

**Opening Remarks by Ms. June Kunugi, Representative
for UNICEF Gulf Area
During the Consultation Meeting on Child Trafficking
from Yemen to Saudi Arabia
Riyadh, 7 June 2006**

- On behalf of UNICEF, I wish to express a warm welcome to all; very pleased to host this first consultation on child trafficking and exploitation with the participation of the Governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia & the Republic of Yemen
- This meeting is particularly timely in that it follows a number of recent historic developments in the relations between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and we find it most appropriate that children are also seen as a priority and included on the agenda for collective action.
- Just a few words about UNICEF's involvement in the issue of child trafficking and child exploitation—we first became involved in 2004, when we provided some support to the repatriation of around 100 Afghan children, and also commissioned a rapid assessment of the situation of children involved in street selling and begging.
- I will not go into the findings of the study, but just to say that, as I'm sure most of you know, there is in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia a very unique and quite complex situation, whereby children from an estimated 18 countries are brought here and involved in a range of exploitative activities. Clearly the solutions for addressing the situation, protecting children, and moving towards prevention in the source countries will have to be carefully researched and tailor-made to the unique situation here.
- UNICEF also hosted an informal round-table meeting here in December 2004, and then we applied for and received some funding from our Headquarters with which we supported three key activities—the first was to enter into a partnership with the Al Bir Society in Jeddah to pilot some interventions providing direct support to trafficked children; the second was to jointly organize with the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences the first regional conference on child trafficking; and the third is a study on processes related to children who are victims of trafficking.
- We truly welcome and congratulate the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Yemen for this initiative to constructively meet and plan how to tackle the issue of children coming from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. On behalf of UNICEF, I wish to pledge our full support, particularly in technical areas related to child protection and child rights. The support from UNICEF

comes from three sources: the Yemen country office, the Regional Office, and the Gulf Area Office based here in Riyadh.

- We hope that this meeting will be primarily forward-looking, so that we can find a constructive and positive way forward. We have included in your folders a very draft concept paper just to start the discussion on the key areas that need to be addressed. We very much hope that this meeting will conclude with a set of recommendations on the next steps for us to follow.