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UNICEF Welcomes Strong Participation in Japan Meeting Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

TOKYO/GENEVA/NEW YORK, 14 December 2001 - Nearly 3,000 people will assemble in Yokohama, Japan, next week at the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. The Congress will review progress since the first World Congress in Stockholm in 1996 and seek global strategies to stem the swiftly developing exploitation of children in prostitution, pornography and through trafficking. The Congress is co-organized by UNICEF, the Government of Japan, the international NGO ECPAT International, and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The meeting will run from 17 to 20 December at the Pacifico Yokohama Convention Center.

UNICEF Japan Office Director Samuel Koo said today that the organization is pleased at the high level of response. "It is clear that the issue of sexual exploitation of children is high on the international agenda. We have much to do before this heinous violation of children's rights is eliminated or even significantly reduced. The overwhelming response to the Yokohama Congress is a sign that at all levels -- governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental and in the private sector and wider community -- there is real determination to step up efforts and meet this challenge."

As of 13 December, the number of confirmed participants at the Congress was:

- Governments: 541 delegates representing 119 countries (59 at ministerial level);
- International organizations: 76 delegates from 21 organizations;
- International non-governmental organizations (NGOs): 506 participants representing 148 groups from 126 countries;
- Japanese NGOs: 1,419 representatives;
- Private sector: 26 delegates from 14 organizations;
- Youth delegates: 90 representatives;
- Other participants/media: 64

TOTAL REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS: 2,722

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy arrives in Japan on Saturday 15th and will make a keynote address to the opening session of the Congress on 17th. Other keynote speakers include H.E. Ms Mayumi Moriyama, Japan's Minister of Justice; ECPAT Chairperson Josephine de Linde; Cherry Kingsley, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a representative of youth delegates, to be chosen by young people at their preparatory meeting in Kawasaki which ends on 15 December. HIH Princess Takamado of Japan, Queen Silvia of Sweden and the Mayor of Yokohama City will speak in the opening ceremony.

For further information on the Yokohama Congress, preparatory consultations, and story/interview opportunities, contact Congress Media Advisor June Kane on:

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For Broadcasters: A new B-roll videotape is available that highlights the commercial sexual exploitation of children and various programmes to prevent it. This 38-minute B-roll includes strong material filmed recently in Albania, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, India and Nicaragua. To preview scripts and sequences or to order a tape please visit: <http://www.unicef.org/broadcast/brolls/csec/>