

**Opening of
South East Europe Consultation on
Reform of the child care system:
Taking stock and accelerating action**

3 July 2007, Sofia, Bulgaria.

**Speech by Ms. Emilia Maslarova,
Minister for Social Policy and Labour, Government of Bulgaria**

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you. UNICEF has been a driving force behind this consultation. Creating and supporting life is the most important thing.

The Government of Bulgaria cares – not only in terms of legislation and institutional capacity, but also in terms of empowerment of the whole society. Efforts must be multiplied so that they will reach each region, each town, each village, each family.

We are facing a demographic crisis. Children must now be confident and competitive. Our work on deinstitutionalisation has led to an increase of foster care and to an improvement of the quality of institutions.

Responsible parenting must be promoted. This is a key investment, although we know that change will take generations. We must especially focus on children at risk and children with disabilities.

In Bulgaria, the government and civil society have collaborated to elaborate a national strategy. We have to go where problems are, to give support jointly with NGOs and to involve all stakeholders. Children have to know that there is mum and dad, and me. Nothing can replace a home whatever this home looks like. All of us can contribute.

There is sunshine, future and light.

Thank you.

