

## PRESS RELEASE

23 August 2004

# UNICEF ETHIOPIA GOODWILL AMBASSADOR FOR OVCS KENENISA BEKELE WINS GOLD IN 10,000 METERS

**ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia** – The Ethiopia Country Office congratulates Olympic gold medal winner and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) Kenenisa Bekele for his victory in the 10,000 meters in Athens.

“Ethiopia has a long and proud tradition in the field of athletics,” said UNICEF Representative Bjorn Ljungqvist. “However, Friday’s victory is more than just another gold medal for this wonderful country. As UNICEF’s newest Goodwill Ambassador, Kenenisa is using his talent and fame to help us highlight the serious situation affecting orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia while helping us end stigma and discrimination for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.”

Kenenisa Bekele is one of the country’s rising stars in the field of athletics. UNICEF Ethiopia was very moved and privileged to sign the young runner as Goodwill Ambassador for OVCs earlier this month before he travelled to Greece to compete for his country.

Globally, the number of orphans is increasing due to HIV/AIDS. Between 2001 and 2003, the figure of children orphaned due to AIDS rose from 11.5 million to 15 million. The proportion of children who have lost both parents to the disease increased from less than 2 percent in 1990 to 28 percent in 2003. According to international estimates there are approximately 3.8 million orphans in Ethiopia in 2001. That figure is expected to rise to 4.4 million by 2005.

Berhane Adere, UNICEF Ethiopia’s other Goodwill Ambassador promoting Girls’ Education, is expected to compete in the women’s 10,000 meter final 27 August. Adere has been working with UNICEF to eliminate gender disparities within Ethiopia’s schools so that the country can reach its goal of education for all children by 2015. Ethiopia has also been selected for UNICEF’s ‘25 by 2005’ campaign, a major initiative to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education in 25 priority countries by the year 2005.

“We will be rooting for Berhane to also take the gold in Athens,” Ljungqvist said. “But no matter what the end result, she is already number one in the eyes of UNICEF with her significant work promoting girls’ education in Ethiopia. Together, she and Kenenisa are helping us achieve our goal of a world truly fit for each and every child in this country and around the globe.”

UNICEF plans to launch a major media and advocacy campaign with Kenenisa upon his return to Addis Ababa to sensitize the Ethiopian population about the difficulties facing OVCs in the country and the necessity of providing them with the essential care and support they need.