

## PRESS RELEASE

# Messi to Serve As UNICEF Global Goodwill Ambassador

**BARCELONA/GENEVA/NEW YORK/ 11 March 2010** – UNICEF today appointed Lionel (Leo) Messi, FC Barcelona and Argentina national team soccer star, as a global Goodwill Ambassador.

“It is a pleasure to welcome Lionel Messi as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador,” said Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director. “He is a football superstar who can help shine a spotlight on the most vulnerable and invisible children.”

Messi’s relatively short career has taken him to the summit of world football. He was named the FIFA World Player of the Year in 2009, a year in which he also won the Golden Ball award for the best European footballer of the year. While Messi’s accomplishments as a player are well known, it is his determination to use his fame to help the world’s most vulnerable children that has led to his appointment as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

“Football has given me a lot of joy and opportunities and I feel grateful to UNICEF for this chance to give support to children,” said Messi. “I hope that in my role as a global Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF I will be able to support children who need our help.”

His team, FC Barcelona, last year achieved a historic sweep of the football championships in 2009, winning the UEFA Champion’s League, the FIFA Club World Cup, La Liga, the Copa del Rey, the European Super Cup and the Spanish Super Cup.

In 2006, FC Barcelona and the FC Barcelona Foundation signed a global agreement with UNICEF. Since then, the club has worn the UNICEF logo on its shirt, broadcasting a message about the rights and needs of children as a symbol of the club’s values and its solidarity with children.

“it is a great honour for FC Barcelona that one of our players, who embodies our club values, and who played on our youth teams since he was 13 today becomes a global Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF,” said Joan Laporta, President of FC Barcelona. “We are very proud of him as a player, and as a person, and we admire and appreciate his sensitivity to the plight of children.”

For more than half a century, UNICEF’s Goodwill Ambassadors have helped improve the lives of children and women around the world, by creating public awareness of children’s issues and helping to mobilize resources.

Messi joins a list of extraordinary UNICEF spokespersons, including Eminent Advocate HRH Queen Rania of Jordan and Goodwill Ambassadors Mia Farrow, Shakira, Sir Roger Moore, Orlando Bloom and Danny Glover, among many others.

Messi will commence his activities as a Goodwill Ambassador with a planned trip to his native Argentina, the home of the Leo Messi Foundation, which supports access for vulnerable children to education and health care.

Attention broadcasters and editors: B-roll of the event and photos will be available at [www.thenewsmarket.com/unicef](http://www.thenewsmarket.com/unicef)

**About UNICEF and Barcelona:**

FC Barcelona and UNICEF signed an agreement in 2006. Since then, FC Barcelona, through its Foundation, has donated a total of \$5 million in the past three years and has pledged another 3 million over the next two years. Part of the 2010 donation will also be directed to the children of earthquake-struck Haiti.

**For further information, please contact:**

**Kate Donovan, UNICEF Media, Tel: 1 917 378 2128 [kdonovan@unicef.org](mailto:kdonovan@unicef.org)**  
**Marc Vergara, UNICEF Geneva, Tel: +41 22 909 5715, [mvergara@unicef.org](mailto:mvergara@unicef.org)**