



STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM (UNCT) IN UGANDA

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**UNITED NATIONS: GREATER CHILD PARTICIPATION IS KEY TO SHAPING A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL CHILDREN**

*Every child has the right to be seen and heard – loudly and clearly – in decisions that affect their and their families' wellbeing.*

**Kampala, 16 June 2008** – Today, on the occasion of the **Day of the African Child**, the United Nations in Uganda encourages the Government and people of Uganda to promote child participation as a means of shaping a protective environment for the children of today and tomorrow.

The 2008 theme for the Day of the African Child, **Child Participation**, is particularly apt here in Uganda where – for the first time in a generation – children born in the north are increasingly able to move out from the shadow of conflict and into the light of a day when every child has access to the full range of services and rights: access to good health care, a decent education, and being brought up with love and respect.

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the sixtieth anniversary of which we celebrate this year – recognizes, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. Yet, at this moment across Uganda, there are tens – indeed hundreds – of thousands of children who are unable to fully claim and enjoy their right to participation due to poverty, inequality, violence and social and political exclusion.

Through the use of child rights clubs, children's parliaments, interactive media and other initiatives, more efforts are needed to meaningfully enlist and reflect the opinions of children in decision-making at all levels and to enable children to access appropriate and useful information. The focus must be on all children, including children from poor families, children living with disabilities and children who are orphaned and vulnerable.

Child and youth participation is one of the five indispensable commitments and obligations of the African Union's "Call for Accelerated Action" towards implementing the **Plan of Action for Africa Fit for Children** (2008-2012). We, the United Nations, reaffirm our commitment to supporting the Government of Uganda to meet this obligation as an African Union member state.

Furthermore, we reaffirm our commitment to assist Uganda to fulfil its obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first legally-binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the universal right of children to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

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**About the Day of the African Child:**

Initiated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1991, the Day of the African Child is celebrated on 16 June in recognition of 1976 tragedy in which thousands of black school children in Soweto, South Africa, took to the streets to protest the inferior quality of their education and to demand their right to be taught in their own language. Hundreds of young boys and girls were shot. In the two weeks of protest that followed, more than 100 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured.

**For more information, please contact:**

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