

## **Statement by Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director, on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People**

**NEW YORK, 9 August 2011**– Today, UNICEF joins the international community in celebrating the 2011 International Day of the World's Indigenous People.

The human family has been immeasurably enriched by the contributions of indigenous people around the world. And yet, indigenous children are among the most disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable children in the world.

In poor and wealthy nations alike, indigenous children are more likely to die before reaching the age of five, less likely to attend school and more likely to suffer from discrimination and to be excluded from critical services.

For example, in Latin America, where the overall standard of living has risen steadily over the past 20 years, data about indigenous children reveal a stark disparity: child mortality is 70 per cent higher among indigenous children than non-indigenous children. In countries around the world, indigenous children have lower enrolment rates, higher drop-out rates and lower educational attainment than non-indigenous children. And indigenous children may also be more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour and other exploitation.

This is unacceptable. All children have the right to grow and thrive and to make the most of their potential. When we exclude indigenous children, we not only deprive them of these fundamental rights, we deprive their societies of the full contributions they are capable of making – and the global family is diminished.

Fortunately, we are beginning to make progress in focusing greater attention on the needs of indigenous children. To date, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has been universally endorsed. And the newly founded UN Indigenous Peoples Partnership (UNIPP) is another step in the right direction. Bringing together the ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF, this alliance is working to create joint programming at the country level to help overcome barriers and bottlenecks that stand between indigenous children and the services they need to survive and thrive.

To best celebrate the richness and diversity of indigenous communities, we need to build on this progress, and recommit ourselves as a global community to reaching every child.

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