

**First Visit of the President of Barcelona Football Club to Swaziland
4 December 2007**

Remarks by Dr. Jama Gulaid, UNICEF Representative Swaziland

Royal Highnesses

Your Excellency the Acting Prime Minister of Swaziland, Ms. Constance Simelane

Mr. Joan Laporta, President of BFC

Honorable Ministers

Members of the Diplomatic Community, civil society, academia, private sector, UN Country Team, government departments

Mr. Rafael Yuste, Vice President of BFC and other members of the delegation

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you all for joining us this evening on this very special occasion. It is a special occasion because we have a distinguished visitor, the president of FC Barcelona. As some of you know, FC Barcelona is the largest football club in the world, the oldest and one of the most successful. It is an institution that stands for "more than a club". Tonight, you will learn more of what this phrase means for children. And when you are ready for a spectacular football game, watch Ronaldinho, Messi, Henry, Puyol, Eto and other football starts on Barca TV.

The visit is also special because it is a milestone for the global partnership between FC Barcelona and UNICEF - two household names in the world. Barca, as the 107 year-old soccer club with impressive results - 18 La Liga Championships, and victories of many international competitions, and UNICEF as the lead United Nations agency that first helped children in Europe after WWII and later mandated to promote the welfare of children world wide. In September 2006, Ms. Ann Veneman, the UNICEF Executive Director, and President Laporta, launched a unique partnership for children.

It is this partnership that brings President Laporta to Swaziland, the first country to receive assistance from this partnership. In 2007, Swaziland received nearly two million dollars from FC Barcelona. In 2008, Swaziland will receive another substantial donation. And in 2009, I trust that FC Barca will remember Swaziland and its children.

President Laporta is here to see how the partnership for children is working on the ground. To use football language, he wants to see if we have scored goals for children - against HIV, against violence, against poor education, against water shortage and against poor sanitation. He wants to see how we have worked to translate our promise for children in Swaziland.

I can confidently say that our joint venture is an exciting one for children. I can also say that the early results we achieved through the partnership are very encouraging. During the visit, President Laporta and his delegation will meet some of the spectacular players against HIV, champions of orphans, and the defenders of children. The Honorable Prime Minister, and the Acting Prime Minister are two of our champions for children. Others are standing in here in front of us, although they are not wearing jerseys. And some live humbly in rural households that you will visit tomorrow.

Welcome, Mr. President. And thank you for being a partner with the government, NGOs, the UN and communities to improve the welfare of children in Swaziland.