

# Children's Rights and Good Urban Governance



**International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities**

***International Conference***

*Florence, Palazzo Vecchio*

*7 February 2003*

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## **Children's rights and good urban governance: from foundlings to human rights**

The Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) UNICEF, is hosted by the *Istituto degli Innocenti* which is, in turn, located in the *Spedale degli Innocenti*, the hospital built for Florence's *gettarelli*, or foundlings, by Brunelleschi in 1426. The *Spedale* was the first of its kind in the world and has since been admired and copied all over the world. Whilst mothers no longer leave their foundlings at its doors, the commitment to children still exists and has been renewed in the challenging context of today's world and this historical commitment is constantly renewed in the continuing work of IRC, set up in 1988 as UNICEF's main research arm. Florence's experience of working with the needs of urban children has a long and noble history. Indeed, throughout its history the city of Florence has always been associated with the rights of children and respect for human rights, not only through the *Innocenti*, but also with the abolition of the death penalty under the enlightened rule of the Lorena family in 1786.

### **A thematic synthesis**

In 1996, at the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), UNICEF and other partners formulated the Child Friendly Cities (CFC) concept as a new approach to sustainable urban living for children. In 2000 the International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities was established in Florence by UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, the Italian National Committee for UNICEF and the *Istituto degli Innocenti*. This was followed in May 2002 by the UN Special Session on Children with its *World Fit For Children* outcome document. In December 2002 the Amman conference on 'Children and the City' gathered to discuss the rights of children and formulated the Amman Declaration based on the slogan "to achieve a qualitative leap in our societies we should invest in our children".

The CFC movement acts not only through national governments, but also more directly at the sub-national level, that is, through communities, municipalities, provinces, and regions of nations. It focuses on how good urban governance, in the shape of deliberative participatory democracy, can function pro-actively in promoting the participation of children as citizens, rather than as dependants, as victims or as the passive recipients of collective goods and services.

The objective of the Florence International Conference, "Children's Rights and Good Urban Governance", with the launch of the Innocenti Digest, *Poverty and Exclusion Among Urban Children*, keynote presentations and Round Table, has been to examine the issue of Child Friendly Cities along the dimensions of governance *with* children, participation *with* children and sustainability *for* children at the local, national, European and global level, but with a particular focus on the first.

The morning's debate generated the following main themes and ended with a provocative call to action by the UNICEF representative to the European Union—to the mayors, councilors, local officials, school teachers, agencies, parents and children themselves—to be the instigators in providing the concrete and programmatic follow-up to the debate.

## **The challenged city**

Data indicate that by 2025 an estimated 60% of the world's children will live in urban areas in a marked demographic shift away from rural to urban settlements. It also means that those social assets for which the city is known—literacy, information, participation, health and education—can no longer be provided in the quantity and quality required for all those needing them. The city, as well being the “hub of wealth and privilege” also generates “poverty and social exclusion”, the very things that rural-to-urban migration seeks to escape.

The world's cities and mega-cities are also host to the problems of environmental crisis (pollution, access to clean water, sanitation, green space, safe space, etc), social and family breakdown, educational discrimination, child labour and sexual exploitation, and adolescent alienation and drug abuse.

From the world's wealthiest capitals to its poorest slums, poverty and exclusion contribute to the denial of childrens' basic rights and thus their human rights. Many children live in life-threatening environments, some survive on the streets, and others live in overcrowded and unhealthy surroundings without the basic amenities of safe drinking water or sanitation. These children rarely have access to safe areas for play and the imperatives of economic survival mean that parents are often unable to dedicate time to childcare and that children are forced to work in hazardous or oppressive situations.

UNICEF is present in many countries to combat these problems with an approach addressing not only the needs, but also the rights, of children. In particular, UNICEF Italy is proud of its role as a partner in setting up the Child Friendly Cities (CFC) Secretariat—a key instrument for the promotion of the rights of children throughout the world—with the support of the Italian Government.

In industrialized countries, UNICEF is finding innovative ways to improve the quality of life for urban children. In Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia, Italy and France, the National Committees are working in partnership with Mayors and local authorities to do this. In London, for example, a world city characterised by cultural richness and diversity, but also by high levels of abuse, trafficking, and poverty, the Office of the London Children's Rights Commissioner described the work of UNICEF and the CFC movement as ‘a gift’ when starting to develop its own plans together with children and young people.

The commitment to improve the quality of life for urban children was affirmed by heads of state and government and municipalities at the UN Special Session on Children in May 2002 where an ambitious agenda for children in the current decade was adopted, entitled *A World Fit For Children*. This acknowledges the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), its optional protocols and a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well-being of children. What we now need is a holistic approach to the urban environment so that the need for survival marches hand in hand with the demands of sustainability. The innovative approach of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) allows a new commitment to childhood in the both the developing and developed world, and will afford a better quality of life to children, adolescents and to society in general.

The Innocenti Digest, *Poverty and Exclusion Among Urban Children* highlights not only the problems, but also the potential for resolving them. Today's urban settlements are indeed chal-

lenged, but they also have the potential to become the foundation on which to build child-centred societies, where the dignity of every child is respected and their rights prioritised. With commitment and vision municipal systems of government can provide a safe and stimulating environment where children can grow and learn the skills of good citizenship, and in doing so cities can develop the skills of good governance and democracy.

## **Keeping the focus local**

A *World Fit For Children* emphasises the key role played by local authorities, and the importance of placing children at the centre of all city development planning agendas. The task of UNICEF is to find the instruments and interlocutors for action to guarantee the rights and aspirations of children throughout the world. The search for capable interlocutors of the Child Friendly Cities initiative has led UNICEF to single out city leaders, Mayors Defenders of Children, as the symbol of good local governance in the active application of children's rights. Thousands of mayors throughout the world have been nominated Mayors Defenders of Children, and expressed their commitment to respect children's rights and to promote a child-friendly municipal culture. Children need allies and amongst their most important allies are Mayors and local leaders who are in a privileged position to promote children's rights in all aspects of good urban governance.

It is important to avoid moving the level of action up too high. In Italy, for example, government interest in the CFCI has become weaker, but the instruments of subsidiarity, consultation and participatory democracy still exist and are used very effectively at the local level. Democracy may well be better 'learnt lower down'. In other words, we should initiate participatory urban planning in the schools and municipalities and keep it local.

Local authorities are closer to where the children live and grow up and can develop tailor-made local solutions to resolve problems. When issues are taken to a local level and children are recognised as citizens, we are likely to move together more rapidly towards Child Friendly Cities and good governance. Moreover, at the local level, the key element to develop is dialogue between children and the political authorities. This sort of dialogue is very difficult to generate at the national or European level, but it is still possible at the local level. Thus, it is vital to keep action bottom-up and to build bridges lower down. This means involving families, schools, children's organizations, etc. rather than imposing rigid administrative policies in the traditional top-down manner.

We must, however, bear in mind that bureaucracy may undermine even the best planned initiative irrespective of the level at which it is developed, so that the child of immigrant parents may well be entitled to attend school, but is debarred from eating in the school canteen because the father does not have a legal work permit. One needs to find a way around this sort of bureaucratic obstructionism, and this may be best done at the local level.

The CFC movement is a tool for those wanting to adopt the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention per se is often considered too generic to apply in specific contexts, but the CFCI applied at the local level is an effective and concrete political tool for both planners and politicians.

There are several key preconditions for any municipality considering becoming a Child Friendly City. First, commitment by Mayors, municipal administrations, and children's orga-

nizations. Secondly, the integration of children's priorities into local planning. Thirdly, the setting up of networks with neighbouring cities in order to pool resources and support, similar to the network set up in Emilia Romagna with the cities of Ferrara, Modena, Ravenna and Castel San Pietro. One cannot experiment with children in isolation, but must share experiences and learn from one another as children do themselves.

International support lends credibility to national level action, and national action is essential in generating child-friendly laws, but the real difference is often made at the local level. Here we need to formalise children's participation by electing Children's City Councils to ensure a sustained dialogue between children and their city leaders, developing these specific tools:

- efficient networks
- strong commitment and engagement by families, teachers, civil society, and children
- clear Plans of Action and their regular and critical assessment
- the dissemination of results to sustain outcomes
- urban decision-making freed from excessive bureaucracy.

Modern world cities are increasingly the focus of conflict and need strong mediation to resolve this. Using childhood as a unit of measurement places us with those who have most difficulty in expressing themselves, who are least likely to be heard, and who are the least empowered, but who have well developed participatory skills and an ability to plan together.

Three concrete, yet differing examples of "keeping action local" are the *città bambina* project in Ferrara, the CFCI in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and the CFC-related work currently being carried out in Florence.

In Ferrara, the CFCI *città bambina* project started in 1993. It was organised by a working group in the local administration located, sectorally speaking, somewhere between urban planning and environment. The support instruments used were national laws and public financing, local authority support, and the role of the Italian Parliamentary Commission for Childhood which had set the ball rolling in 1994 with a parliamentary motion calling for Sustainable Cities for Girls and Boys, after contesting the lack of political representation for children in Italy.

The initiative has dealt with the right to space, the right to time, and the right to non-violence. The experience has revealed that children are able to work together with each other and with adult experts and planners in the local administration. This has meant translating the capacity of children to design their own city with concrete action. Cities have standards for urban planning, standards for parking lots, roads, railways and shops, but not for children. We need to work not only with local authorities but also with the administrators of urban housing in order to reclaim courtyards, abandoned gardens in the city outskirts and to re-convert them into spaces where children can meet and play.

Today *città bambina* is involved in all projects undertaken by the municipality, including the urban planning programme and public works. This gives the children and adolescents working with it a strong power of penetration between the working group on the one hand and the technical experts on the other.

The second example of keeping action local is the city of Florence. Here the promotion of childhood and adolescence is inspired by the principle of treating Florence's younger citizens as active participants and listening to them in order to make that participation concrete, rather than of isolating their needs in the domains of victims or minors. The local administration has

promoted a series of initiatives in a range of projects outlined in the publication, 'Le chiavi della città' (The Keys of the City), focussing on three specific themes. The first deals with planned participation and participatory planning with local institutions where the University of Florence works with children, teachers and the municipality on issues of constructive democracy, the need for children to participate constructively, and a range of forms of democratic participation. The second theme is civil and uncivil behaviour, civil cohabitation, solidarity and democracy where local children examine the civility/incivility of adults and their own sense of citizenship and generate the definitions of civil and uncivil behaviour. The third theme is child labour and exploitation where children stimulate their own consciences about the work of their counterparts not only in other countries but also in their home town of Florence.

The third example of CFCI is the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Here, all pro-child action has, of necessity, to be kept local given restrictions on mobility in the form of curfews and city closures. With over 50% of the population under the age of 18, children killed and injured weekly, many households below the poverty line, high unemployment, damaged or destroyed homes, schools and public infrastructure and very limited access to health services, the Mayors of the OPT are indeed challenged.

With a Framework of Action, four cities are working on City Plans of Action, Safe Play and Recreation and Children's Municipality Councils. In the West Bank city of Jenin over 30 local institutions took part in the City Plan of Action in response to Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002. It means that in Jericho the Kid's Club, partnerships, and building on the experience of child-based NGOs for activities, and training municipal staff have all been identified by Mayors as best practices. It also means campaigns for 'safe streets', 'cleaning up the city' and a focus on local environmental health.

## **Good governance with children**

The UNICEF representative to the EU, Peter Delahaye, described his dream of every city hall in the world having a visualisation of what good governance means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, painted by children, to match Lorenzetti's allegory of good and bad governance in Siena's *Palazzo Pubblico*.

Children and adolescents have the capacity to understand how to create a better city at the level of their dreams using simple and low-cost or even cost-free solutions. In the Moroccan city of Fez, for example, groups of young people help socially excluded children using theatre as a tool to help reintroduce them to schooling. In the Philippines, a CFC Movement works along much the same lines to promote Mayors Defenders of Children, to define Plans of Action, to carry out continual analysis of the indicators of the well-being of children and to reinforce child-friendly legislation. It does so through a network of schools, healthcare clinics, religious communities, and families.

Policy-makers and planners need to work with children and adolescents to harness their enthusiasm, their strong sense of citizenship and their understanding of precisely what is wrong with their—and consequently our—cities. Children have very high expectations of adults—their teachers, mayors and local councillors, and parents—and we must be accountable to those expectations and work towards transforming hostile urban environments into Child Friendly Cities. In doing so, we will ourselves be working towards and engaging in good governance.

Urban institutions are responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of children. It is imperative that these rights are not mere rhetoric and that good governance makes cities child-friendly through budgeting, planning and resource allocation targeted at children. Furthermore, children's voices can inform the democratic process and indeed, participatory democracy is often promoted precisely by those organisations that have experience working with children.

Children have a meaningful role to play in good governance not only in the wealthy and peaceful cities of Europe, such as Ferrara with its history of planning with children, or Florence where children develop their global conscience through participatory study, but also in poor cities in conflict zones such as Rafah in the Gaza Strip. In Ferrara a CFC project in the schools helped staff to teach active citizenship values, and in Rafah children learnt democracy values by taking part in Children's Municipality Councils. In both cases the role of children was pivotal in generating good governance.

One thus needs to develop and support children's perspectives in municipal governance and structures using the tools of city planning with children's priorities, child participation assessment, and the dissemination of information about such initiatives to inform society that the city cares for, invests in, and is working with its children.

In Italy, for example, the Parliamentary Commission for Childhood has instituted a "A Boys' and Girls' Day in Parliament" where school children promote good governance by drawing up their own plans for proposed legislation which are then presented and discussed. Recently the Italian Parliament approved one of these proposals of law on the maltreatment of animals. However, in Italy as elsewhere, the theme of childhood has not always been a key political theme but has evolved historically, starting from negation where children are not considered to have rights or to be citizens. Even today there is still a lack of credibility in the citizenship of children, and it is implicitly questioned when one speaks of them as "citizens of the future". It is imperative to understand that they are citizens *now* and in *all* senses, and not simply in the future, as taxpayers, voters or legalised immigrant labour.

## **Participation with children**

Building on the notion of good governance, we need to formalise children's participation in city life, through democratically elected child members of City Councils in order to give them direct experience of deliberative and participatory democracy. National legislation is not always child-friendly and parliamentary commissions or state agencies often treat the child as a subject—a schoolchild, a sick child, a poor child or a child in need of protection—but rarely as an actor *in* his or her own right and *with* his or her own rights. This implies a shift in the process of urban decision-making away from one based on an exclusively adult vision of citizenship towards one which takes children and young people into account.

In Ferrara, for example, the project *città bambina* works not only with issues of urban space but also with rights. Alongside the City Council and the children's workshops on civil education—its "school of participation"—*città bambina* brings the technical experts of the local administration into contact with children to promote participatory urban planning.

The first concrete example of participatory urban planning in Ferrara was the *Parco del Montagnone*. This park was near a primary school but it was not used by the children because

it was dirty and unsafe like many abandoned public areas. Instead of commissioning the job to outside experts the local authority asked the children at the primary school what they would do with the park. The children were given the task of planning, budgeting, and studying the park and teachers used it as an argument of analysis. The children started to take measurements, to calculate areas and to link up their knowledge of history, geography, and geometry. Working within the confines of a budget they went on to make economic and financial choices and to decide what could be included in the park and what left out. The “school of participation” thus became a “school of local administration”! The children demonstrated a great capacity for mediation between different sets of needs, from small children, to dating couples. Subsequently, the local authority’s technical experts met the children and transferred the plan to paper. When the park finally came to life it was a huge success all round.

The second example of participatory urban planning in Ferrara is that of the Piazza Ariostea, a well-known Renaissance piazza protected by law. The children wanted to have a fountain. It was difficult to obtain all the necessary planning permission, but finally the plan was drawn up and local artisans worked free of charge to create the fountain chosen and planned by the children which is a cross between a tree, a hut and a pure fantasy construction.

In a starkly different urban reality, Rafah is a city in the Gaza Strip which was selected to become a Child Friendly City in Palestine along with Gaza City, Jericho and Jenin. Since 2002 a pilot programme has been in place in Jenin and Jericho on the West Bank, and in Gaza City and Rafah in the Gaza Strip. The goals of CFC are to mobilise city-wide action in response to escalating levels of violence and to work locally in response to restrictions on mobility in the form of curfews and closures. The CFC Framework helps local administrators identify and respond to current emergency needs and develop comprehensive planning and protection strategies for children. Needs differ from those of children in Florence or Ferrara given the levels of conflict, danger, and violence to which children and young people are exposed.

The key objectives are to identify and respond to immediate circumstances to improve the safety and well-being of children in cities of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to increase their opportunities for safe play and recreation, to optimise their participation in identifying their own needs and influencing change in their communities, to increase co-ordination among those working towards a better future for children, and to mobilise city-wide action and ensure that local decision-makers and the community prioritise children’s rights and needs in planning.

The Framework for Action is broken down into three main themes: City Plan of Action for Children; Safe Play and Recreation; and Children’s Municipality Councils.

Starting with the City Plan of Action for Children, the goal has been to identify immediate and long-term priorities for children and to mobilise city-wide action. This means participatory needs assessment, better targeting of municipal resources, city-wide action and increased co-ordination with progress being monitored by a Steering Committee.

The goal of Safe Play and Recreation is to provide spaces and opportunities for children to play and take part in activities. This is done by converting unused and waste land, away from areas of conflict, into neighbourhood play areas for children, by training facilitators to run recreational activities, and by organising Municipality Fun Days and Open Days.

Finally, the goal of the Children’s Municipality Councils (CMCs) is to optimise children’s participation in identifying their needs and influencing change in their communities. The four

CMCs, with 200 members aged 12–16, meet regularly with the municipality and local leaders, run small-scale community projects, organise awareness campaigns on children's rights and issues, arrange local elections for schoolchildren, and cooperate with the Ministries of Education and Local Government, teachers and the UNRWA.

The key outcomes have been increased levels of local investment and local level actions designed to promote and protect children's rights, a common vision of a CFC developed and operationalised using the City Plan of Action, expanded and improved quality of services, increased opportunities for safe play and recreation, and the promotion of children as "active citizens" through activity in their communities and influencing change in their cities.

Turning to the municipalities, the benefits have been the integration of child-focused priorities into municipal planning, encouraging municipalities to improve services for children, better targeting of scarce local resources, and attracting donors and encouraging the wider community to invest in children.

The key recommendations are to strengthen the ability of cities to apply child friendly principles and techniques to the provision of services, to establish a Regional Network of CFC Mayors to promote and expand the initiative, and to develop regional CFC indicators and set milestones for cities working towards CFC recognition. Finally, it is necessary to build on key achievements and best practices in order to develop a framework for the expansion of child friendly initiatives in the Occupied Palestinian Territories into a National Movement for the Recognition and Achievement of Child Friendly Cities.

Returning to Europe, children from Florentine primary schools had taken part in the project "*i bambini e i giovani cambiano la città*" and described how an architect visited their school and talked about participatory planning. The children had made lists of things that they liked and disliked about their city, including places where they liked to play and the number of cars in their neighbourhoods. Teachers cited the problems affecting primary school children in Florence, in particular the problems associated with independent personal mobility.

A student from a Florentine middle school working on a project of child labour noted the stark difference between urban realities. She noted how she and her friends lived in a rich world and play with or wear things made by children elsewhere who cannot play and have to work. In their work of research, documentation and reflection they found that even in Europe there are many children who work. Her companions at school were struck by this fact and wanted to be able to make better choices for future generations.

Primary school children working on the project "*poche ma regole*", a play on words meaning "few rules, but clear ones", had examined notions of civil behaviour and rules for good urban living. They had drawn up lists of civil and uncivil behaviour and visited their neighbourhood accompanied by the Mayor and noted a whole range of uncivil behaviour which caused problems for other members of the community. They discussed with adults the problems that they could not resolve, ranging from mobility for pedestrians, to bad parking, dog excrement, and litter. Their first experience with a social contract model of society was to carry out a questionnaire in their neighbourhood. In doing so they were able to identify problems, understand the link with the environment, the connection between problems and solutions, the importance of consensus and collective action, and a sense of personal responsibility. Suggestions made for improving the quality of urban life ranged from introducing public toilets for dogs,

to using public buses and bikes for transport, to intervening when they saw something wrong happening in public.

A middle school pupil described the violence and exploitation project at her school where she discovered that child labour existed not only in the developing world, but also in her home town with children cleaning car windows and selling flowers in restaurants. This had provoked a deep sense of shame and forced her to make the move from indifference to involvement.

Children's participation, it was noted, is a primary concern in a range of projects of imagining, using the process of dreaming and appreciative inquiry. The groundbreaking example of 'Imagine Chicago' was cited with its discovery that young people made the best interviewers in capturing the intergenerational dialogue.

## **Training adults to listen**

One of the imperatives in moving the CFC movement forward is to train adults to listen actively to children as citizens rather than as subjects, and to take account of their views in an intergenerational dialogue, taking care to avoid all forms of tokenism. This does not imply an uncritical or artificial analysis of their condition, but a genuine recognition of their specific needs. Moreover, it helps us move beyond focussing exclusively on the elements of fragility inherent in childhood and towards the positive elements of their participation, and their extraordinary potential.

The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF described how at a meeting organised at the United Nations between leaders and children, the leaders were instructed to leave the children to orchestrate the debate. The leaders were initially unwilling for children to be involved in anything other than a ceremonial sense. After the children's involvement was insisted on, what leaders remembered as the most creative and powerful part of the meeting was the participation of and dialogue with the children.

Despite this, we need to bear in mind that large parts of the adult world remain hostile or indifferent to children and adolescents. We need to learn not to be afraid of children or to treat them merely as a ceremonial presence. Our permanent objective must be to encourage adults to examine and reflect on their attitudes to children, and to stimulate them to change their behaviour where this is child-hostile.

Adults need to develop capacity building and to give children 'a place at the table' and to include them in decision-making processes. Through listening we help prioritise children on cities' agendas and evolve from societies which are indifferent or hostile to their child-friendly equivalents. The key step is to listen to the voices of children and to assess reality from their perspective, and to transform their ideas into action.

The need for adults to 'listen and learn' was echoed across the board from the Munich organiser of a CFC initiative, to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to the Italian regions of Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, to the Office of the Child Commissioner in London, to Florentine primary and lower secondary school teachers and their pupils.

We need more vision and more receptive listening, backed by the will to move children's agendas beyond the logic of the mere provision of services to the active involvement of children and adolescents in the pursuit of their rights.

## **Sustainability for children: from child hostile to child friendly**

The human rights challenge facing us today is to convert cities from child-hostile to child-friendly. Child Friendly Cities, it was argued, would not be necessary were cities not so child hostile, with policies which lead to the denial of children's rights and hence of human rights.

A human rights approach allows us to address issues differently starting with the word 'poverty'. Many international organisations tend to treat poverty as an issue of funding, so that to eliminate poverty one simply has to provide additional resources. However, from a human rights perspective, what should be done when poverty is the result of a denial of human rights? This sort of poverty will not be eliminated by throwing money at it because the children involved are not national citizens, belong to the wrong minority, or whose parents are illegal, absent or 'invisible'.

From a human rights perspective EU law was criticised for being discriminatory. EU law does not promote a human rights approach but a EU-citizenship approach, dividing people into EU citizens and non-EU citizens. This affects the rights of non-citizens, and in particular the children of non-citizens, who cannot enjoy many services in practice. Preaching human rights but not being able to apply them within the EU is a glaring human rights hypocrisy.

Belfast, Northern Ireland and Ankara, Turkey were cited as examples of child-hostile cities.

At the Holy Cross Roman Catholic School for Girls on the border between Catholic and Protestant areas in Belfast, girls aged 4-11 run the gauntlet of adult and adult-like verbal abuse and the threat of physical violence from hostile loyalist pickets on their way to school. This is apparently due to the religious allegiance of their parents but the real reasons may run deeper. The relative deprivation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities has changed and victimization and deprivation, combined with political violence generates hostility. Research indicates a correlation between poverty and political violence throughout Ireland. Moreover, political violence has a gender profile insofar as the perpetrators are young and male, and some are children. Recent Eurobarometer surveys report that in the EU children tend to be more racist, and more socialised into discriminatory practices, than older cohorts, and that children as young as 6 have already internalised the distinction between "them" and "us". Thus, when facing such issues we need to dig deeply enough to discover the real causes in order to be able to deal with them effectively.

Turning to Ankara, the Turkish capital hosts the strange phenomenon of a disproportionately large number of girls (not female prostitutes) among its street children in a world where street children are generally boys. There is no apparent reason for this and the gender dimension and gender discrimination do not appear to have been studied. Moreover, the organisations dealing with street children only appear to work with boys. Evidently no local policies have been developed to deal with the issue. The imperative here, as in Belfast, is to move beyond treating children as numbers to a human rights approach in order to uncover the real reasons for children being poor or excluded.

A human rights approach requires local authorities to act *in loco parentis*. This brings us to the argument that we have policies to protect our own children, but not other people's children and how this constitutes a subtle form of child discrimination. Children must have rights *qua* children, rather than on the basis of their parentage.

Then there is the question of language discrimination. In Ankara, for example, educational programmes dealing with child delinquency and street children have had limited success because everything was done in Turkish, whereas a significant minority part of the population is Kurdish. On the other side of Europe, in London, official estimates report that approximately 870 languages are spoken, whereas all public programmes and services are provided in English. Thus, linguistic outreach is necessary when dealing with the increasing numbers of children and adolescents who were not born, or whose parents were not born, into the city, culture or nation where they grow up.

In addition to discrimination on the grounds of religious origin, gender or language there is the additional phenomenon of discrimination on the grounds of age where media and political compassion for children appear to stop short in early childhood. In the past minors were considered as children from the ages of 0 to 18. By contrast, today the EU defines children as those aged 0–10, and those aged 10–18 as young people; this means that 12-year-olds can be legally defined as too old to have a right to education yet young enough to work.

## **A summary: moving the CFC process forward**

UNICEF is deeply committed to promoting the rights of children living in remote rural areas and to those crowded into the world's expanding mega-cities. Future generations are entitled to a city which institutionally, culturally, and environmentally combines the interests of the adult world with their own needs and legitimate hopes. Even in a context of military occupation, deprivation and conflict, a Mayor in the OPT has testified how one can commit to the rights of childhood and make them a priority—so must we! This meeting could not have been a better way of launching our new publication on Child Friendly Cities, the Innocenti Digest, *Poverty and Exclusion Among Urban Children*.

Children and adolescents have the right to live in an environment that safeguards them from abuse and exploitation and allows them to develop their potential, but in reality many of the world's young urban citizens are denied these basic rights and are the living proof that far too often the world systematically fails to protect and promote its children.

One must never underestimate children and young people and their capacity for participating in good governance. Not only are children a unique resource, and an excellent indicator of a healthy society and well functioning civil society, but they are also active catalysts of good governance itself. They understand ways of creating a better city at the level of their dreams and are able to look ahead and propose change with solutions which are simple, feasible, and often cost-free. There is a unique enthusiasm in the way children envisage and observe their cities and their voices express an undeniable sense of citizenship.

A criticism often levelled at adults is that they make the interests of childhood conditional on their own adult interests. Adults should remember that they were once children, and to recall the words of Kofi Annan when he declared that, “children are not just the future, they are also the present”, and it is the present with which we need to work.

Children have high expectations of adults and we must be accountable to those expectations and work towards transforming hostile urban environments into Child Friendly Cities. In doing so, we will ourselves be working towards and engaging in good governance. In this

process, a key step is to listen to children's voices, to assess reality from their perspective and also act accordingly, ensuring a concrete follow-up to their suggestions. This will mean:

- creating formalised spaces for children's participation, and institutionalising participation, for example through democratically elected child or youth members of City Councils.
- mainstreaming children's perspectives and needs in municipal governance and structures, and sustaining this effort.
- preparing adults, teachers, national and local officials, childcare and administration professionals, to 'listen and learn' when taking children's views and unspoken needs on board.

In doing so, it is vital to ensure national action and support from Parliament through to Municipalities, and to anchor and widen this process through:

- an enhanced network of Mayors, to share experiences, support and learn from each other.
- the active commitment and engagement of society.
- the development of clear city plans, with children's priorities, and the promotion of children's budgets and child impact assessment for all key municipal decisions.
- the dissemination of information on these efforts to inform society that cities care for, invest in, and are working with children.

The meeting has shown that child-friendly cities are not simply a dream, but that the foundations have already been laid with concrete facts, best practices and functioning partnerships. What we are proposing is a realistic project of change in urban decision-making and planning and in the way we have long envisaged citizenship. From now on children must always have a place at the table.

Today, we are all inspired by the enthusiasm of children imagining their dream cities and by the work done by adults in governments, regions, cities, villages and schools to help them make this a reality. The process cannot be left there. It is our duty to make things change! We must modify institutional structures, budgeting and service provision to avoid discrimination. We must give children a voice by involving them in the assessment of reality and the design of solutions on the way to building the child-friendly cities from which all citizens stand to gain.

The world is once again feeling the winds of war, and it is the keen hope of UNICEF that conflict will be avoided as the first victims will, as ever, be children. This forum has a responsibility to redouble its efforts in building a tomorrow of hope. In this task it will be the cities that will be called upon to be the prime protagonists and partners of a New Social Pact where child-friendly principles will prevail over narrow economic or political interests. Let us now bring our message forward and move to action!

## Appendix 1: Children's Rights and Good Urban Governance

### The Conference Roundtable

Moderator: Peter Delahaye, UNICEF Representative to the European Union

Peter Delahaye introduced himself, commended the extremely rich discussion of the opening statements and explained how the morning's panel would function.

We learnt that Florence lies at the heart of children's rights and many of its institutions confirm that. In the spirit of European unity the Moderator hoped that the Florentines would not take it amiss if he referred to the City of Siena where, in the Sala del Nove of the *Palazzo Pubblico* Ambrogio Lorenzetti in 1339 painted the allegory of good and bad governance, placing the virtues of good governance in the middle. Peter Delahaye described how it was his dream, as he sat here in Florence between two Deputy Mayors, that every city hall in the world would have such a image of what good governance means in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and that the walls of the city halls would be painted by children.

He outlined the three goals of the Roundtable:

- to share innovation among CF cities in Italy and abroad to examine the global coverage of CFC.
- to stress how implementation at the level of local governance is a new indicator of good urban governance and a tool to help adopt the CRC.
- to highlight the role of mayors, local authorities, civil society and children in making society child friendly and moving towards a CRC local strategy for children.

Delahaye predicted that the following three themes would emerge from the discussion:

- Good governance *with* children
- Participation *with* children
- Sustainability *for* children.

### Tiziano Tagliani, Deputy Mayor of Ferrara

#### "The Italian Experience"

The Deputy Mayor greeted the participants and thanked UNICEF and the City of Florence for this opportunity.

The Child Friendly City Initiative began in Ferrara in 1993, helped by financial backing from public and private sources. It was organized by a working group with good pedagogic experience in local administration in Ferrara located, sectorally speaking, between urbanistics and environment.

Today the experience of the *città bambina* is present in all the projects undertaken by the municipality, in the new general plan for the city and issues of public works, and not only education and related issues. This enables it to operate and influence both the working group and the group of technical experts.

The experience was based on taking the child as a unit of measurement for the city. In today's world cities are increasingly the focus of conflict and of conflicting interests and there is a need for strong mediation to resolve such conflicts. Using childhood as a unit of measurement puts us on the side of those who have greatest difficulty in moving around on their own and of expressing themselves and who are the least empowered within the city, but who have well developed skills when it comes to the ability to communicate and to plan together.

Since 1995 the Ferrara initiative has dealt with the themes of the right to space, the right to time, and the right to non-violence. In this context, the city has found that children have the ability to work together, with each other and with adults in general and the local administration in particular.

The support instruments used in Ferrara have been national laws, the backing of local administration and financing, and the role of the Parliamentary Commission for Childhood.

*Città bambina* works not only with urban spaces but also with rights. The project works within local schools and helps staff teach active citizenship values. Alongside the City Council and the children's workshops on civil education – a true “school of participation” – *città bambina* brings technical experts, from the local administration into contact with children to promote participatory urban planning. In this context technical experts, politicians and children work together to promote participatory urban planning in Ferrara.

The Deputy Mayor went on to cite two specific examples.

The *Parco del Montagnone* was an abandoned public park located near a primary school. It was not used by children because it was dirty and unsafe and resembled many other public spaces located between the centre and the outskirts of the city. Instead of commissioning the job to outside experts, the local authority asked the children at the primary school what they would like to do with the park.

The children were given the task of planning, budgeting, and studying the park and the teachers used the park as an argument of analysis. The children started to take measurements, to calculate areas and to link together their knowledge of history, geography, and geometry. Working within the confines of a budget, they went on to make economic and financial choices and to decide what could be included in the park and what left out. The “school of participation” had become a “school of local administration”!

Perhaps contrary to expectations, the children thought about the needs of everyone, and not just themselves. They demonstrated a great capacity for mediation between different sets of needs and even took into account the needs of young dating couples in the park, reserving a protected area for them.

Next the technical experts met the children and transferred the plan to paper. The park finally came to life and has been a huge success all round.

The second example of participatory urban planning is that of the Piazza Ariostea, a Renaissance park protected by law. The children in Ferrara wanted to have a fountain there. It was difficult to obtain all the necessary planning permission, but finally plans were drawn up and local artisans worked free of charge to create the fountain chosen by the children which is a cross between a tree, a hut and a fantasy construction.

*Città bambina* means translating the capacity of children to design their own city into concrete action. In a city there are standards for urbanistics, standards for parking lots, standards for roads, railways and shops, but not for children. The Deputy Mayor pointed out that we need to work with the administrators of residential buildings, etc. in order to rescue courtyards and gardens in the city outskirts and to turn them into spaces where children can meet and play.

The Deputy Mayor spoke warmly about his meeting with his counterpart, the Deputy Mayor of Rafah, who comes from a city with enormous problems. He noted how Italy does not have the same sort of problems as Palestine, but that it often seems enormously difficult to accept children and invest in them for the future. European cities often have few children and we need to be critical of certain models of development proposed by the adult world.

## Emad S. Sha'at, Deputy Mayor of Rafah, Occupied Palestinian Territories “Four Child Friendly City Initiatives in the Occupied Palestinian Territories”

Dr Sha'at expressed how honoured he was to be in Florence and how grateful he was for the warm welcome received. He had been greatly impressed by Ferrara, and the participatory approach that the city is taking when planning projects for children and with children. He expressed a desire to develop future cooperation with the city of Ferrara.

He went on to speak briefly about the Amman Conference, 'Children and the City' in December 2002, organized by the World Bank with UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFP, where mayors, researchers and governors from the Arab world met and produced the Amman Declaration based on the slogan, "to achieve a qualitative leap in our societies we should invest in our children".

Dr Sha'at described how he came from a city on the border with Egypt which had been selected to become a CFC in Palestine along with the cities of Gaza, Jericho and Jenin. Of these, Rafah and Jenin are the poorest and most deprived.

Speaking about the impact of the occupation that has taken place since 2000 and the start of the Intifada against Israeli occupation, he described how the Occupied Palestinian Territories have a population of just over 3 million with almost 7 children per family and 53 per cent of the population under 18. Since September 2000 the impact of the occupation has left 350 children dead and 7,000 injured (Defence for Children International). Approximately 20-25 per cent of those killed altogether have been children; over 60 per cent of households are now below the poverty line (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics); by December 2002 50 per cent were unemployed and this rises to 70 per cent in Rafah (UNESCO); almost 200 schools are damaged (Ministry of Education); damage to the public infrastructure is estimated at US\$370 million (UN and donors); over 655 Palestinian homes are damaged or destroyed, though this is from an Israeli source and figures given for Rafah are much higher (Btselem); over 36 per cent of households are unable to access health services (PCBS).

Turning to the CFC presence in the OPT since 2002 a pilot programme has been in place in Jenin and Jericho, on the West Bank, and in Gaza City and Rafah in the Gaza Strip. The goals of the initiative are to mobilise city-wide action in response to escalating levels of violence and to work locally in response to restrictions on mobility in the form of curfews and closures. The CFC framework seeks to identify and respond to current emergency needs and to develop comprehensive planning and protection strategies for children.

The key objectives are to identify and respond to immediate interventions that will improve the safety and well-being of children in OPT cities, to increase their opportunities for safe play and recreation, to optimise their participation in identifying their own needs and influencing change in their communities, to increase coordination among those working towards a better future for children, and to mobilise city-wide action and ensure that local decision makers and the community in general prioritise children's rights and needs in planning.

The Framework for Action can be broken down into three main themes:

- City Plan of Action for Children
- Safe Play and Recreation
- Children's Municipality Councils.

Starting with the *City Plan of Action for Children*, the goal is to identify immediate and long-term priorities for children and to mobilise city-wide action. This means participatory needs assessment, better targeting of municipal resources, city-wide action and increased coordination. Progress is monitored by a Steering Committee. Best practice is found in Jenin where over 30 local institutions took part in the City Plan of Action in response to Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in April 2002.

Turning to *Safe Play and Recreation*, the goal is to provide spaces and opportunities for children to play and participate in non-violent activities. This is achieved by converting unused and waste land, away from areas of conflict, into neighbourhood play areas for children in Rafah and Jenin, by training facilitators to lead safe play and run recreational activities in Rafah, and by organizing Municipality Fun Days and Open Days in all

four cities. The best practices identified were the Jericho Kid's Club, and partnerships that built on the experience of child-based NGOs for activities, and training municipal staff. Clearly it is impossible to implement the whole programme due to a lack of resources, and there is heavy reliance on donor support.

Finally, the goal of the *Children's Municipality Councils* (CMCs) is to optimise children's participation in identifying their needs and influencing change in their communities. There are 4 CMCs with 200 members aged 12-16. They meet regularly with the municipality and local leaders, run small-scale community projects, organize awareness campaigns on children's rights and issues, arrange local elections for schoolchildren (recently they have gone one step further and set up youth parliaments in Palestine), and cooperate with the Ministries of Education and Local Government, teachers and the UNRWA. Best practices identified were the campaigns for safe streets, environmental health and "clean up the city" in Jericho.

The key outcomes to all this have been increased levels of local investment and local level actions designed to promote and protect children's rights, a common vision for a CFC developed and operationalized using the City Plan of Action and guaranteeing expanded and improved quality of services, increased opportunities for children to participate in non-violent safe play and recreation, and the promotion of children as "active citizens" through activity in their communities and the chance to influence change in their cities.

Turning to the municipalities, the benefits have been the integration of child-focused priorities into municipal planning, encouraging municipalities to improve services for children, the stimulation of better targeting of scarce local resources, attracting donors and encouraging the wider community to invest in children.

The key recommendations are to strengthen the ability of the cities to apply CF principles and techniques to the regular provision of services, to establish a Regional Network of CFC Mayors, to promote and expand the CFC initiative and to develop regional indicators for CFCs and set milestones for cities working towards CFC recognition. Finally, it is necessary to build on key achievements and best practices in order to develop a framework for the expansion of the initiative in the Occupied Palestinian Territories into a National Movement for the Recognition and Achievement of Child Friendly Cities.

Dr Sha'at concluded with the moving picture of two children in Rafah raising the victory sign while sitting on the rubble of what was once their home.

## Children and Teachers from Local Florentine Schools

Moving to the representatives from local Florentine schools, a primary school pupil who had participated in the project "*I bambini e i giovani cambiano la città*" described how an architect visited their school and talked about participatory urban planning. The children had made lists of things that they liked and disliked about their city, including places where they liked to play and the number of cars in their neighbourhoods.

Their teacher cited the problems affecting urban primary school children, particularly the difficulty of getting out and about on their own. She stressed the need for local authorities to listen to children *as people* not just as subjects, and described how children gave good advice and how adults would benefit by 'entering into their reality'.

A student from a Florentine middle school working on a project concerning child labour noted the stark difference between theory and reality. She observed how she and her friends live in a rich world and play with or wear things made by children elsewhere who cannot play and have to work. In their research, documentation and reflection they found that even in Europe there are many children who work. Her companions at school were

struck by this fact and wanted to be able to make better choices for future generations.

Primary school children working on the project "*poche ma regole*" which is a play on words meaning "few rules but clear ones", had examined notions of civil behaviour and rules for good urban living. They had drawn up lists of civil and uncivil behaviour and had visited their neighbourhood accompanied by the Mayor and noted a wide range of uncivil behaviour which caused problems for other members of the community. They discussed the problems that they could not resolve with adults. The issues mentioned were mobility for pedestrians, bad parking, dog excrement, litter etc. Their first experience with a social contract model of society was to carry out a questionnaire in their local neighbourhood. In doing so they were able to identify problems, make the link with the environment, the connection between problems and solutions, the importance of consensus and collective action, and all expressed a sense of personal responsibility. Suggestions made for improving the quality of urban life ranged from public toilets for dogs, greater use of public transport and bikes, to intervening when they saw something wrong happening in public.

A high school pupil spoke about the violence and exploitation project that she had previously participated in at her middle school. They had found that child labour existed not only in the developing world, but that it was also present on their own doorstep in their home town of Florence with children cleaning car windows at traffic lights and selling flowers in restaurants. This provoked a deep sense of shame. The study had helped them move from indifference to involvement. The symbol of the project had been a flower, but the children had decided to replace with a wasp which would buzz and bother people and not go away. It was suggested that the same studies should be continued in Florentine high schools.

## Interventions and Comments

Sandra Milena Segà, Youth Delegate to the UN Special Session on Children

As the Italian Youth Delegate to the UN Special Session on Children in New York, Milena has had the opportunity to see the workings behind *A World Fit For Children*, to meet 400 young people from all over the world, and to exercise her right of participation.

During the Special Session there had been a major focus on the right to education, which helps generate the right to speak and to personal dignity. She went on to emphasise the trust and belief of the delegates in the work carried out by organizations such as UNICEF.

Milena drew attention to two of the seven basic points contained in the document formulated by the Italian youth delegates for the UN Special Session:

- the right of children to immigrate *as* children, and not *as* immigrants from any particular country with the risk of being denied access to healthcare and education.
- the right of children to debate without discrimination, with intercultural exchange which removes fear, and the role of schools in teaching the importance of difference.

She congratulated the Deputy Mayor of Ferrara, and in particular the work taken on by Deputy Mayor of Rafah.

She levelled the criticism at adults that they make the interests of childhood conditional on the realisation of their *own* adult interests. It is critical, she argued, that adults do not forget that they were also children once, and ended with the words of Kofi Annan at the UN Special Session that, "children are not just the future, they are also the present".

Peter Delahaye

Urged that when Italy takes up the Presidency of the European Union after Greece (July 2003) the Italian Government should not be modest in citing Italy's success in Child

Friendly Cities, and should present Italy as a showcase of CFC initiatives and good urban governance.

### Alessandra Maggi, President of the Istituto degli Innocenti (IDI)

In answer to the question of how the movement would accelerate in Italy, the President of the Istituto degli Innocenti explained how the work done by UNICEF and the IDI has involved both large and small cities which have carried out a range of different events and initiatives. This included awarding prizes, participating with young people, and a travelling and a permanent CFC exhibition.

Dottoressa Maggi stressed the need for incisive actions, courage and continuity and the key role to be played by local authorities. She also emphasised how the CFCI was one area where Italy could compare itself with other countries.

The Secretariat has enabled the IDI to evaluate other CFC realities and to build in the values of comparison with other experiences or counterparts.

### Hon. Tiziana Valpiana, The Italian Parliamentary Commission for Childhood

The Child Friendly Cities project is particularly dear to the Italian parliamentary Commission for Childhood. In Italy it started from a motion in 1994 calling for a *città sostenibile* or “sustainable city” after protests that there was no representation for children in Italy (entry to the Italian Parliament is barred to those under the age of 12).

Legislation in Italy is not generally child friendly. In the other parliamentary commissions the child is often treated as a subject, as a schoolchild, a sick child, a poor child or a child in need of protection etc., but never as an individual in his or her own right.

The Commission is currently working on the issue of child trafficking in Italy in collaboration with police work on child pornography, and on clear rules for quality children's television.

The Commission has also instituted the “Boys' and Girls' Day in Parliament” where school children work on drawing up proposals for laws. These are then presented and discussed and one of them is approved and made law. Recently Parliament approved one of these proposals for a law on the maltreatment of animals.

### Ray Lorenzo, Urban Planner

In answer to the question of how can the Italian experience inform Europe, Mr. Lorenzo replied that Europeans should study what has been achieved in Italy, observe the methodology of the CFC, and avoid the tendency to move the level of action up too high. Democracy, he argued, was better learnt at the most basic level, for example starting with participatory urban planning in schools.

He commended the very high level of experience in participative urban planning in Ferrara. In Italy IRC has played a vital role in the dissemination of the Child Friendly Cities initiative and movement which has received a great deal of attention from local authorities and, at one time, from central government.

The interest in Child Friendly Cities on the part of the central national institutions has decreased, but the instruments of subsidiarity, consultation and participatory democracy still exist.

He stressed the importance of having clear principles to apply when working with participatory democracy, e.g. when drawing up contracts for neighbourhoods with the consultation and involvement of children.

There was, he added, the problem of institutional and geographical coverage in Italy, i.e. institutionally coverage was lacking in the universities and geographically it was lacking in the south of Italy.

As regards good governance, he pointed out that participatory democracy is often promoted by precisely those organizations that have experience working with children. There are, he argued, extraordinary opportunities to be exploited, in Italy, Europe and beyond.

#### Caroline Boswell, Office of the London Children's Rights Commissioner

Three years ago the project was started in London by children and young people for themselves. The Office has talked to over 5,000 children about their experiences and is working on generating new thinking and new practice (consciousness raising).

London is a world city with diversity and cultural richness but it also has high levels of abuse, trafficking, and poverty. Learning about what happens elsewhere can help London as well.

The key message is solidarity. The work of UNICEF and the CFC movement was literally a gift for the London group when developing local plans for children. She stressed the importance of solidarity not only between children and adults, but also across the NGO sector.

The Office is due to close at end of April but the hope is that the Mayor of London will set up an office to create a permanent mechanism dealing with children's rights.

#### Jana Frädriich, Munich CFC Project

Ms Frädriich spoke briefly about the structure of the Action Plan used in her city to liaise with the political level and with the local authority. So far the following very simple, but effective, methods had been used:

- A 'recipe book' for participation.
- Planning participation with children through manual and intellectual work.
- Training adults to understand children's participation.

#### Jan Van Gils, European Child Friendly Cities Network, Belgium

Bringing a perspective from Northern Europe, Mr. Van Gils praised the fact that the European movement of Child Friendly Cities is putting those involved in contact with each other and enabling them to exchange experiences and to stimulate the network.

At the local level, the key to success is dialogue between children and the authorities. This sort of dialogue is very difficult to generate at the national or European level, but is possible at the local level.

The movement for Child Friendly Cities helps all those involved to apply the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Initiative is a good and practical political tool for implementing the Convention at the local level.

#### Peter Delahaye

Mr. Delahaye noted the amount of hesitation before people "jumped in" and started up a CFC initiative, although even five neighbours will do. His advice was to "just do it". Children deserve this, he argued, and we have to hear their voices.

However, conditioning such spontaneity is the question of sustainability and accountability for follow-up actions. He asked the Deputy Mayors present what one piece of advice they would give to a fellow mayor thinking about starting a CFC initiative in their own city.

#### Emad S. Sha'at

Dr. Sha'at replied that there are two, rather than one, important elements for success for a municipality thinking about becoming a Child Friendly City. First, the commitment by municipal administrations, mayor and council, and children's organizations and groups in the city. Secondly, there is the need to integrate children's priorities into local planning.

## Tiziano Tagliani

The most important element is determination and keeping action moving from the level of families, schools, children's organizations, etc. and not imposed from the top-down like a traditional administrative policy.

Secondly it is important to set up networks with neighbouring cities in order to pool resources, and here Tagliani cited the example of the regional network in Emilia Romagna between Ferrara, Modena, Ravenna and CastelSanPietro. One cannot, he insisted, experiment with children in isolation; it is important to exchange experiences as children do themselves.

It must be borne in mind that bureaucracy is always a risk and can ruin the best initiative, so that a child is able to go to school but is debarred from eating in the school canteen because their father lacks a residence permit, and is obliged to leave the school and return at 2 o'clock. One needs to find a way around rigid bureaucracy and the pain that this causes children.

## Peter Delahaye

Suggested that key website addresses be displayed on the overhead screen in order to facilitate follow-up and referred briefly to the work coordinated by Nadia Auriat on the Action Research Project, 'Growing Up In Cities'. At this point he suggested moving beyond the European platform and "going global". He suggested that it was not just a question of Child Friendly Cities, but of a range of projects, using the imagination, the process of dreaming and appreciative inquiry. He cited the groundbreaking example of 'Imagine Chicago', pioneered by Bliss Browne, which has just celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Last year Ms Browne had rallied together a series of cities around the globe that were determined to "discover and dream". It is said that the world changes the moment you begin to question, and discovery, design and destiny allow us to catch the dreams of citizens. The 'Imagine Chicago' project discovered that young people were the best interviewers in capturing intergenerational dialogue.

## Kul Gautam, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF

Asked what his vision was like from the Executive Office in New York, Kul Gautam declared that the debate was indeed taking us in the right direction and was both inspiring and educational.

He stated that we already know that if we have child friendly adult leaders, then we can have a child friendly community, but that if we go beyond that and involve young people then we could have an even better and child friendly world.

Stressing that it was not only a question of child friendly leaders, Gautam went on to insist that we should not underestimate the power and influence of children. He described how at a UN Session on Children a meeting was organized between leaders and children where the leaders were instructed not to lecture to the children and to leave them to orchestrate the debate. The diplomats initially refused and were unwilling for children to be involved in anything other than in a ceremonial sense. After having insisted, what leaders remembered best was the participation of and dialogue with the children as the most creative and powerful part of the meeting.

We must learn, he argued, not to be afraid of children or to treat them merely as a token presence.

## Peter Delahaye

The moderator recounted how, at a preparatory session of the UN Special Session on Children in Kathmandu, a Bhutanese child in national costume stood before his Minister of State and asked a question, and after the Minister had replied, the child stood up again and said, “Mr. Minister, I am not satisfied with your response”.

## Sandra Milena Segá

Pointed out that not everyone thought in the same way as the participants at the conference, and that large parts of the adult world were hostile or indifferent to children and young people. She stated that justice for children and young people needed adults to work for and apply it.

## Marta Santos Pais, Concluding Remarks

Children are indeed a unique resource and we need to work with them and participate in their enthusiasm, their strong sense of citizenship and their understanding of precisely what is wrong with their cities. Children propose simple, cost-free solutions and the question is why such solutions are not applied.

Children have very high expectations of adults — their teachers, mayors and local councillors, officials, and parents — and we must be accountable to those expectations and work to change hostile cities into child friendly cities.

In a sense children are indeed not only a good ‘unit of measurement’ for urban contexts but also an excellent indicator of progress and of a healthy society.

We need to listen to children, take into account their voices and assess reality through their perspectives, but we also need to act accordingly. We need to transform our ideas into action. In practical terms we can start by formalising children’s participation by developing city councils with elections and thus ensuring a continuing dialogue between children and their city leaders.

National action is indeed essential in order to generate child friendly laws, but the real difference will be made at the local level where we can act rapidly.

More specifically one needs:

- efficient networks
- strong commitment and engagement by families, teachers, and society, etc.
- clear Plans of Action and their regular and critical assessment
- dissemination of results to sustain outcomes
- urban planning freed from excessive bureaucracy.

Adults also have to learn and to develop capacity building and to give children a place at the table. It is not a question of discussing a wonderful ideal, but of making urban planning change from a bureaucratic to a child friendly reality.

On behalf of the Innocenti Research Centre, Marta Santos Pais thanked the conference, describing it as a unique opportunity for the IRC in Florence to launch its latest Digest on *Poverty and Exclusion among Urban Children* and to promote and stimulate the work which must follow such findings.

Peter Delahaye brought the Conference to a close by saying that there would indeed be a follow up to the debate, but that it would be the *participants themselves* — the mayors, councillors, local officials, schools, agencies, parents and children — who would be doing it.

## Appendix 2: Children's Rights and Good Urban Governance International Conference

The International Conference on Children's Rights and Good Urban Governance, organized jointly by UNICEF and the Municipality of Florence, took place in the beautiful *Sala dei Gigli* at the *Palazzo Vecchio*, the seat of the Florentine city administration.

### Opening Remarks: Christoph Baker, Chair

Opening the meeting, Christoph Baker of the Italian National Committee of UNICEF, introduced himself, presented the apologies of the Mayor of Florence, and welcomed Giuseppe Matulli, the Deputy Mayor.

**Welcome and Opening Remarks: Giuseppe Matulli, Deputy Mayor of Florence**  
Giuseppe Matulli began by apologizing for the absence of the Mayor of Florence, but expressed his pleasure in welcoming this important international meeting.

UNICEF IRC is hosted by the Istituto degli Innocenti which came into being in 1421 when the wealthy Florentine Wool Guild (*Arte della Lana*) commissioned Brunelleschi to design a hospital that would honour and protect the most vulnerable of Florence's children, the *gettarelli* or foundlings. The Spedale degli Innocenti was the first of its kind and has since been admired and copied throughout the world. The problem of foundlings no longer exists, but the commitment has transformed over time and, more recently a famous Italian expert in juvenile justice, Gianpaolo Meucci, confirmed the importance of the duty of society with regard to its children.

With the signing of an international treaty between UNICEF and the Government of Italy 14 years ago, the Innocenti centre came into being in Florence. The history of the Spedale degli Innocenti reflects the changes in child care and well being and today represents a renewed commitment to children's rights in a challenging international context. Florence's specific experience of working with the needs of urban children has a long and noble history.

The Deputy Mayor declared that the city of Florence was not only honoured to host the meeting, but appreciated the opportunity to present its own experience in responding to the challenge of children's needs in an urban context today.

### Welcome by the President of UNICEF Italy: Professor Giovanni Micali

Professor Micali greeted the representatives of the children present in the *Sala del Giglio*, the Deputy Mayor, his colleagues at UNICEF, and the authorities present.

He recalled preceding commitments and how, two years ago, UNICEF had met at the Palazzo Vecchio with the local administration in the *Sala dei Cinquecento* to celebrate the Fourth International Forum of the *Città Amiche dei Bambini*. Today, that commitment is renewed and extended.

Professor Micali went on to thank the international representatives of UNICEF for their presence, Kul Gautam, Deputy Executive Director UNICEF in New York, Hans Olsen, Deputy Director UNICEF Regional Office, Geneva, and Marta Santos Pais, friend and Director of UNICEF IRC in Florence, the national representatives of UNICEF from Italy, France, Spain, Slovenia and Switzerland. Particular thanks went to Professor Citarella, a member of the Committee of Ten, for his commitment to moving forward the work of UNICEF Italy. He greeted with pleasure Milena Sega from the *Forum dei Giovani* at the 2002 UN Special Session on Children, and Gigliola della Marina, the Children's Ombudsperson.

For over a decade the National Committee of UNICEF in Italy has been working to pro-

mote the rights of children as set out in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child signed in 1989 and which became law in Italy in 1991. The job of UNICEF is to find the instruments and interlocutors for action to guarantee the rights and aspirations of children throughout the world.

The quest for capable interlocutors has identified the figure of Mayor as the emblematic symbol of the Defender of Children. As of 1990 thousands of mayors have been nominated as Defenders of Childhood in Italy, as elsewhere. These Mayors are committed to respect the rights of children and to promote a culture which is child friendly.

In 1996, at the Habitat II Conference on Human Settlements, in Istanbul, UNICEF presented the Child Friendly Cities project, and put forward a new approach to children living in cities for local authorities, urbanists, sociologists, etc.

The global trend suggests that by 2025 it is estimated that over 60 per cent of the world's children will be concentrated in urban areas. This constitutes a real change in the shift from rural to urban living, and an inversion of the situation where the greater part of humanity lived in rural areas.

We now need a holistic approach to all components of the urban environment so that survival goes hand in hand with sustainability. An innovative approach has allowed a new commitment to infancy in both the developing and developed world, one which will afford a better quality of life for children, young people and society in general. It is an approach which allows us to develop new ways to surmount the strong contradictions inherent in human society.

In Italy there is a growing commitment to the Child Friendly Cities Initiative with local authorities and the other actors involved developing a new methodology and innovative routes which are more attentive to the needs of children.

The Italian National Committee for UNICEF embraced the proposal of the Ministry of the Environment which launched the project *Città sostenibili delle bambine e dei bambini*, in 1996, the annual city award and the creation of the documentation centre in Florence.

The National Committee, together with the Ministry of the Environment, is responsible for the organization of an Annual International Forum. This is a yearly review of experiences in other countries, of collaboration and of consolidation, and is carried out with the support of the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI). This experience is central to the many-faceted themes being examined here today.

Children growing up in the urban context present us with the following themes:

- socially excluded childhood (e.g. street children)
- educational discrimination
- environmental crisis (pollution, access to water, sanitation and green spaces)
- social breakdown
- child labour and sexual exploitation
- adolescent alienation.

UNICEF is present in many countries to combat these problems with new methodologies and new formulae, all of which are centred on not only the needs, but also the rights of children. For example, in the Moroccan city of Fez groups of young people help emarginated children using theatre as a tool to help reintroduce them to schooling. In the Philippines, a Child Friendly Movement works along much the same lines to promote the role of mayors as defenders of children, the definition of plans of action, the continuing analysis of urban indicators, and the reinforcing of legislation and respect for the law. It does so via a network of schools, basic health care clinics, religious communities, and families.

In industrialized countries, UNICEF is attempting to find innovative ways to improve the quality of life of urban children. In Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia and France, the National Committees of UNICEF are working with mayors and local authorities to identify ways to do this.

Professor Micali congratulated and thanked all local authorities and city administrations which, like Florence, are working for the construction of a child friendly future.

As regards the commitment of UNICEF, it is proud of its role as a partner in setting up the International Secretariat of the CFC — a key instrument for the promotion of the rights of children throughout the world — with the support of the Italian Government.

The President pointed out that humankind was again feeling the winds of war and expressed the keen hope that conflict would be avoided as the first victims would, as always, be children. This forum had, he argued, a responsibility to redouble its efforts to build the basis for a tomorrow of hope. It was, he continued, the cities that would be called upon to be protagonists and partners of a New Social Pact where principles would prevail.

The rights and needs of children are the rights and needs of the world. Children must judge the validity of the projects that will affect them in respect of article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This is not a mere utopia as the foundations have already been laid. Even the Mayor of Rafah, who lives in the drama of such continual conflict, can testify how, even in a context of occupation and violence, one can commit to the rights of children and make them a priority.

UNICEF Italy is convinced that the new generations have the right to a city which institutionally, culturally, and environmentally, combines the needs of the adult world with the needs and legitimate hopes of children and adolescents. We are equally convinced that it must be them — children and young people — who judge whether the policies of projects to be adopted correspond to their needs. It is simply a question of finding the means and methodologies of listening to the decisions that affect them.

In this sense UNICEF is working alongside municipalities and the NGOs to plan and realise ever more child friendly cities.

## Daniela Lastri, Florence City Councillor for Education and Youth Policies The Commitment of the City of Florence to Children's Rights

Councillor Lastri was very much in agreement with the analysis of the themes on childhood and youth expressed so far. She pointed out how the city of Florence had always been a key reference point for the culture of the rights of the child and how the presence of the Innocenti Research Centre had been significant in this respect.

However, childhood in Italy, as elsewhere, has not always been a key political theme. The approach to childhood has evolved historically, starting from a negative concept where children are not considered to have rights or to be citizens. Even today there is still a lack of credibility in the citizenship of children, and this is implicitly questioned when one speaks of them as “citizens of the future”. It must be understood that they are citizens now and in all senses, and not simply in the future.

Listening to children and young people does not imply an uncritical or artificial analysis of their condition, but a genuine recognition of their specific needs. It helps us to avoid focussing exclusively on the elements of fragility too often cited without looking at the positive elements of their participation, starting with their extraordinary potential, whilst having respect for their need for a basic level of protection.

In Italy, after a long period of stasis, legislation has been passed which facilitates the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first national plan for childhood and adolescence was approved in 1998. Thanks to this legislation many local authorities which had already been working in a more disorganized way on these issues were able to receive funding and support, and many institutions were able to develop children's participation through projects foreseen by the law.

In Florence, even before the introduction of this law, many institutions had been working on projects for children. For example, there was a series of provisions and services dedicated to those aged 0–3 years, and these were subsequently diversified to adjust them not only to the changing needs of families and children, but to move the issue beyond the logic of the provision of services to facilitate the participation of children and young people.

In Florence the city is working on two themes:

- The promotion of childhood in recognition of the needs that characterise this phase of life, not just isolating their needs as victims but as active participants, and bringing on board their ideals.
- Listening to children as young citizens in order to make their participation concrete.

In Florence many interventions have been made in a series of projects outlined in the publication "The Keys of the City"; this focuses more specifically on three themes:

- Planned participation and participative planning with local institutions. Here the University of Florence (Dept. of Urbanistics) works with children and teachers and the municipality to highlight the themes of constructive democracy, the need for children to participate in a constructive manner and a range of forms of democratic participation.
- Civil and uncivil behaviour, civil cohabitation, solidarity and democracy. Here children examine the civility/incivility of adults and their own sense of citizenship with children themselves generating the definitions of civil and uncivil.
- Child labour and exploitation projects where children stimulate their own consciences about the work of their counterparts not only in other countries but also in Italy, and in Florence. This is supported by examination of UNICEF reports and experience and an examination of forms of exploitation and how these differ across countries.

As children develop their global conscience it is hoped that this will help generate the intervention of adults.

Institutions are responsible for developing and promoting the rights of children. It is imperative that these rights do not become mere rhetoric or point of political liturgy.

Florence is fortunate as a city where the institutions communicate and where there is an age-old culture of the rights of children and young people.

It is fundamental that each and every adult who is responsible for children and their well-being understands how vital their work is. It must be our permanent objective to make adults reflect on their own attitude to children and the debatable stance of other adults in relation to children, and to change not only their own behaviour, but to help others reflect on theirs.

A conference of this sort is one of the many occasions which help us continue on our chosen route. This is one of the many moments of comparison and has been determined by the fact that Florence has key institutions that encourage reflection and that place the rights of children at the centre of our daily work and commitment.

## Kul Gautam, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF Presentation of the 10th Innocenti Digest

Mr. Gautam greeted friends and colleagues and described how heart-warming it was to hear the Deputy Mayor and councillors describing what the city of Florence is doing to make Florence a Child Friendly City. As Giovanni Micali had pointed out, UNICEF is a proud friend and partner of the Government of Italy and the cities of Italy in the world-wide movement to make the concept of a child friendly city a reality. It was in this context that UNICEF was proud to present the latest Innocenti Digest on *Poverty and Exclusion among Urban Children*.

UNICEF is deeply committed to promoting the rights of all children, from those living in remote rural areas to those crowded into the world's expanding mega-cities. The Digest testifies to this concern for the tens of millions of children who experience poverty and exclusion in urban centres around the world.

As documented in this report, these young citizens are denied the basic social services and are living proof that far too often the world systematically fails to protect its children. They have the right to live in an environment that safeguards them from abuse and exploitation and that allows them to develop their potential.

This was the commitment reaffirmed by a large number of heads of state and heads of government and municipalities that assembled at the UN Special Session on Children in 2002. The Special Session adopted an ambitious agenda for children in the current decade, entitled *A World Fit For Children*. It acknowledges the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols and a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well being of children. It emphasises that local authorities are of critical importance and that it is vital to place children at the centre of all development planning agendas.

The Innocenti Digest has taken these themes and examines them, from the world's wealthiest capitals to its poorest slums where poverty and exclusion contribute to the denial of children's basic rights. He described the life-threatening environment in which many children live, some surviving on the streets, others living in shacks without the amenities of clean drinking water, sanitation, or basic schooling. These children rarely have access to safe areas for play and recreation. Moreover, the imperatives of economic survival mean that parents are often unable to dedicate time to childcare and may also mean that children are forced to work in hazardous situations.

Urban settlements are challenged but also have potential to become the foundation on which to build child-centred societies where the dignity of every child is respected and their rights given priority.

Experience in Florence and elsewhere in Italy indicates that cities can provide a safe and stimulating environment where children can grow in confidence and learn the skills of good citizenship. For this reason we urgently need child-centred cities and Florence and other cities are an example that this is possible. Good citizenship helps make cities child friendly through budgeting, planning and resource allocation, and children's voices can inform the democratic process. After all, who is in a better position to say what children want from their city than children themselves?

In meeting the challenges to create a Child Friendly City, children must have allies and amongst their most important are mayors and local leaders who are in a privileged position to promote children's rights in all aspects of urban governance.

The history of the city of Florence testifies to the potential of human imagination to

conceive and realise beautiful urban environments which reflect the aspirations of their citizens including the youngest. Indeed, throughout its history it has always been associated with respect for human rights, and the rights of children. To mention just two of the many examples, the first was the growth under the Council of the People of the prosperous arts and crafts guilds which led to the establishment of the first lay hospital for foundlings in the fifteenth century. The second was the abolition of the death penalty under the rule of the enlightened and far-sighted Lorena family in 1786. Florence and Tuscany set the standard for the dignity for human life which eventually led to the peoples of the world making the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Kul Gautam repeated how honoured he was to be here today to talk of good governance and children and thanked the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and city leaders.

Turning to the notion of good governance and children, Gautam ended with the words of Italo Calvino, “our dreams will always be shaped through time and change” and it was in this spirit that UNICEF wished to present its latest Innocenti Digest.

### Katarina Tomasevski, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education of the UN Commission on Human Rights Urban Poverty and the Denial of Children's Rights

Child Friendly Cities would not, Tomasevski argued, be a challenge at all were cities not generally so child-hostile. Using her experience in human rights work, and emphasising that children's rights are human rights, Tomasevski explained how many cities had distorted local policies which led to the denial of children's rights.

In responding to the question of how human rights contribute to addressing child-related issues from a distinct perspective, she started from the word ‘poverty’. In organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank and the European Central Bank, she argued, poverty is treated exclusively as an issue of funding, and its elimination is treated simply as a question of providing additional funding. However, from a human rights perspective, what should be done when poverty is the result of a denial of human rights? This sort of poverty, she argued, will not be eliminated by throwing money at it because the children involved may not be national citizens, or may belong to the wrong minority.

We need to acknowledge that European Union law is by definition discriminatory. EU law does not promote a human rights approach but a EU-citizenship approach, dividing people into EU citizens and non-EU citizens. This affects the rights of non-citizens, and especially the children of non-citizens, who cannot have access to services in practice. There is nothing children like more than catching adults preaching human rights but not applying them — a human rights hypocrisy.

Tomasevski presented two specific examples of child-hostile cities, Belfast and Ankara, to illustrate her argument:

In Belfast, in the last eighteen months the Holy Cross Roman Catholic School for Girls which lies on the border between Catholic and Protestant areas, has gained the world's attention. Here girls aged 4–11 have to run the gauntlet of verbal abuse and the threat of physical violence from hostile loyalist pickets in order to get into school. Recently there was a bomb at Holy Cross and young girls were exposed to adult-like hostility, violence and threatened violence. All this was because of the religious allegiance of their parents.

From a different perspective some say that the reason for this is that the relative deprivation of Catholic and Protestant communities has altered and victimization and deprivation, combined with political violence, has generated this hostility.

Research indicates a correlation between poverty and political violence throughout Ireland. Not only is there a linkage between relative poverty and violence, but political violence also has a gender profile insofar as the perpetrators are male and young, some even children. When facing these issues we have to dig deeply enough to find out what the real causes are in order to be able to deal with those causes effectively.

In the Turkish capital, Ankara, there was a strange phenomenon, namely the large number of street children who were girls, not prostitutes, but female street children. Street children are normally boys. In answer to the question “Why?”, Tomasevski could find no official answers; the gender dimension was not visible and the issue of gender discrimination did not appear to have been studied.

Moreover, the organization that works with street children has no girls, only boys. Local policies had not yet developed to deal with the issue. The imperative is to move beyond treating children as numbers to a human rights approach. Adults tend to be good at numbers but this runs counter to a human rights approach, in other words, why exactly are children poor or excluded? And, why cannot local authorities make policies to eradicate poverty and exclusion?

A human rights approach would require local authorities — which are in a better position than national authorities to solve problems — to act *in loco parentis*. This brings us to the argument that we have policies to protect our own children, but not other people's children (discrimination and children's international discrimination).

Eurobarometer surveys have reported that in the EU children educated in European schools tend to be more racist than previous generations, and that children are more likely to partake in discriminatory practices. Research in Belfast shows that children of the age of 6 have already internalised the “us” and “them” divide. Children must have rights *qua* children, not *qua* who their parents are.

There is also the question of language. For example, in Ankara educational programmes dealing with child delinquency and street children did not work. This was because everything was done in Turkish, whereas a significant minority part of the population is Kurdish. This meant that even talking about the problems was impossible.

In London in the UK by official estimates there are approximately 870 languages spoken, whereas all public programmes and services are provided in English. Thus, linguistic outreach is necessary for children and young people.

Discrimination on the grounds of age is a new phenomenon. Children are generally considered children from the ages of 0 to 18. There is a great deal of media and political compassion for children, but only so long as they are babies or very young, that is, in early childhood. By contrast, there is a great deal of hostility towards and fear of teenagers (10-18 years), especially in Latin America where the common perception is that they are violent and criminalised. Thus, we discriminate in our policies. Children are only defined as such from the ages of 0 to 10, and from the ages of 10 to 18 they are defined as young people. This is a European Union definition which means that 12-year-olds can be legally defined as too old to have a right to education but young enough to work.

This is a rapid listing of the human rights challenges in converting cities from child hostile to child friendly. Tomasevski invited participants to “do it as fast and comprehensively as you can”, and added that she believed that when issues are brought to the local level and children are recognised as people, then we can indeed move together much better and much faster.

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