

## OHCHR-Nepal and UNICEF-Nepal Joint Press Release

15 September 2006

### UN agencies concerned that children are again used in demonstrations

KATHMANDU, September 15: United Nations agencies are concerned that children are again being deployed by adults to participate in demonstrations and rallies.

“We are worried about their safety, we are worried that they are missing school, and we are not at all sure that they have the consent of their parents or guardians,” UNICEF Representative, Dr Suomi Sakai said yesterday.

“While children do have the right to freedom of expression under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, their parents and guardians also have the right and responsibility to ensure that children are exercising their rights in an age-appropriate manner.

“Organisers of any demonstration or public gathering have a responsibility to ensure that any children participating do have the consent of their parents.

“And they should not be pulling children out of school, let alone transporting them to other locations. Children have lost so many school days already in these many months of turbulence and *bandhs*. In some districts, the school year has been cut almost in half.

“Finally, organisers of rallies must not put children into situations that could put them at physical risk or offer them enticements such as food or money in order to participate.” Dr Sakai said that UNICEF was particularly worried about the risks to street children and other children without family support.

David Johnson, Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, also noted that the presence of children and young people in any public gathering was also a factor that needed to be considered by police and other security forces with a mandate to ensure public order.

“Children have the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations. But they are especially vulnerable and their rights must be protected. Organisers must make sure that children participating are doing so voluntarily. Police should pay special attention to the presence of children in demonstrations, and ensure that any response involving children is appropriate. International standards which require that law enforcement officials must exercise restraint and use only the minimal necessary force in policing demonstrations are particularly essential to protect the rights of children,” he said.

###

*For further information, please contact:*

*Kieran Dwyer OHCHR-Nepal: Tel.: 428 0164 (Ext. 321) - Mobile: 98510 14263 or Email: kdwyer@ohchr.org*  
*Rupa Joshi, UNICEF: Tel. 522 3200 (Ext. 1179) – Mobile: 98510 54140 or Email: rjoshi@unicef.org*