



Ministry of State for Family and Population
The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood

Speech of
Minister Mushira Khattab
Regarding National Efforts to Combat
Trafficking in Children
Cairo – April 20th 2010

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is such an honor to be speaking to you today about the national efforts to combat trafficking in children. These efforts wouldn't have materialized without the insightful vision and leadership of the First Lady, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, who was the first to alert us about this crime. Efforts began in February 2000 with the decision of the Consultative Technical Committee at the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to place marginalized children, victims of trafficking or at its risk, at the center of national attention. Over the past 10 years, H.E. Mrs. Mubarak led an active scientific endeavor to enforce these children's rights without discrimination while placing their best interest on top of every decision made in this regard. Efforts were made at two levels. The first was to provide a supporting infrastructure and the second was the on-ground direct intervention to prevent such acts and to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims into their society and prosecute offenders.

I. The Infrastructure:

We laid an infrastructure based on the legal frame that insures victim rights in protection, rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as criminal prosecution and punishment. All the gaps in the database

were filled and necessary national strategies and plans were created. Both governmental and non-governmental efforts were coordinated to block sources of children-trafficking, not to mention, creating mechanisms for monitoring such activity and receiving victim complaints, using the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Law as our main guiding frame for all our activities.

In 2003 H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak announced the National Strategy for the Protection, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Street Children paralleled with our announcement to commence a community discussion to develop the Child Law to insure that all children receive their full rights. In the same year H.E. Mrs. Mubarak also launched the special line for aiding children with disabilities to provide free medical and legal consultation, as well as, medical services and nutrition to those in need.

A national survey about child labor was conducted for the first time in Egypt and the results were announced by the First Lady who also witnesses the launching of the first study about the economical cost of child labor and warned about the dangers of economical exploitation of children. She also launched the national strategy to eliminate child labor and the 2006 action plan and led an organized effort to attract children away from the streets and the labor market. Necessary cooperation was carried out with a large number of Ministries and governorates and NGO's were aided in the legal handling of issues related to marginalized children which paved the way to further cooperation with a large group of children supporters.

In 2005 H.E. Mrs. Mubarak announced the national plan to protect children against violence and launched the children's help-line as a free mechanism to receive child complaints and tackle them. The amendments made to the Child Law lead to a popular consensus for issuing the amended Law in June 2008 as the strongest legislation for human rights and for bringing justice to marginalized children. Today after 5 years the Egyptian family is reaping the benefits of the children help-line.

The national strategy to protect youth from drugs was launched in 2005 and a five year plan was created in line with the 2005 "A World Worthy of Children" document and the 2006 national plan to combat

violence against children. We also prepared a training guide for persons dealing with street children and a survey to stand on the phenomenon of street children in 2007. These policies provided a comprehensive developmental and legal base to coordinate governmental and non-governmental efforts in cooperation with our partners in development.

To empower marginalized girls and protect them from falling victims to trafficking, H.E. Mrs. Mubarak launched "The Year of the Egyptian Girl" Initiative from Aswan in 2002 following 2 years of preparation. The initiative is based on 3 "No's":

"No deprivation from education", "No female genital mutilation", and "No girl-child marriages". A comprehensive media campaign was carried out to raise community awareness about the value of girls. Unexpectedly, the campaign was a great success and it resulted in increased support for girls rights. Today after 8 years of continuous work, female genital mutilation has been criminalized owing to an immense grass root movement that sprung from villages in Upper Egypt who openly rejected this crime transforming the act from a socially accepted act to a crime punishable by law. In addition, the national plan for the education of girls, led by Mrs. Mubarak, granted girls in deprived villages the full chance to receive quality education to equip them with necessary life skills placing them on the same level with other more fortunate girls. Thousands of girls who were candidates for trafficking in the labor market or in early marriages are now free from the trap of exploitation and have the chance to choose their lives. The UNICEF has documented this experience for the benefit of other nations.

The legislative amendment was made to secure, as a minimum, the rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Crimes of trafficking in children including sexual exploitation were tackled with a comprehensive developmental manner based on enforcing all the child's rights beginning with his/her right to identity, education, and family care, where for the first time in Egypt the Child Law guarantees the child the knowledge of his paternal father and the right to carry his name. In addition, a child with an identified mother and unidentified father or whose paternal identity is disputed has the

right to be officially registered by his mother at birth. The Law has increased the age of marriage for girls to 18 full calendar years and guaranteed their right to protection against violence. The law has also made clear distinctions between crimes of trafficking and has expanded the borders for child victim protection and their right in rehabilitation and reintegration and has magnified offenders' penalty.

The Law criminalized trading in children or in their organs, or their exploitation in prostitution or pornographic material, or in forceful labor, or any form of trafficking in children even if the crime was an extra territorial crime.

The Law also criminalized the exploitation of children through the computer or the internet or information networks or animations and inciting children to, or exploiting them in prostitution and pornographic activities even if the crime did not take place. It also criminalized the worse forms of child labor according to the International Labor Organization's agreement no. 182 and emphasized the child's right to privacy.

We created a non central comprehensive protection system to reinforce the role and responsibilities of the local communities where protection committees and the child help-line play a focal role in the social protection or victims of trafficking.

In addition, the Law introduced a new judicial system for juvenile delinquents that adopts reform justice and prevents juvenile delinquency and facilitates the reintegration of delinquents. The age for legal and criminal accountability was increased from 7 to 12 years of age. Specialized child related crime courts were established and since the Law was issued in June 2008 and up to this date training sessions have been ongoing to train judges, public prosecutors, and social workers in cooperation with civil society.

II. Measurements adopted to eliminate child trading and exploitation in prostitution and pornographic material and trafficking in children

At the end of 2007 the NCCM established the Anti-Trafficking in Children Unit to continue the efforts that began in the year 2000 to protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation. The unit prepared a national plan to combat trafficking in children by raising the awareness about crimes of child trafficking and support the role of related governmental and non-governmental institutions.

The unit also organized training courses for workers in some touristic facilities, judges, psychiatrists and social workers in family dispute resolution offices in Cairo, Giza, the 6th of October, in addition to training juvenile, [REDACTED] and jail officers and commissioners of [REDACTED], and those responsible for the protection of newly born children and religious figures.

The unit prepared a draft for the minimum standards for combating trafficking in children in addition to conducting a study about the international standards for combating sexual exploitation of children in pornographic activity on the internet and the extent of the Egyptian law's consistency with such standards.

The unit also conducted a survey about girl-child marriages in villages of the 6th of October governorate and launched the Family Counseling and Girl-Child Marriage Reporting Line, which with the help of the civil society and media, has unveiled many cases of girl-child marriages. Additionally, the unit organized awareness raising programs in these villages and female volunteers were chosen to raise awareness about the dangers of girl-child marriages and child labor and depriving girls from education. \since the year 2009 the line has received a total of 23,000 calls of which 300 were to report about girl-child marriages and Marriage Clerks involved in such activity. The ministry has succeeded, in cooperation with the public prosecutor and the Minister of Justice and in coordination with civil society, in unveiling 9300 cases in 2009. The Marriage Clerks involved were prosecuted and punished along with other involved facilitators. Some family disputes related to girl-child marriages in violation of the Child Law and Civil Status Law were also resolved.

The Ministry of State for Family and Population played a focal role in altering policies related to the work of Marriage Clerks through revising all their work and discovering violations in the form of girl-

child marriages. The Ministry has also raised the awareness of the citizens and the civil society about the importance of reporting those involved in such crimes which led to an evident drop in girl-child marriages and calls for the continuation of an awareness campaign with the participation of the citizens.

Volunteers, the media and religious institutions also played a vital role. It brings me pleasure to praise His **Eminence** the Mufty for the Fatwa he issued which condemns the parent who exploits his girl-child by marrying her off for commercial purposes.

On an international level the Ministry of State for Family and Population is playing an active role through the exchange of expertise with other countries and the participation in international conferences and activities and implementing a program for the combating of trafficking in children in cooperation with USAID and another with **██████████** and the Swiss Embassy. A center for the rehabilitation of victims of child trafficking was established in Al-Salam city in cooperation with an international NGO known as FACE. At the moment negotiations are being held with the international immigration organization to establish a regional center for the rehabilitation of victims. A specialized library was established and a website for the unit and the Ministry is especially proud about its close cooperation with Suzanne Mubarak's Women's International Peace Movement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our achievements were not confined to legislative change or policy making for the benefit of marginalized and weak children. We did not just create laws, we enforced them and we are in constant follow up of policy implementation. Our true success lies in our credibility among those we provide service to and protect their rights. Owing to this credibility we were able to alter how children are viewed especially marginalized children who are now viewed as owners of rights that must be respected. Nondiscrimination against children is a crucial factor in the reinforcement of their rights. Similarly, depriving women from their civil rights detracts the rights of children.

It has been a long and tiresome journey to implement facts on the ground given challenges resulting from internet and portable

technologies. What we called for came as a shock to many, but with continuous sincere awareness giving and communication at the grass root level we now witness a social movement that supports the rights of the weak and vulnerable.

Yet many challenges are still ahead of us,

Legislative reform in Egypt is the first step in a road of arduous work. There is the strong need to spread knowledge of various law provisions and monitoring the enforcement of law to evaluate its effect in addition to formulating enforcement and monitoring mechanisms. This should be paralleled by educational reform, the allocation of proper funds and coordinating the efforts of institutions working in field of child rights. With regards to protection from commercial and sexual exploitation of children, we need to monitor law enforcement to build an accurate database, encourage reporting such violations, improve litigation, identify flaws and encourage more change. Phenomena such child labor and street children still form a serious challenge that we were unable to abolish and free children from being used in such activity under the pretext of poverty.

Today after the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Population the scope of our work has expanded to include the Egyptian family as one unit and empower it to protect its members, especially the weakest who are normally women and children.

We hope for continuous progress as we acknowledge and thank our partners and supporters namely religious and social leaders, academics, parliamentarians, members of the media, civil society and the children themselves. And our most sincere thanks goes out to Egypt's first lady Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak who led and nurtured this effort as we say to her we still have more to do and are looking forward to her continuous support. Again our dear lady allow us to thank you and thank all of you for your time. God bless you all...