

Report on launch of
EARLY CHILDHOOD PEACE CONSORTIUM:
September 20, 2013, Labouisse Hall, UNICEF, New York

Founding members: Yale University; United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; Mother Child Education Foundation; UNICEF; Sesame Workshop; Early Years; Foundation Child; The Fetzer Institute

Thanks and gratitude to the founding partners for their contributions and active participation in the Consortium.

We also acknowledge the contributions of Angelica Ponguta, and Anna L. Zonderman from Yale University in the preparation of this report.

Photo Credits: Shemrah Nancy Fallon (Yale University)

Yale



OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

- ❖ The launch of Early Childhood Peace Consortium brought together over 140 partners from multiple sectors (including civil society, the social and mass media, government officials, multi and bilateral agencies, as well as practitioners and academia), agencies and countries to “*create a legacy of sustained peace drawing on the transformative power of early child development.*”
The Early Childhood Peace Consortium established an unprecedented network and unified stakeholders around the goal of reducing and preventing violence against children, recognizing the transformative power of the early years, and incorporating the broader social context in the promotion and generation of evidence-based early childhood programming for social cohesion, justice, and peace.
- ❖ The Consortium launch provided the opportunity to share and discuss evidence and approaches emanating from a range of disciplines and sectors that link the neurobiology of the earliest years of life to results in peace promotion, resilience and pro-social relationships; programming for violence reduction, peace and early childhood; and policy approaches focused on global governance, rule of law and security and sustainability in the post-2015 development agenda and beyond.
- ❖ The launch also endorsed the proposal **of a UN Resolution on Early Childhood and Peacebuilding** that will be supported and presented by Member States at the UNGA which will underscore the role of families and children in promoting peace. Thus far, there is no resolution on Peacebuilding that recognizes the vital role of families, communities and young children..
- ❖ The Consortium launch also helped focus the attention of the field of peacebuilding on early childhood. This was a remarkable result, in that not only does the early childhood field need to demonstrate its value for peace building but that the peacebuilding field also needs to recognize that value and use it accordingly.
- ❖ There has also been a series of follow up results to the consortium:
 - Media Advocacy: UNICEF has a podcast with 3 of the featured speakers talking about programmatic initiatives with results for peace building ([Link](#))
 - Wider Dissemination of knowledge: Several of the partners have established a web-presence on ECD and Peace building (UNICEF: [Link](#) Yale [Link](#)).
 - Evidence Generation: The Ernst Strungmann Forum in Frankfurt, Germany, hosted a conference with close to 50 world renowned scientists, across disciplines from biology to policy to deliberate on the evidence based pathways between early childhood and peace. The results of their discussions will be published in a book by MIT Press, in 2014.
 - Broader Stakeholder Outreach: Several networks have convened meetings and conferences on this topic: the World Peace Institute ([Link](#)); Asia Regional Network on Early Childhood Policy (ARNEC).
 - Submission of a side event at the 8th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development focusing on early childhood and peacebuilding.

The inception of the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC), in 2012, emerged from an effort involving four agencies: UNICEF (representing the United Nations); Yale (representing academia and research), Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV; representing NGOs); and the Fetzer Institute (representing private and philanthropic organizations). These agencies, individually engaged in improving peace outcomes for families and communities, realized the potential of joining forces to create a much larger impact on the world community. The consortium was launched to bring together other agencies and organizations who might have also been working individually within a network that could:

- (i) Achieve the key goals related to the global peacebuilding agenda
- (ii) Create a platform to advocate for change using bottom-up approaches, inform future research, policy agendas and programs,
- (iii) Strengthen established and emerging networks around children and peace

The Launch was innovative as it marked the inauguration of a network to advance peacebuilding through early childhood. Thus far, peacebuilding initiatives have been top-down. However, the Consortium enables the generation of novel ideas and “visionary solutions” to leverage the transformative power of ECD. The ECPC is founded on the idea that we must address *root causes* of violence and conflict, and that children can be agents of change for peace. This report includes: (i) a brief summary and analysis on how the sessions and speakers contributed to the fulfillment of the objectives of the Consortium; (ii) a set of gap areas and next steps that emerged from participant contributions; and (iii) an elaboration on next steps.

To link emerging knowledge from bio-behavioral and environmental sciences with existing evidence to increase investment, advocate for and create local and sustainable programs for peacebuilding through ECD

Compelling evidence was presented on the effect of environmental stressors on epigenetic and bio-behavioral mechanisms of development. Key messages included:

- The child’s environment is as important as their genetic endowment: gene function can be regulated and is responsive to time-sensitive environmental cues.
- Parent-child interactions are critical to development and to trans-generational patterns of behavior though their influence on gene expression and hormonal pathways that can alter affiliation, bonding, and social behaviors.
- *Policy and program implications:* There is strong empirical evidence to suggest that parenting interventions can affect epigenetic and hormonal signals and have an impact on the individual’s behavior and development well into adulthood. The Consortium enables an important exchange between the natural sciences and other disciplines on the biological basis of early life experiences and later-in-life outcomes.

To contribute to the debate on peace building by focusing on early childhood development and engaging families, communities, civil society and governments, and philanthropists through science and practice

Lessons learned from practice (long-term effects and policy implications):

- Data describing the programmatic strategies of the Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) in Turkey and Early Years in Ireland show positive effects at the mother, child and community network levels. This suggests the need to bolster the evidence-base support, and promote knowledge exchange around exemplary programs that are sustainable and can be contextualized.

- Data from Sesame Street demonstrates that media and technology are powerful tools that can promote coping strategies for, and address violence and multiple contextual challenges faced by children in fragile contexts.
- The Early Years program has developed successful strategies to implement programs in situations of emergency, high vulnerability, fragility and conflict. Their experience demonstrates the importance of networks, alliances and partnerships in the process of peacebuilding through ECD. Based on their experience, practitioners need unique capacities to appropriately address children's traumas, and an experiential approach is necessary to address conflict resolution and creating compassion for the "other."
- Policy and program implications: Evidence from practice demonstrates that we must: (i) intervene early, (ii) include mothers and fathers, (iii) focus on group dynamics and communication skills, and (iv) involve local government officials from the beginning. The media must strive to generate timely and culturally sensitive images of peace. Programmatic evidence is critical to demonstrate impact, and data can be used to advocate for increased investment in program models that work.

To advocate and disseminate information for academics, policy makers, educators, parents and children to build a global movement that values young children and families as agents of change for peace

The next generation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): How to place ECD at the center of the agenda? Approaches and challenges:

- The pillars of the next generation of the MDGs are social, economic and environmental sustainability. Though the links are complex, the ECD community must communicate how national-level agendas can operationalize ECD under the sustainability framework. ECD must also be aligned with the MDG strategic approach of *universality, economic transformation and empowerment, the governance agenda, and partnerships that are needed to make the agenda work*. It is necessary to mobilize country- and local-level participants, identify measurable and defined targets, unify ECD around a common set of goals, simplify the ECD message so it can be used in the global arena, and integrate ECD into the larger sustainable development dialogue.
- The Alliance of Civilizations expressed its commitment to ECD peace education. The Alliance believes that education in early life is critical to building intercultural trust and tolerance.
- Speakers and the audience noted it is critical to identify synergies with the legal frameworks that will emerge from other ongoing negotiations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdul-Aziz Al-Nasser called special attention to seeking creative and visionary solutions to peace. He noted the Early Childhood Peace Consortium occupies a unique niche by advancing peace and forgiveness through early childhood, a time when competencies, attitudes and beliefs are obtained and are the greatest predictors of outcomes later in life. He also remarked on the fact that until now efforts to promote peace have been made through global policies and top-down approaches, *but peace is born early and advances as it grows...this change and hope for the future starts with children*.
- Key intervention by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, Ms. Amina Mohammed, highlighted the importance of peacebuilding and working together as entry points to realizing the MDGs. Furthermore, given that ECD can contribute to social capital and economic development, there are important synergies between ECD, peacebuilding and global development. Yet, critical questions remain like *"How can we build vibrant communities where children are front and center (especially in post-conflict settings)? How do we make sure we are targeting and reaching the most vulnerable? Is there an enabling environment for change?"*

Emergent themes and contextual and the “macro level” of peacebuilding

- A new emergent theme, beyond the conceptualization of bio-behavioral and programmatic approaches to ECD and peacebuilding, involved the emphasis on larger constructs such as the Rule of Law. This was critical because integrating social justice into the dialogue promotes a model that combines peace-making (targeted by intervention programmes at the family and community level) and peacebuilding (which take into account the macro social, political structures that determine the environment of children and their exposure to structural violence).
- The operational definitions of the Rule of Law indicate that the law applies to all individuals regardless of any social, demographic, or cultural characteristics. These principles are difficult to implement in particular with vulnerable groups, especially children in conflict. Understanding these principles is critical to the new generation of ECD programming.
- Children who are victims of conflict suffer multidimensional impacts and may become themselves instruments of war. Governance, policy and legal frameworks must focus on guaranteeing the safety of the community first. States must build their capacity to manage their own Rule of Law needs. These are crucial considerations to ensuring systems are in place to reach and protect vulnerable populations and to provide environments where programmatic interventions are viable and effective.

GAP AREAS

- Participants noted that the conceptualization of “early childhood and peacebuilding” needs to be bolstered and clarified. Additional evidence and a more detailed theory of change for ECD in fragile contexts is needed
- It is important to link the conversation about ECD with the wider discussions about the contribution of social service delivery for the stabilization of fragile societies
- Issues around social justice and societal contexts must be taken into account when understanding ECD and peacebuilding
- Investment cases that show the cost effectiveness of ECD interventions as opposed to the “cost of inaction” are also necessary to foster advocacy
- State-of-the-art measurement of ECD must be reviewed and a consensus must be reached, especially as it relates to internationally comparable results or a global index on child development.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- The ECPC is at the vanguard of creating transformative solutions to one of the greatest issues plaguing the world community – that of increased violence and conflict.
- The next steps for advocacy will focus on advancing efforts in advocating for a UN resolution to ensure the highest level of global government recognition for the role of early childhood in promoting peace.
- Creating a formal governance structure of the Consortium and multiple stakeholder roles; (i) regional foci (e.g., conflict/post-conflict settings); and (ii) the complementarity of the Consortium with other networks and initiatives on ECD and peace.
- Generate a communication strategy that successfully reaches civil society and media who are the main messengers of conflict.

SPEAKER QUOTES & REACTIONS

"This is not work for the weak, this is work for the courageous...the appetite for peace is part of human nature" – Kyle D. Pruett, MD, Yale University

"The Early Childhood Peace Consortium can and should be an important advocate to place ECD higher on the global peace and development agenda. This is really urgent. During today's workshop, we heard several concrete proposals on how to move forward with our advocacy for ECD. Without such concerted advocacy we will not have resources and political attention we need to scale-up ECD programmes worldwide, especially in countries heavily affected by violence and conflict" - Christian Salazar, Associate Director, Division of Programmes, UNICEF

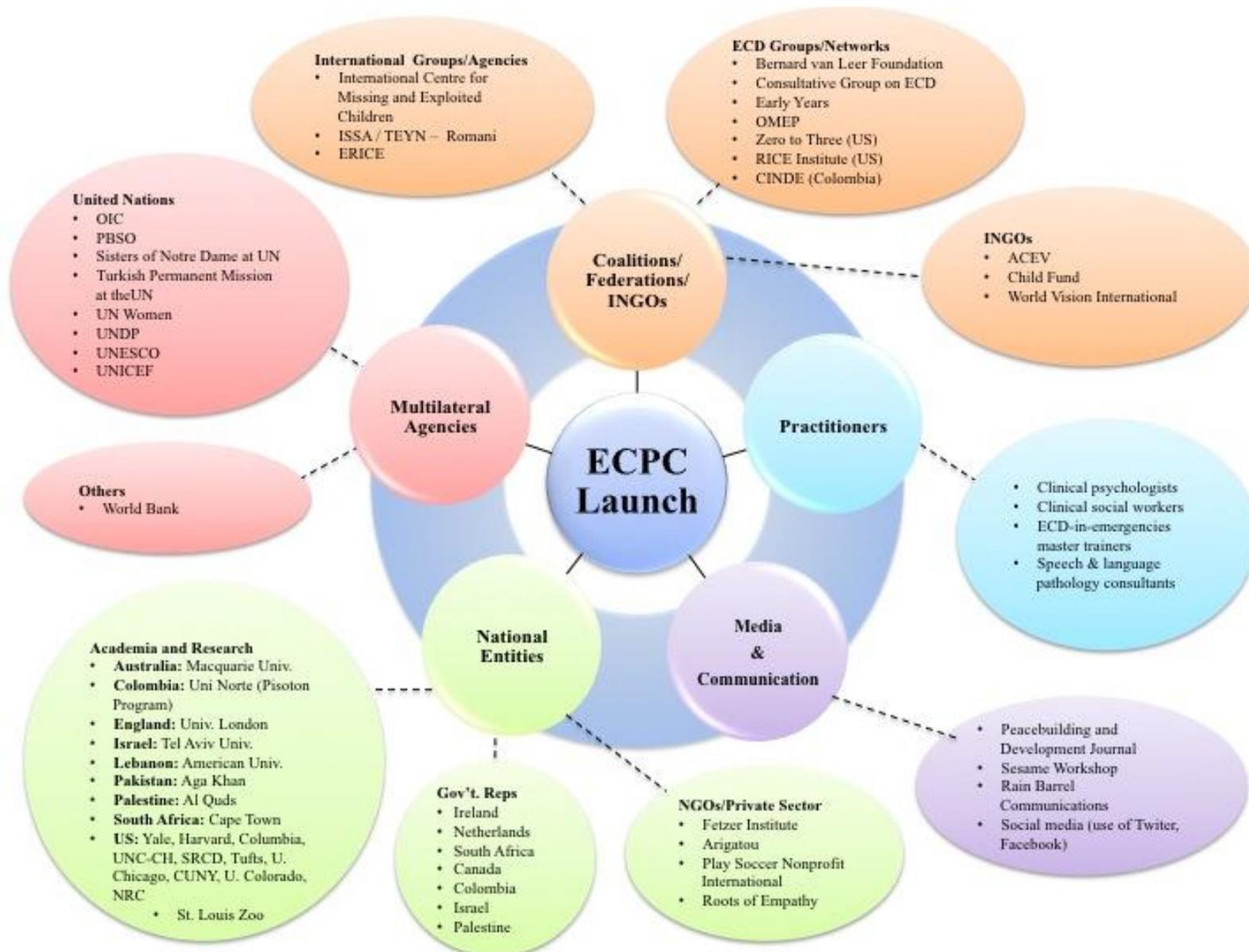
"I have been to many similar events, which were mostly a conversation among younger adults, many of whom were idealistic. This event was real, tangible, and proposed valuable mechanisms for change." – Michael Evans, Founder – Full Court Peace

"What was most interesting was there were more actors represented, more agencies, themes. It was not the talking about the 'usual'. There was a wider circle, more advocates... I feel encouraged." – Liana Ghent, ISSA – REYN – Romani Early Years Network

"We are all neighbors along 'the longest street in the world' where children should live in peace". – Mohammed H. Mohammed, Fetzer Institute

"We need to take action to make our world a better place for our children and for future generations. The academic community will be one of the partners in this important undertaking to refine and implement in a sustainable fashion ECD programs of proven value." – James F. Leckman, MD, Yale University

EARLY CHILDHOOD PEACE CONSORTIUM LAUNCH: LANDSCAPE & NETWORK



ANNEX – Overview of Session Presenters

Event Chair, Pia Rebello Britto, PhD, Sr. Advisor ECD Unit, UNICEF

"To achieve real peace, we must teach our children peace. Early environments are as much a part of our endowment as our genes."

Welcome Address, Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta, Deputy Executive Director Programs, UNICEF

"What brings us together is our belief – backed by emerging evidence – that violence of any kind, early in life – either experienced or observed – can have long-lasting and detrimental impacts on the health, life skills, competencies, attitudes and beliefs of young children and adults, alike."

Introduction to Consortium, Rima Salah, PhD, Adjunct Faculty Yale University Child Study Center, former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, former Deputy Special Representative of the Sec-Gen, UN Mission in Central African Rep and Chad

"Our goals are ambitious, but there is nothing too ambitious for the welfare of children and their families.....With you all joining the movement, we will certainly achieve our goals."

Keynote Address, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

"In closing, let me say this, our world is a great, yet complex thing. To leave it to a generation which is unprepared, and unequipped with the proper principles and ethics, would be hazardous. Hence, instilling values of harmony and tolerance in our children through instruments of early education is vital for a peaceful future. The time for change is NOW. Let us benefit from today, for a better tomorrow."

UN Session Chair, Dr. Nicholas Alipui, Director UNICEF Programmes

"Issues of increasing violence are threatening peace and security in families, communities and countries. We have to make bold moves. We have to develop innovative solutions. I am immensely pleased that consortium focusing on a different approach to promoting peace. It is focusing on evidence-based approaches rooted in the essence of human development."

United Nations, Dr. Amina J. Mohammed, U.N. Secretary-General's Special Advisor of Post-2015 Development Planning

"How can we build vibrant communities where children are front and center (especially in post-conflict settings)? The success so far has been achieved through teamwork; we must work together."

UN Panelist, Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR)

"Around the world violence is hold back states and societies from achieving their potential. To say we are working on the Millennium Development Goals we must work to mitigate violence against women and children. Justice and security services need to be established and be able to support communities."

Scientific Evidence Chair, James F. Leckman, MD, Neison Harris Professor of Child Psychiatry, Psychology and Pediatrics at Yale University

"We need to take action to make our world a better place for our children and for future generations. The academic community will be one of the partners in this important undertaking to refine and implement in a sustainable fashion ECD programs of proven value."

Science Presenter, Dr. Michael Meaney, Professor of Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University and Adjunct Senior Investigator in the Singapore Institute for Clinical Studies

"The experience of the child is 'biologically embedded' and serves to influence health and capacity over the lifespan" and that "this effect is apparent even at the level of the DNA of the individual; the activity of genes implicated in brain development and function is directly regulated by the social environment."

Science Moderator, Dr. C. Sue Carter, Research Professor in Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and Research Professor Psychology, Northeastern University in Boston

Known for her pioneering research in the study of the role of the neuropeptide, oxytocin, in parent care and bonding, Dr. Carter affirms, "The biological and evolutionary prototype for peace and safety is the parent-child interaction."

Practice Session Chair, *Ayla Göksel, M.Sc., CEO Mother Child Education Foundation, ACEV*

Demonstrated the scientific and theoretical keystones of AÇEVs early childhood and parent (mother and father) training programs and its evidence-based practice as a tool to promote peace and tolerance behaviors in children, families and communities.

Practice Presenter, *Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, Ph.D, Professor of Psychology at Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey. A founding member of AÇEV*

"Supporting early childhood development as well as transforming families, causes ripple effects to the community. This is at the core of societal development and is possibly the most enduring and the surest pathway toward peace building."

Practice Moderator, *Diane Sunar, PhD, Head of Psychology Department at Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey*

"Peace in the family gives a child a better start and leads to better school performance, less aggression, more autonomy and a better self-concept."

Media Session Chair, *Melvin Ming, CEO Sesame Workshop*

"Make the image of peace as compelling as the image of war. Teach peace as a value, a tool, a habit, a virtue, and a rule. Can we teach children that the law of the planet Earth is peace?"

Media Panelist, *Dr. Charlotte Frances Cole, Senior Vice President of Global Education at Sesame Workshop*

Our mission is to value every child, harness the educational power of media to help all children to reach their highest potential, with the promise that the next generation can bring people together and fuel burgeoning social change."

Media Moderator, *Kyle D. Pruett, MD, Kyle D. Pruett, MD, Clinical Professor in the Child Study Center; Clin Prof Psychiatry; Sch of Nursing*

"This is not work for the weak. This is work for the courageous. The appetite for peace is part of human nature."

Violence Prev/Peace Promotion Chair & Moderator, *Ms. Louise Zimanyi, Executive Director Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development*

Ms. Zimanyi addressed the role of young children and families as agents of change in reducing violence and promoting peace.

Violence Prev/Peace Promotion Panelist, *Dr. Siobhan Fitzpatrick, CEO Early Years, Northern Ireland*

Network on Peace Building/UNA: Marked the development of successful strategies to implement programs in situations of emergency, high vulnerability, fragility and conflict, and demonstrated the importance of network alliances and partnerships in the process of peace building through ECD.

Violence Prev/Peace Promotion Panelist, *Dr. Sheelagh Stewart, Director of Governance and Rule of Law, Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), United Nations Development Program (UNDP)*

Now is the time to build a new legal system prioritizing: First things first, "child safety matters hugely for an overall sense of safety"; translational justice; building the state's capacity to manage its own rule of law needs, critical to confidence building and to reach marginalized groups. "Parents innately want to do right by their children but they have to be given the chance."

Foundation's Session Chair, *Dr. Brenda Haiplik, Senior Education Advisor - Emergencies, UNICEF*

Programmatic evidence is critical to demonstrate impact and data can be used to advocate for increased investment in program models that work.

Foundation's Panelist, *Ms. Lisa Jordan, Executive Director Bernard van Leer Foundation*

Bernard van Leer's mission is 'to improve opportunities for children up to age 8 who are growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. We see this both as a valuable end in itself and as a long-term means to promoting more cohesive, considerate, creative and peaceful communities with equal opportunities and rights for all.' Ms. Jordan presented the types of issues that foundations are interested in, the knowledge and evidence they are seeking from other partners and the rationale for supporting peace promotions efforts.

Foundations Panelist, *Mohammed H. Mohammed, Program Officer, Fetzer Institute*

As Program Officer of the Fetzer Advisory Council on Natural Sciences, Mr. Mohammed spoke on the 'call for a more

profound understanding of the scientific basis of love and forgiveness.' "We are all neighbors along 'the longest street in the world' where children should live in peace."

Foundation's Panelist, *Marya Reed is the Director of Operations at the Doha International Family Institute, a member of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development*

Closing Remarks, *Dr. Christian Salazar Volkmann, Deputy Director Programme Division, UNICEF*

"The Early Childhood Peace Consortium can and should be an important advocate to place ECD higher on the global peace and development agenda. This is really urgent. During today's workshop, there heard several concrete proposals on how to move forward with our advocacy for ECD. Without such concerted advocacy, we will not have resources and political attention we need to scale-up ECD programs worldwide, especially in countries heavily affected by violence and conflict." He concluded, "Partnerships need steadfast support. Today was great. There is high energy and enthusiasm. But the peace building agenda is a long road. It needs endurance."