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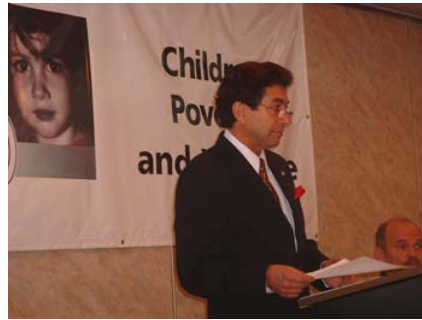
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# Children Speak

*Vol 2, No.7, October - November '04*

*A Newsletter of the Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights*

## Message from the President



### **International Summit on Children, Poverty and Violence**

The O.P.C.R. held an International Summit on Children, Poverty and Violence on October 22nd and 23rd, 2004 at the Holiday Inn-Montreal Airport Hotel in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Thirty recognized specialists and leading experts representing 17 different countries from Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America and Europe as well as 24 students from six English Montreal School Board (EMSB) schools and 3 youths from Cuba met for two days to assess current strategies, identify the most significant barriers to improving the condition of children and make recommendations on how to overcome these barriers and achieve quicker, concrete and better results with respect to the Summit's four main topics: Health,

Education & Literacy, Legal & Social Protection of Children/Violence and Food & Nutrition.

The objective of the International Summit was to open a creative dialogue between professionals, leading thinkers and youth and to stimulate the formation of innovative multidisciplinary solutions to topical problems faced by children, with a view of establishing a sustainable child-rights' based action plan that includes effective mechanisms for implementation and monitoring over a five-year period.

After the introductory plenary session, which outlined the condition of children globally and included personal manifestos of representatives from Africa, Asia, Americas and Europe, the delegation was divided into the four main areas of the summit: Education, Food & Nutrition, Health and Legal & Social Protection of Children/ Violence. The Summit was organized in a manner that recognizes and supports our commitment that youth should be active and meaningful participants - on an equal footing with adults - in their own development rather than passive beneficiaries. The discussions in each group focused on global solutions for dealing with fundamental barriers to child protection and means of achieving them in collaboration. There was a consensus among all groups to focus on the following areas in order to

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# Solely for our children . . . .

By Dr. William Rowe, D.S.W.

The International Summit on Children, Poverty & Violence highlighted the need for long-term solutions and, more importantly, the extraordinary contribution of youth participants in terms of dialogue, information and lessons learned. Some of the strong points resulting from the Summit include:

- Developing children rights' zones
- Propagating a culture of learning
- Understanding the challenge of creating universal principles for Education in global citizenship
- Preparing a roadmap for rights



- Developing child-friendly model communities throughout the world, which present a preeminent example of child protection and growth

- Focusing on the best interests of children *today*
- Encouraging child-friendly cultural practices

All of these points constitute guidelines for action in the years to come. They are part of a recipe to reclaim civil society and make it work for the benefit of our children and families. Not for ideology and certainly not for power. But solely for our children, because that is the only future we have. The International Summit reminded everyone of the importance of fulfilling this promise and vision □

## Voices of Youth

Excerpts from the qualifying essays submitted by the youths who took part in the International Summit

"I believe part of the solution is for everyone to give something to others who are less fortunate... As a teenager I would be willing to donate what I can because I would want other children to grow up in a healthy environment like I've been able to."

**Lisa Rubano, Grade 10 student, Laurier MacDonald High School**

"As countries work to feed all of their people, the message must be 'eat healthy food, not just more food!'"

**Pamela Salera, Grade 10 student, Laurier MacDonald High School**

"There are 1.4 million (Canadian) children living under the poverty line today, a number that seems to go unnoticed... There is a definite lack of awareness about Canada's



**The wealth of a nation should not be measured by GDP or GNP, it should be measured by the state of its children"- Marquise Houle, Youth Representative**



**"The best diet you can give your child is your example"**  
- Sandra Cohen-Rose, Moderator, Food & Nutrition Group

disadvantaged children. It is inconceivable for people to want to help change the way things are going if they aren't even aware that such problems exist. Canada is a well-off country, so the assumption is made that all of its citizens are equally fortunate."

**Katryna Van Vliet, Grade 10 student, Royal West Academy**

I believe that it is the responsibility of the international community to build more schools in order to give people more of a chance in life. It is not fair that we get all the privileges and the happiness that goes with it and they do not. I do not understand why we let things like poverty and sickness affect our fellow people, and I really do not understand the people who inflict this damage onto others.

**Alice Boom, Grade 9 student, Marymount Academy**

# Voices of Youth



Youth participants after an interactive motivational session with Dr Ken Nedd

Hopefully, it will be a great day when the armed forces of our planet will have to hold a bake sale to finance their arsenal and useless wars, while every child and every school will be able to afford all the necessary books conducive to the development and maintenance of literacy.

**Tanya-Michelle Contente, Grade 10 student,  
Vincent Massey Collegiate**

We are given the privilege, in our country, of having a fairly strong education system; however there is still a large dropout rate among teenagers... I believe that one of the main reasons that many young adults do not see the importance of attending school is due to lack of support and encouragement from their families and friends... I believe that what goes on outside of the classroom plays a huge role on how a child perceives their school.

**Lara Steinhouse, Grade 10 student, Royal West  
Academy**

In spite of the innumerable underlying circumstances and ulterior political motives that ceaselessly stunt the progression of this cause (to help children), we ought to muster the necessary incentive to act judiciously and demand not mere possibilities but actual results.

**Danya Bowman, Grade 10 student, Vincent  
Massey Collegiate**

Television in a way is part of the problem because it makes us believe we are too good for any help offered to us, we have to be just like our favourite character. Before the problem or violence even occurs, we are already defeated. The logical answer would be that we have to change how we view the world in order to begin tackling the problem of violence.

**John R.C. Battista, Grade 10 student, Laurier  
MacDonald High School**

No matter how old you are you'll never lose that inner child, you'll always have that one moment where you're so afraid that you want to huddle up in a corner. Just because you're an adult doesn't mean you're not a child.

**Vanessa Di Girolamo, Grade 10 student,  
Rosemount High School**

In my opinion, what created poverty was violence... I personally think that violence cannot be stopped for it will just continue on and on. If we all work together and create some sort of solution (such as an organization), we can reduce violence.

**Ann G. Jeyaratnam, Grade 9 student,  
Marymount Academy**

It is a sickening fact that, in Mexico, girls are forced into prostitution, where they escort elderly sex tourists from abroad. The number one leading country from where these tourists come from is Canada!

**Amina Reaz, Grade 9 student, Marymount  
Academy**

## Voices of Youth

I think it would be great if we could force parents to take courses that would be teaching them how to look after their child. This should take place before the baby is born and they should get paid for it. It's a good idea because it would improve their parenting skills or teach them if they don't have any, and they can accomplish all that without worrying about money.

**Raiyan Salim, Grade 10 student, Rosemount High School**

To learn how to treat others well, children must be given a good example to follow. Children deserve to be treated with the same respect as adults, because they will eventually become adults and take their place in society. The same laws that protect adults should also protect children. Children are the future of the world, and without a future to look forward to, life has no meaning.

**Melanie Sinclair, Grade 9 student, Lauren Hill Academy**

Violence is everywhere and because of this, people are becoming immune to it. It has such a persistent presence in the world, that most people ignore it.

**Lea Trudel, Grade 10 student, Royal West Academy**

## International Summit on Children, Poverty & Violence

ensure a good quality of life for all children:

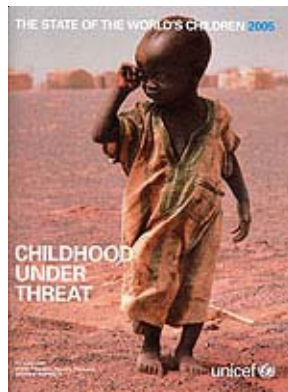
- Promoting greater awareness about the needs, rights and value of children and youth among all segments of society, including decision makers, law enforcement officials, parents, teachers and children themselves.
  - Extensive networking among NGOs and the media in order to accelerate and consolidate initiatives for children in various fields.
  - Establishing international standards of education that would include:
    - Conflict resolution and peace studies;
    - Preventative programmes dealing with parental responsibilities, discipline, relationships, at risk behaviors and situations, etc.;
    - Respect and tolerance for all cultures, races and people;
    - Vocational training;
    - Counselling for parents and children.
  - Developing supportive community models such as those that exist in Kibbutz to exemplify an ideal society for children. The deliberations also focused on setting up mechanisms for child protection in each country, which can be independently monitored.
- A preliminary version of the Summit's declaration and recommendations is currently being circulated among all participants for amendments and comments. The final version will be incorporated into a child-rights based five-year action plan that will be forwarded to stakeholders and agents of change worldwide, including all of the member states of the United Nations. □

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## The State of the World's Children 2005

**T**he 2005 edition of UNICEF's State of the World's Children will be launched on December 9. This year's report focuses on how poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS threaten the idea of childhood as a period of time for children to grow and develop to their full potential.

Since the adoption of the Convention on the rights of the child in 1989 significant advances were made in the fulfilment of children's rights to survival, health and education, and a growing recognition of the need to create a protective environment to shield children from exploitation, abuse and violence.



However, in several regions and countries, some of these gains are in danger of reversal as a result of poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS. The rights of over 1 billion children are violated because they are severely underserved in one or more of the basic services required to survive, grow and develop. Millions of children are growing up in families and communities torn apart by armed conflict. In sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS has led to increasing child mortality, dramatic reductions in life expectancy and millions of orphans. □

(UNICEF)

# Weapons that target children

The Palestinian authority has accused Israel of being responsible for the deaths of five Palestinian schoolboys who were killed in an explosion in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian officials say the children were killed when one of them accidentally detonated an unexploded shell or landmine while they were on their way to a United Nations school in the Khan Younis refugee camp.

Mines and unexploded ammunition kill about 8,000 children around the world every year. In Afghanistan, one organisation has been combating that threat with an unlikely weapon - radio soap opera. In New Home, New Life on the BBC's Pashto service, which broadcasts to Afghanistan, educational messages alert children to the dangers posed by live ammunition and landmines.

A recent storyline featured a young boy who, like many Afghan children, collected and sold scrap metal to help feed his family. Despite repeated warnings, he continued until one day he picked up a piece of live ammunition and was blown apart.

The show's project director, Shirazuwin Siddiqi, said: "We interviewed many children and they said: 'We've seen the show. But we need the money to buy bread.'" He added that the episode had produced one tangible result. A shopkeeper who bought scrap from youngsters was so distressed by the story that he abandoned the metal business and began selling textiles instead.

Landmines have killed more people worldwide than nuclear and chemical weapons combined.

And again, children are particularly at risk. Youngsters step on them while herding animals or searching for firewood. And warning signs are useless to children too young to read them. Many explosives are designed to resemble attractive objects like pineapples or balls. The infamous

"butterfly mine", favoured by the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, was set off when young victims mistook them for pretty insects.

"Children are the targets," said UNICEF spokesman Mark Vergara. "These are not like stray bullets. The aim is to get children." Little boys have been known to use mines as wheels for toy trucks. In Cambodia, children have been seen playing boules with B40 anti-personnel mines. Those who do survive may require several operations as they outgrow one prosthetic limb after another.

When mines are used on the battle front, the goal is to maim, rather than kill. Killing a man only removes one member of the opposition forces. Maiming him removes at least three, because other fighters must abandon the front to carry their fallen comrade to safety.

But when the devices are planted in civilian areas, the aim is to demoralise the community. And the damage is not just physical and emotional. Mines also inflict serious financial damage. Victims are rendered incapable of work, and a family member is forced to stay at home and care for them.

Then there is the cost of removing the mines. Eliminating a \$3 device can cost as much as \$1,000. The process is dangerous and slow. At the current pace, experts say, it will take an estimated 600 years to remove all the devices now in place along paths and roads around the world.

Meanwhile, charities like UNICEF are running mine awareness programmes. These alert people to the danger of mines and tell them what to do if they come across one. UNICEF press officer Mark Vergara, said: "We tell them things like 'Don't touch it, retrace your steps, don't stray off onto the side of the road.' It's very basic stuff." □



## NEWS...

### Land mine statistics

- Number of countries containing mines: 68
- Number of live mines in former war zones: 100 million
- Average number of people killed or maimed by mines daily: 71
- Number of children maimed or killed annually: 8,000
- Cost of one mine: \$3-\$30
- Cost of clearing one mine: \$300-\$1,000
- Cost of clearing Afghanistan's mines: \$500m

# NAIROBI SUMMIT ON A MINE FREE WORLD

**H**igh-level political representatives and internationally renowned activists and sporting figures will be among those gathering at the upcoming Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World to be held in Nairobi, Kenya 29 November to 3 December.

The Nairobi Summit is the landmark First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines, and will assess the remarkable progress made since the Convention entered into force five years ago, and the serious challenges still remaining.

"The Nairobi Summit is the chance for leaders at the highest level to reaffirm commitments to end the suffering caused by landmines," said Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, the Summit's President-Designate. "Therefore I am pleased that political figures from mine-affected and donor states are scheduled to take part in the Summit, including the President of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, the Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, and the Vice-President of Colombia, Francisco Santos Calderón."

The Deputy Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Tajikistan and Thailand have also confirmed their participation. In addition, announcements

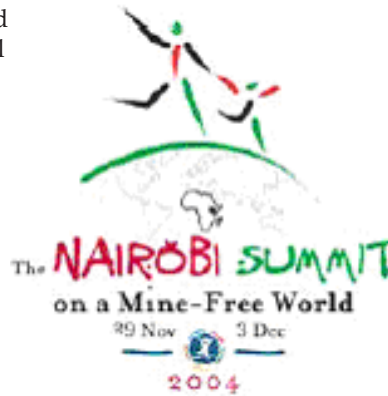
on the participation of at least a dozen other heads of state are expected in coming days.

Personalities taking part in the Summit include Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, who will convene a special summit of landmine survivors. Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Jody Williams and Shirin Ebadi, and this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai, will lead a panel on responses to war. A host of

world class runners, including world marathon record holder Paul Tergat and Ethiopian athletics legend Haile Gebrselassie, will participate in the Run Towards a Mine Free World scheduled for Saturday 27 November.

"Celebrities did their part seven years ago in raising awareness of the human cost of landmines and they will do so again at the Nairobi Summit," said Ambassador Amina C. Mohamed of Kenya. □

For further information, please contact: Kerry Brinkert, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Tel: 41-(0)-79-687-2257 E-mail: [k.brinkert@gichd.ch](mailto:k.brinkert@gichd.ch) [www.nairobisummit.org/press](http://www.nairobisummit.org/press)



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