



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Launch of the “State of the World’s Children Report – Special Edition Celebrating 20 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child”

@ the ‘Education for Every Child’ Forum in partnership with the Malaysian Bar Council

Friday, 20 November 2009 • Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

OPENING ADDRESS BY

Mr. Youssouf Oomar

UNICEF Representative to Malaysia
& Special Representative to Brunei

Yang Amat Berbahagia Tun Dr Siti Hasmah bt Mohd Ali

Yang Berbahagia Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir

**Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Dr Zulkurnain Bin Haji Awang
Secretary-General, Ministry of Education Malaysia**

**Mr Ragunath Kesavan
President, Malaysian Bar Council**

Children and young people

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen.



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Allow me to express my gratitude to all our distinguished guests present here today.

It is an honour to see so many of our friends and partners showing their solidarity in celebrating 20 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Member States of the United Nations two decades ago in a historic commitment to affirm human rights for all children.

The Convention gave UNICEF the special responsibility to work in partnership with governments, communities, parents and every human being so each may play their role in protecting a vulnerable and critical phase of life – childhood.

Childhood is a period separate from adulthood – a time when children can grow, learn, play and develop because it is their right to do so. These rights are for all children, in all countries and cultures, at all times and without exception, simply through the fact of their being born into the human family.

The Convention has transformed the status of children and childhood – inspiring changes in laws to better protect children, altering the way international organisations see their work for children, and supporting advances in child survival, development, protection and participation.

Malaysia ratified the Convention in 1995, although the political commitment to give special attention to the welfare and well-being of children has long existed. Children in Malaysia today enjoy far better standards of living, compared to 50 years ago – with vastly improved survival standards, near-universal primary education, a stronger protective environment and recognition of the importance of birth registration and documentation for children.

However, we cannot claim that the Convention has achieved what needs to be achieved. Rather, it has provided all of us with an essential foundation to play our part in changing what needs to be changed.

The special anniversary edition of the State of the World's Children that will be launched today reminds us of what we have left to do. It reminds us that we all have a duty to uphold the Convention, because it belongs to each and every one of us.



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It is not just the duty of child rights advocates or governments to adopt the Convention and promote the rights of every child. It is the duty of every individual, as a member of their family, community and workplace.

Today's forum organised in partnership with the Malaysian Bar Council, aptly themed 'Education for Every Child', is one of many steps forward, as we hope to inspire multi-sectorial engagement and build a strong alliance to make children's rights a reality.

I would like to take this opportunity to record our gratitude to those who have lent us their support and encouragement:

Yang Amat Berbahagia Tun Dr Siti Hasmah.

Yang Berbahagia Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir.

Yang Berhormat Tan Sri Dato' Muhyiddin Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education.

Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Dr Zulkurnain Bin Haji Awang, Secretary-General, Ministry of Education Malaysia

The Ministry of Education Malaysia.

The Perdana Leadership Foundation.

The Malaysian Bar Council, particularly the National Young Lawyers Committee, the Human Rights Committee and the Secretariat.

The children and their guardians from Nur Salam, Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Orang Asli and Malaysian Care.

Speakers and moderators for the forum today.

And of course, all our partners from the Government, civil society and the media.

Thank you.

END.