

**ADDRESS BY MS. AIDA GIRMA, UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE,
at THE SOUTH AFRICAN LAUNCH OF THE INTER-AGENCY REPORT ON
CHILD LABOUR ON 11 MAY 2010**

Honorable Minister

Excellencies

Officials of the ILO

Mr. Vic Van Vuuren (South African) Director of ILO Pretoria Office

Mr . Joni Musabayana (Zimbabwean) - Deputy Director

Dear children of the New Life Centre for Girls

Distinguished guests

Good morning.

As we have just heard, despite overall progress in the fight against child labour worldwide, there is an urgent need to scale up efforts. We are alarmed to learn that in recent years, the incidence of child labour has actually increased in many countries. Children in Sub-Saharan Africa are particularly affected, where estimates suggest that one in four engaged in various forms of work that may be hazardous, interfere with their schooling, or be otherwise harmful to their full mental and physical development.

In this year, the 20th anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, it is necessary to reaffirm our commitment to redress these intolerable violations of children's rights. As well, we need

to be aware that the widespread use of child labour is undermining progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

South African efforts in addressing the scourge of child labour have been exemplary. The South African constitution is notable in explicitly affirming the right of children to be protected from harmful forms of work. A comprehensive child labour programme of action is reinforced by an appropriate national legislation.

South Africa's progress in addressing child labour is reflected in school enrolment rates that are amongst the highest on the continent. Furthermore, the extension of the child support grant to children up to the age of 18 is an important step in addressing child poverty as a root cause for children's involvement in harmful labour.

Nevertheless, South Africa's cities serve as poles of economic opportunity in a context of extreme inequality, sub-regional poverty, and catastrophic levels of HIV/AIDS. While some child labourers are highly visible, such as street children working in the informal economy in border towns of Musina, others are hidden from view and exploited in the worst forms of child labour, for instance trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

The organisation of the World Cup next month has raised concerns about the possible increase in child labour linked to the economic bonanza of the event. In fact, there is little experience in organizing major international sporting events in settings where the numbers of poor and vulnerable

children are so high. Many children may be drawn both by the excitement and the possibility of earning some cash; and adults may seek to exploit vulnerable children for their own economic benefit. Criminal syndicates may thrive during such an event, target children in order to fulfill the perceived increase in demand for prostitution and drugs which the event is expected to bring.

In this context, UNICEF and the ILO is supporting government efforts to prevent and reduce the abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ in South Africa, and contribute to a strengthened child protection system as a enduring legacy of the event. This programme has four components:

Firstly: to provide a safe haven for children in dangerous situations through the establishment of “Child Friendly Spaces” at four of the FIFA Fan Fests: Soweto, Sandton, Port Elizabeth, and Nelspruit. Specilised child care workers and counsellors will be available on site to identify children at risk and refer them to appropriate services.

Secondly: to strengthen child protection services **to respond to exploitation, abuse and trafficking through training of emergency teams in each of the nine provinces.** The training will focus on procedures and protocols for response to children in need of care and protection.

Thirdly: to promote the adherence to the international code against commercial sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. In collaboration with Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa and major

industry operators, the Code will be launched in South Africa during the first week of June. It will be accompanied by training of industry staff.

Fourthly: to raise awareness about the risks of child abuse, exploitation and trafficking around the period of the World Cup. This is taking place through a "Red Card" campaign that includes strong messages aimed at young people at risk; the general public; and travellers, tourists and visiting football fans.

Finally, UNICEF will support a series of sport festivals in school communities during the extended winter school holiday. These festivals will engage children in structured activities and while empowering children with life skills and information to protect themselves.

The risks associated with the World Cup are symptomatic not only of high levels of vulnerability of children in South Africa and in the sub-region; they are also symptomatic of weak prevention and response systems. Response to these risks provides an opportunity to strengthen national child protection systems to address child labour, exploitation and trafficking, leaving a positive legacy that will extend long beyond the event itself.

I thank you.
