

# Canada

## Position Paper for UNICEF

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### Introduction

At the UN Special Session on Children in May 2002, Former Executive Director of UNICEF Carol Bellamy stated, “A century that began with children having virtually no rights is ending with children having the most powerful legal instrument that not only recognizes but protects their human rights”. As a committed member of UNICEF since 1953, Canada recognizes that the rights of children must be a global priority, and that every child has the right to health, education, equality and protection. By signing onto the Convention on the Rights of a Child in 1989, Canada asserts its continued effort to support the safety and well being of all children in the International Community. During her remarks on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty in October 2009, Executive Director of UNICEF Ann M. Veneman stated, "The cycle of intergenerational poverty must end. Investing in children's health, education and protection is an obvious place to start."

### I. Educating the Youth: Ensuring Capable Citizens for the Future

Canada recognizes that education is vital in helping children develop into capable citizens for the future. Currently, there are no binding international laws in place that require all children to receive primary education. Many programs that cater to nations individually such as Save the Children and the USAID sponsored Africa Education Initiative (AEI) have been widely successful at giving young children adequate primary education. In her remarks at the visit of the Young Women’s Leadership School in East Harlem with Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan, Ann Veneman stated that, “Providing quality education to girls is a sound investment that helps build a brighter future for their communities and their countries”. It is estimated that there are 93 million children in the world that are not enrolled in some form of schooling. Only 60% of children attend secondary school worldwide. Canada calls upon the 2005 resolution A/RES/60/2 (Policies and Programs Involving Youth), The 2006 Resolution A/RES/60/141 (The Girl Child), and the 2003 Resolution A/RES/57/249 (Culture and Development) in order to create equality within educational systems and give children access to information and technology to further advance their education. Canada is fully aware that children need access to basic resources in order to get the most out of their education. To increase access to education, Canada supports efforts such as the UNICEF School-In-A-Box Program, which supplies a classroom of 80 students teaching supplies in order to enhance the quality of the children’s education. To promote children’s rights on a national level, Canada has established organizations such as the Canadian Coalition on the Rights of Children (CCRC), which works to educate children about human rights as well as their own individual rights. Through programs such as the National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA), every Indigenous Canadian child has access to resources and tools that provide for a quality education. Through the national program CanLearn, students are provided with access to information about secondary educational opportunities and affordable financing for future education. Every year during Halloween, UNICEF organizes a trick-or-treat campaign to raise money for the education of children in developing areas. The Canadian Ministry of Education ensures the education in Canada is constantly a top priority in the nation. In order to ensure all children receive equal opportunities pertaining to primary education, Canada introduces a **three-point plan** entitled **EAI (Equality, Access, Implement)**. **EQUALITY** is important to ensure that all children are given the same opportunities regardless of class, race, religion, sex or any other demographics. Children must be able to have **ACCESS** to certain resources that are proven to further excel success in the classroom. Governments must **IMPLEMENT** policy to ensure that all children are given an education as well as a safe environment in which they can learn. On his remarks at the 2008 Special Place for Children in EU External Action Committee on Development, former Secretary of State Kofi Anan stated that, “There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace”.

### II. Safeguarding and Promoting the Rights of Children in Conflict Zones

Canada firmly promotes the elimination of all participation and exploitation of children in conflict zones. After rebels violently revolted against the Sudanese government in 2003, child soldiers were heavily used. In June of 2009, International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo stated that the ICC was looking to charge Sudanese men involved in the Darfur conflict and suspected of promoting the recruitment of some 6,000 child soldiers under 11 in the armed conflict. As stated by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada Leonard Edwards at the UN 63<sup>rd</sup> Session, “As a community, we must stand up for the rule of law and for those whose rights are violated or undermined by the very institutions which should ensure their protection.” Canada recognizes that the trafficking of children is an issue that affects every country. The legal age of service in the military in Canada is 17, while in many under developed nations the age can be as low as 15. By 2006, Canada had contributed \$477 million to peacekeeping efforts in Sudan. In a statement made in January of 2009 on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, Ann M. Veneman stated, “Only when there is a cessation of hostilities can children begin the long journey back to a semblance of what is the most fundamental right of a child, the right to a life free from physical and mental violence.” Every year, 1.2 million children are trafficked worldwide for labor and sexual exploitation. Currently, it is estimated that 200,000 to 300,000 children today are being used in armed conflict for either rebel groups or government. Canada calls upon the 2006 resolution A/RES/60/231 (Rights of a Child), the 2009 resolution A/RES/63/241 (Rights of the Child), and the 2009 resolution S/RES/1882 (Children and armed conflict), that call for the eradication of all violence involving children, and their reintegration back into society. In order to stress the importance of the elimination of the forced recruitment and use of child soldiers, Canada continues to actively support the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which actively prevents the recruitment and use of children as soldiers and secures their demobilization. Oxfam Canada established a Control Arms Campaign, which is fighting to establish more international rules to prevent small arms from getting into the hands of criminals and organizations

that use child soldiers. Canada recalls the 1979 Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict in calling for the protection of women and children from weapons of war and the forced recruitment of children in conflict areas. Acknowledging that every child that is a victim of violence has individual needs, Canada embraces international programs such as Global Action for Children (GAC), which promotes the education and reintegration for children to return to normalcy. Canada strongly supports War Child International, which protects the rights of children during conflict including demobilization, reintegration and protection from landmines. Canada reminds each Member State of the importance of holding all persons who violate the rights of children accountable and reprimanded for their actions. Canada calls upon the Rome Statute of the ICC in taking further action to prosecute those who abuse and exploit children by means of exploitation in times of warfare. In order to advance the protection of rights of children in conflict zones, Canada respectfully introduces a **three-point plan** entitled: **DPR (Disarm, Protect, Reintegrate)**. Action must be taken to **DISARM** all children involved in conflict. It is vital to **PROTECT** children from forcefully being exploited and harmed in conflict zones by implementing policy within the provisions set by the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, entered into law in 2002. Areas affected by conflict must welcome organizations and programs which help to **REINTERGRATE** children affected by conflict back into society within the boundaries set forth by the Paris Principles. On his remarks at the Security Council open debate on Children and Armed Conflict in July of 2008, Secretary Ban-Ki-Moon stated, "The protection of children in armed conflict is a litmus test for the United Nations and the Organization's Member States. It is a moral call, and deserves to be placed above politics. It requires innovative, fearless engagement by all stakeholders."

### III. Measuring the progress of MDG 6: Protecting Children from HIV/AIDS

Canada recognizes the devastating global impact of HIV/AIDS on the International Community as a whole. The Center for Disease Control began reporting the first known cases of AIDS in 1982. Within two years of the first outbreaks, the epidemic had been reported in 33 countries. On her Remarks at the UNICEF Special Session of the General Assembly on June 2000, Former Executive Director Carol Bellamy stated, "We must aim for socialization of girls and boys in a culture of non-violence and respect for each other's rights, inherent dignity, and equality. Equality in relationships with men and boys is essential if women and girls are to protect themselves against violence and HIV/AIDS." With 73,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Canada, proper medical attention has lowered the annual death rate to fewer than 500 in 2007. In an address to Mexico on August 10, 2009, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated that, "This framework represents a new approach to our government's fight against HIV/AIDS ... It emphasizes a bottoms-up approach tailored for and by the country we are assisting. It represents an expansion of local capacity and healthcare systems that can last over time". 15 million children alive today have lost at least one parent to HIV/AIDS and of the 2 million that died in 2007 with the disease, 270,000 were children. Canada calls upon the 2000 resolution A/RES/55/2 (The United Nations Millennium Declaration), the 2006 resolution A/RES/60/262 (Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS), and the 2001 Resolution A/RES/S-26/2 (Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS). The Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative (CHVI) is a collaborative undertaking between the Government of Canada and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The overall goal of the CHVI is to support a coordinated domestic and international contribution to global efforts to accelerate the development of an effective and globally accessible HIV vaccine. HealthBridge (formerly PATH Canada) has been working since 1982 in Asia, Africa and the Americas to conduct research and distribute contraception globally. HealthBridge has evolved into an agile and efficient organization that aims to improve the health of vulnerable populations, including those at risk of malnutrition and infectious diseases, particularly malaria and HIV/AIDS. The Canadian HIV/AIDS mentorship program (CHAMP) is a peer education project created by primary care physicians who provided HIV/AIDS care in Canada. Canada supports international campaigns such as Unite for Children and Unite Against AIDS, which aim to protect and support 80% of children affected by HIV/AIDS by 2010. The Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research is a national organization which funds research related to HIV/AIDS. Canada stresses the importance of a continued global effort to endorse a safe, effective, affordable and accessible HIV vaccine. In order to protect children from HIV/AIDS, Canada respectfully introduces a **three-point plan** entitled: **AID (Aware, Implement, Distribution)**. Children and adults alike must be **AWARE** and educated on the causes and effects of HIV/AIDS. The International Community must work together to **IMPLEMENT** a comprehensive, long-term approach to addressing HIV/AIDS both domestically and internationally in order to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. Areas affected by HIV/AIDS must be encouraged to welcome organizations and programs which help with **DISTRIBUTION** of contraceptives within their borders. This is vital to severely deplete the number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS and in order to meet the deadline of Millennium Developmental Goal 6 by 2015. In his remarks at the 2007 conference with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on the discussion of CHVI Initiative for HIV/AIDS, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated, "Through today's initiative, Canada, in partnership with the Gates Foundation, will provide the resources needed to help realize an HIV/AIDS vaccine, which could one day spare millions of people from this horrific disease."