

PRESS RELEASE

The Fifth Parliament of Children of Mexico was inaugurated

- UNICEF, as in the past years, supports the organization of this exercise of children Participation.

Mexico D.F., May 28, 2007 – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Mexico is pleased by the celebration of the Fifth Parliament of Children of Mexico, for which the Chamber of Deputies has opened once more the doors of the Parliament. In the inauguration ceremony were present the Presidents of the Commissions of Vulnerable Groups and Citizen Participation of the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the authorities of calling institutions such as the Secretariat of Public Education, the National Commission for Human Rights, the System for the Integral development of Families, The Federal Electoral Institute and UNICEF in Mexico.

In the words of Michael Klaus, Chief of Communication of UNICEF in Mexico, “the carrying out of this Fifth Parliament of Children is a very important event in relation to the fulfilment of the right to participation of children and adolescents in all the issues that affects them, as it is gathered by the Convention on Children’s Rights. It constitutes a great opportunity for the 300 young members of parliament because, representing all children of Mexico, they have the possibility to present their demands and question the Assembly and the Government about how they will work in the future to improve their life conditions. We, the adults, have to listen carefully what the children members of parliament are saying and give to it the proper follow-up”.

Likewise, he stated, “the participation is one of the most important components in the strengthening of the democracy, because through it we can assure the fulfilment of the other rights. These are the reasons why UNICEF is greatly pleased in continuously giving its support to the organization of the exercises of participation such as the Parliament”.

This year Parliament of Children of Mexico welcomes the visit of two members of parliament of the National Congress of the Parliament of Children and Adolescents of Bolivia: Mónica Coria Vásquez from the province of Oruro and Santos Macgyver Chocalá Flores from the province of Tarija, of 11 and 13 years old, respectively. In this manner, the children members of parliament that participate in the Parliament of Mexico will share their experiences with their Bolivian colleagues during a special session that UNICEF has organized for Tuesday, May 29. During several days, the representatives of the Bolivian parliament will be able to participate in the programme that includes tasks related to the legislative practice, the making of agreements, as well as in the recreational and cultural activities.

In this sense, the Fifth Parliament of Children of Mexico 2007 is a space of children participation designed so that the children of Mexico exercise their right to participation and exteriorize their opinions and proposals with the objective of promoting that since the childhood the construction of citizenship be strengthened as well as democratic practices and values. On Friday, June 1, children members of parliament will give lecture to the commissions’ works and will present the declaration of the Fifth Parliament to the authorities attending.

The announcement of the selection of children members of parliaments has extended to children between 10 and 12 years old in 106,000 schools all over the country. The announcement, which circulated in the schools of primary education and in the communal courses of CONAFE, consisted in making aware to

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children about the importance of the participation and in developing a topic of their choice related with the exercise of their rights. Subsequently, there were carried out Distrital Conventions where children of the districts elected to a total of 300 children member of parliament that form part of this Fifth Parliament.

Children Participation in Mexico

The exercise of the children right to participation in Mexico has been strengthened since the first Children Elections were carried out in 1997 organized by the Electoral Federal Institute (IFE) and UNICEF, developed in parallel with the federal elections of that year.

This was the first time in which the children right to participation achieved a greater visibility all over the Mexican society, contributing to place the topic of children rights into the public opinion and in the political agenda of the country. More than 3.5 millions of children participated in this exercise manifesting themselves for the education in the country as one of their priorities.

Starting from this experience, there was organized a second space so that children and adolescents could express themselves: the Childhood and Juvenile Query, carried out on June 2, 2000, the same day of presidential elections. In this occasion, almost 4 millions of children between 6 and 17 years old had the opportunity to express themselves in the urns. Among their main demands were a clear pronouncement against violence, more respect, equity, non-discrimination and a wider social participation.

Since then, the number of proposals to facilitate the exercise of this right had raised in a considerable manner. This is the case of the Children and Young People Parliament, which has been a constant exercise of participation since the instalment of the First Parliament in 1999.

The outcomes of that first Children and Young People Parliament were debated and approved among children, and were presented to the authorities in a public ceremony. In their conclusions, children and young people demanded for an education with more quality, better infrastructures of schools, equal treatment for handicapped people, more ecological conscience, fair and honest government administrations that make a good use of public resources. Starting with this exercise of children and young people participation, the authorities were committed to keep on supporting this space, giving continuity to the Parliament, which have been carried out every year in a non-interrupted manner.

UNICEF supports Children Participation

UNICEF, through several strategies, support the fulfilment of the right of children and adolescents to an authentic participation in many countries, among them Bolivia. The creation of the Bolivian Children and Adolescents Parliament in 2002 was an initiative of children and adolescents of the Bolivian Alliance with Childhood and Adolescence, with the aim to constitute it as an instance of participation and incidence in the public politics of the country.

The last April 12, was carried out the Fifth National Congress of the Children and Adolescents Parliament of Bolivia. This event had the presence of 157 children members of congress that came from the nine departments of the country. Mónica Coria and Santos Chocalá actively took part in this Parliament, whom

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will share their experiences within the activity that UNICEF has organized for Tuesday, May 29 in the afternoon (3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.) in the Sessions Room of the Legislative Palace of Mexico.

Although in Bolivia the population under 18 years old constitutes the 45 percent of the country, the reality is that traditionally it has been excluded from the sector of social and political participation, in this sense, UNICEF participates in the organization of exercises such as this, facilitating the participation to be totally open and invites each year to all children and adolescents of the country to participate in this initiative.

At the same time, UNICEF supports the follow-up process to the recommendations and proposals made within the Bolivian Parliament with the organization of Special Sessions, in which are present representatives of each province of the country.

For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the principal organization in the world dedicated to childhood, and works on the field in 156 countries and territories to help children to survive and advance in life from first childhood to adolescence. Being the greatest provider of vaccines for poor countries, UNICEF supports children health and nutrition, quality water and sanitation, basic quality education for every child, and the protection of children against violence, exploitation and AIDS. UNICEF is entirely financed by voluntary contributions made by individuals, enterprises, foundations and governments.

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