



PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children welcome Government of Pakistan's commitment to protect children from sexual exploitation

ISLAMABAD, June 10, 2011 – In a joint statement with the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, UNICEF Pakistan today welcomed the Government of Pakistan's move to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

"The ratification of this Optional Protocol marks a significant milestone in the efforts to protect children from sexual exploitation in Pakistan. This is also part of a global effort to bring the international community together in the fight against the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography," said Dan Rohrmann, UNICEF Pakistan Representative.

"Pakistan was an early leader in the international community's commitment to defending the rights of children around the world, ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography is a critical adjunct to the CRC that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000. We applaud the Government of Pakistan's commitment to extend the rights of children in Pakistan to include the right to protection from trafficking, prostitution and involvement in pornography," added Mr Rohrmann.

The Protocol places special emphasis on protecting the rights and interests of child victims, requiring governments to provide legal and other support services. This obligation includes considering the best interests of the child in any interactions with the criminal justice system. Children must also be supported with necessary medical, psychological, logistical and financial support to aid their social reintegration.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, joined UNICEF in welcoming this important decision. "I salute this solemn commitment by Pakistan to criminalize these serious child rights violations, to protect child victims and witnesses and to fight impunity within and across borders."

"With this important development, the international community is moving increasingly closer to the universal ratification of the Optional Protocol. This is a goal I am committed to promoting, as part of the global campaign launched in May 2010 with the Secretary General, in cooperation with UNICEF and other UN partners," said Ms Santos Pais.

The CRC's Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography supplements the Convention by providing States with detailed requirements to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. It also protects children from being sold for non-sexual purposes, such as other forms of forced labour, illegal adoption and organ donation.

Pakistan stands now among 144 countries who have ratified the Protocol, reflecting global concern about the issues that it covers. In ratifying the Optional Protocol, the Government of Pakistan has committed to criminalise and punish the activities related to these offences. The Protocol requires punishment not only for those offering or delivering children for the purposes of sexual exploitation or transfer of organs, or offering children for profit or forced labour, but also for anyone accepting children for these activities.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. In Pakistan, UNICEF works with the government, NGOs and other partners to support child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and AIDS. It has provided vital relief and reconstruction support to help individuals rebuild their lives after emergencies, such as the October 2005 earthquake. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF Pakistan visit: www.unicef.org/pakistan

About the UN Special Representative on Violence against Children

Ms. Santos Pais is an independent global advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. Appointed by the Secretary General in follow up to the UN Study on Violence against Children, she acts as a bridge builder and a catalyst of actions in all regions and in all settings where violence may occur. The mandate of the SRSG on Violence against Children is anchored in human rights standards, and promotes the universal ratification and effective implementation of core international conventions.

For more information about the SRSG on Violence against Children visit:

<http://srsq.violenceagainstchildren.org>

For more information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child visit:

www.unicef.org/rightsite

For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

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