

For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



**Statement by UNICEF Representative Yemen Country Office
Aboudou Karimou Adjibade
Second consultative Meeting on Child Trafficking
Between
Yemen and Saudi Arabia
25-26 November, 2006. Sana'a Yemen**

Respectable delegates from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, UNICEF colleagues from Gulf Area Office and Yemen Country Office, ladies and gentlemen.

Asalama-o-aliakum

It is my privilege to welcome our guests from Saudi Arabia and delegates from Yemen, UNICEF colleagues, ladies and gentlemen to this important meeting. I feel honored that my first official event, upon joining UNICEF Country Office in Yemen as the country Representative addresses the pressing issue of child protection which is close to my heart and also a very high priority on UNICEF agenda. Though I have been here only for a month, I have no hesitation in saying that I feel greatly thrilled and motivated by the positive and friendly spirit of Yemeni people and commitment of the Government of Yemen to the cause of children and consider myself lucky to become a member of an inspiring team.

Having said that, let me say that we are pleased that after initial delays and postponement we are finally here together for this important meeting which is our privilege to host. As you know this is a follow-up to the first successful meeting in June this year in Riyadh. At the outset, I wish to thank our colleagues from the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and our team here who have worked hard to organize this meeting

Just to refresh our memories, I wish to highlight that the suggestions and recommendations emanating from the Riyadh meeting had called for continuing the joint and concerted action to protect children from child trafficking. One of the tasks is to arrive at a commonly agreed working definition of child trafficking.

The other task is how to translate the principals and standards enshrined in the international protocols and Convention on the rights of the child. While so far both of our

countries have not ratified the Palermo protocol which addresses the issue of trafficking of children and women, we still have our legal obligations to the convention on the rights of the child and its optional protocols.

Over the last year we have seen spectacular surge of interest and commitment in both the countries to come to grips with the horrific practice of child trafficking. Child protection has emerged as a major priority on the development agenda, and it is gratifying to see that Saudi Arabia and Yemen are taking their responsibility in the real earnest. The challenge before our countries is formidable and one of the major constraints is the lack of credible data. At the same time there is no denying the fact that the number of children being trafficked, not in Yemen only, but across the world is on the rise. Globally, around one point six million children go through the horrifying trade of child trafficking exposing children to harsh, exploitative conditions. This is a stark violation of the rights of the child and many reports have revealed that trafficked children having no legal status are often maltreated and harassed with no chance of getting out of the vicious circle. The trafficking of children is a thriving and dramatic business, affecting the children all over the world, both in industrialized and developing countries.

The clandestine nature of child trafficking makes it more difficult to know the exact number of children trafficked.

These children are subject to exploitation, cheap or unpaid labor, or made to work as domestic servants or beggars or take to reckless work on the street in order to survive. The international community and development organization have rung the alarm bell about the growing scope and trans-national complexity of child trafficking. Unchecked it will continue to grow. For the development of effective policies, it is essential to have a clear and accurate overview of the patterns and processes of trafficking worldwide.

We need to understand the process of trafficking and what needs to be done in both the countries to minimize this hazard. The cross borders cooperation which UNICEF is striving to stimulate in so many other countries facing the similar situation holds the key to combating this exploitative treatment of children.

In UNICEF, we are heartened to see the emerging commitment on the part of both of governments and willingness to tackle child trafficking not in a piece-meal and fragmented manner, but through a clear-cut shared vision and policy. We are counting on this consultation to take the process forward and pave the way for future collaboration after sharing the updated information on what has been achieved so far and how to plug the gaps that seem to slow down the effort.

We are confident that this milestone meeting will result in our better understanding of the child trafficking and provide us all for a road map to reach the goal of creation of a protective environment for all children. We look forward to your valuable input and trust together we can translate that into action. I once again wish to express our sincere thanks to both the governments for their steadfast support to UNICEF's modest efforts in our two countries.

Thank you very much for your **attention**.