

Speech by Her Excellency, Hirut Delebo,

Minister of Woman's Affairs Office

for the launch of State of the World's children 2006

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today to participate in the Launch of the State of the World's Children, 2006.

In September 2000, our country Ethiopia has in the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted the Millennium Declaration, thus committing to reduce poverty, reduce mortality, fight disease and hunger, get girls and boys in school, empower women and give more people access to safe water by 2015. Any achievement towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals is an achievement towards fulfilling our children's rights. In May 2002 Ethiopia together with other countries have "reaffirmed its obligation to take action to Promote and protect the rights of each child (every human being below the age of 18 years including adolescents), and its determination to respect the dignity and to secure the well-being of all children: "In the world fit for Children".

The 2006 State of the World's children report tells us that "millions of children make their way through life impoverished, abandoned, uneducated, malnourished, discriminated against, neglected and vulnerable".

We believe that it is really high time to bridge the gap between the ideal childhood and the reality experienced by the thousand of children in Ehtiopia who live in extreme vulnerability and exclusion.

Addressing these enormous challenges, fully and constantly is the essence of leadership. The Government has for instance adopted a National Plan of Action for Children that revolve around the central theme of "The World Fit for children". The Government has also adopted several policies such as the "Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP)". "The Third Education Sector Development Program (ESDP III), as well as the Health Sector Development Program III where developed and finalized".

The Penal Code was reviewed. The revised Penal Code incorporates new provisions representing significant strides in criminalizing harmful traditional practices: these include abduction, female circumcision and genital stitching as well as trafficking of women and children.

A law dealing with Vital Registration has been drafted and submitted to Parliament for ratification.

Because children's rights to survival, development and protection are moral and legal obligations to the government, the local communities and the families, we need to build capacities at all level to ensure the sustainability of all initiatives. We need to make sure that the most marginalized children, children who are victims of all kinds of abuses are reached.

We, the Government together with UNICEF and other organizations, and with the communities need to continue to strive towards an environment conducive to ensuring to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child, including physical, mental spiritual, moral, psychological and social development in a manner compatible with human dignity. Our children are our future!

Thank you.