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**UNICEF statement on the occasion of a discussion
on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
during the Human Rights Council's 4th Session**

26 April 2007

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that UNICEF is participating in this timely discussion on the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities.

We would like to applaud the ad hoc committee and the many organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) that participated in the drafting process for their tireless work on this landmark treaty. The Convention gives status, authority and visibility to disability as a human rights issue; and it recognizes the additional vulnerabilities faced by children with disabilities by virtue of their age.

UNICEF participated at different stages in the drafting process – to advocate for specific attention to the situation of children with disabilities in the Convention's text. We did so in coordination with the International Disability Caucus and are pleased to see that the rights of children are referred to throughout the final text of the treaty, with specific obligations placed on governments to take all necessary measure to fulfill, protect and respect these.

The new Convention raises the profile of children with disabilities and complements the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Until recently, the CRC - while applying to all children - was the only international Human Rights Treaty that contained in Article 23 a set of specific provisions for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities – in this case: children with disabilities. The Committee of the Rights of the Child deserves recognition for the sustained attention it has paid to disability-based discrimination in its communications with State Parties. Last year, the Committee issued its General Comment Nr. 9 on the rights of children with disabilities – a comprehensive analysis of their situation around the world based on a review of reports submitted over a long period by many State parties. It is the most wide-ranging and authoritative evidence of world-wide discrimination against children with disabilities currently available.

The new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reinforces the CRC, further increasing the visibility of the rights of children with disabilities; as in the case of the CRC, the new Convention will include a monitoring body, to which state parties will report - initially after two year and subsequently every four years. It will be important to use the experience drawn from the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and encourage the greatest possible involvement of NGOs in the reporting process. Coordination and information sharing between the two treaty monitoring bodies, as well as the complementary use of the two by stakeholders, will also be key to ensure consistent and frequent monitoring of the protection and promotion of the rights of children with disabilities.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council,

The combined force of the two Conventions will help to ensure that countries will no longer be allowed to relegate children with disabilities to the margins of society. For UNICEF, the Disability Convention provides a reference and framework for our advocacy and programming to protect the rights of children with disabilities – in addition to the CRC. We will encourage our regional and country offices to promote the ratification of the Convention. And we look forward to supporting its implementation through joint and complementary programmes with our UN partners, as well as through close partnerships with civil society.

Thank you.