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PRESS RELEASE

UN General Assembly holds Special Session focusing on children

NEW YORK, 11 December 2007 – Heads of State and other dignitaries have gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York today for a landmark conference to review progress towards *A World Fit for Children*, a plan of action to improve the lives of children created by governments in 2002.

"Five years ago, world leaders pledged to promote healthy lives; to provide quality education; to combat HIV and AIDS; and to protect children against abuse, exploitation and violence," said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman. "Now we are taking stock – to see where we need to push further and faster to build a world that is truly fit for children."

In 2006, for the first time since global data has been collected, deaths of children under age five fell below 10 million. More children are in school today than ever before, especially girls. More children are registered at birth and there is a greater focus on protecting children from violence, abuse and the worst forms of child labor.

Yet 9.7 million children under age five continue to die each year and, as the world prepares for the International Year of Sanitation, nearly 900 million children lack access to this most basic service.

The special General Assembly high-level meeting, known as A World Fit for Children +5 (WFFC +5), will examine advances and setbacks in child well-being since the 2002 Special Session on Children.
The General Assembly is expected to adopt a declaration reaffirming global and national commitments to the goals set in 2002.

In addition to Heads of State and government, some 130 high level national delegations will be present, including more than 40 government ministers. Twenty children will participate in the Conference as members of their national delegations. Hundreds of NGOs will also gather in New York for discussions and advocacy on children's issues.

Children prepare for the Conference: the Youth Forum

More than 90 children from around the world have been meeting for two days in New York to prepare for A *World Fit for Children +5*. On 9 and 10 December, the children discussed issues they would like to see raised at the World Fit for Children +5 plenary sessions and roundtables.

The highlight of the Forum was a live satellite link-up between seven of the children in New York, selected by their peers, and members of the new global entity called 'The Elders', including Graca Machel, Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson, who were gathered in Cape Town.

Moderated by CNN's Michael Holmes, the resulting inter-generational dialogue is scheduled to be aired by CNN International today (11 December), on the first day of WFFC+5.

General information

The full official title of *World Fit for Children +5* is The Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children. The conference starts on the morning of Tuesday, 11 December and concludes on Wednesday, 12 December. For more information, including a full programme of events, please visit:

http://www.un.org/ga/62/plenary/children/highlevel.shtml

For media accreditation please visit:
http://www.un.org/media/accreditation/form/myform.asp

Attention broadcasters: Video footage is available free of charge at
www.thenewsmarket.com/unicef

About UNICEF
UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports 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. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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