promoting the ideals and objectives of the United Nations Charter and the welfare of the children of the world.

We have chosen to hold our Annual Review conference starting today as it is an appropriate time to reflect on the past year, together with our partners, in order to define our priorities for 2007. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners for their devotion and a hard work in 2006 for the benefit of children in this country. Our wish is to both continue and to improve this work in order to deliver visible and measurable results for all children in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As you can see from the Agenda, we have an intensive day and a half in front of us, with six thematic sessions. These sessions will feature our separate programmatic areas, but the common denominator is our strategic focus on Social Protection and Inclusion.

You will remember that UNICEF's slogan says "For **every** child...Health, Education, Equality, Protection". Let's focus on: "for EVERY child". We want to contextualise our strategic goals and results within the context of a Social Protection and Inclusion framework. While aspects of social protection are administered through different government sectors, including health and education, our Annual review will focus on social welfare or similar sectors with particular responsibility for vulnerable groups of children. The human rights principle of non-discrimination sharpens our focus

on excluded groups and ensuring that the rights of the most disadvantaged children are protected and fulfilled.

UNICEF defines “Social protection” as the sub-set of public actions – carried out by the state or privately – that address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty. Social inclusion is a process that ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and enjoy a standard of well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live.

Currently, the social protection system in BIH lacks the capacity to assess the needs of vulnerable groups and adequately target social protection responses based on human rights principles. Additionally, the lack of collaboration between different governmental levels is a major constraint to the effectiveness of the delivery and reach of the system. Tackling child poverty is not something that can be left to individual or charitable responses – it requires action by policy makers to address the underlying causal processes and structural problems.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in many countries in the world, we are far from the ideal of adequate social protection as a right for EVERY child. We know that children, particularly those under 5 years of age, are among the most vulnerable categories of the poor in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Households with 2 or more 3 children are particularly susceptible to poverty and social exclusion.

Childhood poverty differs from adult poverty in that childhood is the most vital period in mental, physical and social development. It is for this reason that UNICEF works with Government to define strategies and actions to progress towards reducing child poverty and enhancing social inclusion of the most marginalized children and families.

**Given this context, the primary objectives of this Annual Review Conference are to:**

- Devote explicit attention to children in different sectors of the social protection system in BIH
- Analyse the extent to which the social protection system in BIH works to promote children’s rights, including securing their protection from separation, abuse, exploitation and neglect
- Identify the ways in which UNICEF and partners can most effectively contribute to strengthening countries’ social protection capacity.