

MEDIA RELEASE

UNICEF commends the Kosovo authorities for the endorsement of the Strategy and Action Plan on Children's Rights

Pristina, 1 October 2009 – UNICEF today commended the Kosovo authorities for the endorsement of the Strategy and Action Plan on Children's Rights 2009-2013. The Strategy and Action Plan on Children's Rights is an important achievement which shows the commitment of the Kosovo authorities and civil society to achieve progress for children.

Speaking at the launch of the Strategy and Action Plan, The Head of UNICEF's Office, Mr. Johannes Wedenig said 'We applaud the Kosovo Government's commitment to achieving progress for all its children. Long-term sustainable gains for development require investment in the health, protection and education of children, and that is what this Strategy and Action Plan is about'

The Strategy and Action Plan represent one of the most important overarching documents for the development and wellbeing of children. Specific sections of the document set time - bound targets for the enhancement of health, education, social protection services, and development of a juvenile justice system. The Strategy and Action Plan also tackle the issue of governance for children and appropriate budgetary allocations.

During the last ten year period, progress has been made in creating appropriate institutional bodies responsible for implementation of children's rights. Despite the progress made, challenges lay ahead. The infant mortality rate remains high, very few children attend any form of pre-primary education, not all children especially girls from Roma, Ashkalia, Egyptian communities have the chance to finish compulsory education and children with disabilities remain with a very limited access to education and social services. Poverty increases the vulnerability of families in Kosovo, it creates social and ethnic disparities, and very often children are most affected. The social assistance, while quite well targeted, does not reach enough children and families in poverty.

Mr. Wedenig continued 'Increasing social investment, putting children at the centre of the economic and political agenda, and strengthening the institutional capacity of Kosovo authorities are the key to successful implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. Furthermore, no policies are neutral to children, hence with the endorsement of the Millennium Development Goals, child rights must come to the forefront of long-term social and economic development of Kosovo.

UNICEF reassures its commitment to mobilise resources and create sustainable alliances with UN sister Agencies present in Kosovo, the European Institutions, civil society and children themselves so that every child in Kosovo reaps the benefit of this Strategy and Action Plan.

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