

**Remarks by June Kunugi
UNICEF Representative, Gulf Area Office
At the Workshop on Combating Child Trafficking
Naif Arab University for Security Sciences
Riyadh, 18 February 2006**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamuh Aalaykumm. On behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, I would like to express a warm welcome to all participants in this workshop on combating child trafficking, and to express deep thanks to the hosts and organizers at the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences.

UNICEF is proud and privileged to be a co-sponsor of this workshop with Naif University. The participation of a number of countries from the region is a testimony that protecting children from trafficking is a common priority.

All children have a right to protection from exploitation, abuse, neglect and violence, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by all countries present here today.

Child trafficking is a complex, global problem. As estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked every year. Children and their families are often attracted by the promise of better employment and a more prosperous life far from their homes. Child trafficking is linked with criminal activity and corruption. It is often hidden and hard to address. Trafficking violates a child's right to grow up in a family environment. In addition, children who have been trafficked face many risks and dangers, including violence and sexual abuse. They are sometimes arrested and detained as illegal aliens – often with little or no access to their parents or other support services.

There are many faces to child trafficking, and many types of situations in which UNICEF and our partners have been tackling it. Trafficking includes:

- The movement and recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- Guatemalan babies and children trafficked for adoption in North America and Europe;
- Girls as young as 13, mainly from Asia and Eastern Europe, trafficked as 'main-order brides' or for commercial sexual exploitation;
- Large numbers of children trafficked in West and Central Africa, mainly for domestic work but also for sexual exploitation, to work in shops or on farms. Nearly 90 per cent of these are girls;
- Sometimes trafficking is both in and out of a country, like when children are trafficked both in and out of Benin and Nigeria.

UNICEF's approach to tackling trafficking in children is to provide technical support, bring a wide range of partners together, and work with all to find constructive approaches and solutions. This regional workshop will for the first time provide an opportunity to share experiences and good practices, and look towards the development of regional partnerships and a common strategy.

We are very pleased that two initiatives that the UNICEF Gulf Area Office has been involved in will be shared at this workshop by our partners. In one of them we are providing technical support

to the Ministry of Interior of the United Arab Emirates in supporting children who were previously involved in camel racing. We would like to highlight the vision and the commitment of the UAE in removing children from the sphere of camel racing, and providing support, care, treatment and education for these children even after they return to their home countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Sudan and Mauritania, which is something we hope other countries would do when repatriating children who have been in such situations.

In another initiative in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we are working with a wide range of partners including government bodies, municipalities, civil society organizations and academic institutions in tackling the situation of children involved in street selling and begging. This is a very complex problem, as children have been found coming from close to 20 different countries, and much more needs to be done in the source countries as well. We congratulate the Kingdom for the open and constructive approach taken, which is essential as the foundation for all efforts and programmes.

A protective environment for children needs to be built to address the situation of trafficking in children as well as prevent its spread.

I would like to express our special thanks to Naif Arab University for Security Sciences. It is a privilege for UNICEF to work with Naif University, the only institution of its kind, covering 22 countries. This advantage facilitates pan-Arab and regional interventions for children, and we at UNICEF would like to work in full partnership with you, as we have established working relationships with all of these 22 countries as well. We look to Naif University for your extensive knowledge about the situations of trafficking. as a center for the generation of knowledge, teaching, training, and for research, the University is well positioned to address the criminal justice dimensions of trafficking in children, and so we thank you again for hosting and jointly co-sponsoring this workshop with UNICEF.

We also thank the international experts and colleagues who have come from other countries and the regional office, and look forward to your expert advice on standards as well as ways forward.

We thank all participants again for your attendance and I ask that you explore opportunities to work with UNICEF in your countries in tackling trafficking in children as well as other situations where children need protection and support. I will be forwarding the outcome and recommendations of this workshop to all UNICEF Representatives in this region. I wish you all success in this workshop and in its follow-up.