

PRESS RELEASE

2nd Coordination Meeting on Children Previously Involved in Camel Racing Wednesday, 20 September 2006

Abu Dhabi, 20 September 2006

Since the inception of the Children Formerly Involved in Camel Racing Project in May 2005, this meeting is a Mid-Term Review and the second gathering of all officials involved in the assessment, review, documentation, planning, implementation, and finalization of the project.

The main aim of the meeting is to give the opportunity for these officials to gather with the United Arab Emirates as well as with UNICEF to present the progress which has been achieved so far, to assess it, to exchange experiences and lessons learned, and to decide on the next steps yet to be taken.

The meeting lasted for two consecutive days with a set of clear working agenda which gives space for interaction, raising concerns and responses, discuss the challenges and obstacles openly during plenary sessions and come up with valid key points and clear recommendations.

Chairing the meeting, Major general Saif Al Sha'afar, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, thanked UNICEF and other parties involved in repatriation and rehabilitation of rescued camel jockey children for the "fruitful and constructive cooperation in the programme".

The meeting was headed by UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Dr. Omar Abdi. Among others, in addition to Ministry officials, senior UNICEF officials and representatives from Sudan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Mauritania.

"The UAE strongly denounces the crime of human trafficking, and it is always committed to combating such crimes. The country is also committed to protecting the victims of such crimes. The UAE Government has adopted many steps to promote and enhance its efforts in controlling and combating this and all such crimes," the Ministry Undersecretary said. He added ""Though the camel races are part of the national heritage of the UAE, the tradition has been misused in order to win lucrative competitions. To curb this misuse of traditional sport, President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan enacted a law that regulated camel races and prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 18 to work as jockeys"

For further information please contact:

Esmail El-Azhari Ibrahim

Programme Officer

UNICEF Gulf Area Office (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE)

Tel: +966-1-488-1705/1715/1725 ext. 101, Fax: +966-1-488-1738

Mobile: +966-504148473

E-mail: eibrahim@unicef.org