

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW- HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UNICEF INPUTS ALGERIA

I. Contextual framework:

1. In the scope of the national reconciliation process initiated in 1999 with the Civic Concord project, the main bills enforcing the "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation" were adopted in February 2006. So far, the policy of civic concord and national reconciliation has contributed to a marked improvement of the security situation, even if sporadic acts are committed occasionally in the mountain regions or around the capital.

2. On the economic level, financial stability is the main asset today: the climate of the oil market and the cautious management to keep the economy on a sound balance have led to the highest level of currency reserves (66 billion Dollars end of May 2006, 12 times the level since 2000), to a better controlled inflation rate (2.4 per cent in 2006), and to a decrease in the foreign debt (4.7 billion Dollars in 2006, that is 15 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product against 35 per cent in 2003). The projected growth of the GDP reached 6 per cent in 2006. However, some areas of fragility still remain.

3. The economic growth, in view of the demographic growth of the active population, must persist on the long term basis to hold back the rise of unemployment which reached 15.3 per cent, 50 per cent of which affecting youth. Consumption, a positive reflection of the households' income (+ than 31 per cent for the current period) has annually progressed by 4 per cent.

4. The Algerian Government continuously mobilizes all its resources to implement the economic and social reforms within the framework of the Complementary Plan in Support of Growth (PCSC), which reached 144 billion Dollars. The public authorities count on a domino effect caused by the opening to the international market (the coming into force of the association agreement with the European Union on September 1, 2005 and the negotiations for membership with WTO).

5. The Algerian Constitution enshrines the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex and also mandates the State to take positive action to ensure equality of rights and duties of all citizens, men and women, by removing the obstacles which hinder the progress of human beings and impede the effective participation of all in the political, economic, social and cultural life.

6. In 2001, the President set up the Consultative Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which is composed of representatives from civil society, public institutions and (non-voting) members of Government, including the Delegate Minister for the Family and the Status of Women. While the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions certified that the Consultative Commission was in formal compliance with the Paris Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions, it is widely regarded as not fully independent and often unwilling to challenge the Government on politically sensitive issues. None of its annual reports have been published.

7. Algeria has made several interpretative reservations and declarations when it ratified the CRC on 16 April 1993. Algeria has presented its initial report on 16 November 1995 and its second periodic report on 16 December 2003. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued its first Concluding Observations on 18 June 1997 and its second one on 12 October 2005. Algeria is due to submit its third and fourth report on 15 May 2010. Algeria has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict with the presidential Decree n.06-299 of 2 September 2006.

8. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has congratulated Algeria because it has adopted several laws at protecting and promoting the rights of the child, notably the Act n.05-04 of February 2005 which reformed the system of penal institutions and the social reinsertion of children. As part of the reform, personnel from the Ministry of Justice have received training. There are several emerging organisations that work with authorities to protect children's rights in violation cases. Two new institutions were established aiming to protect and promote children's rights: the Office of the Head of the Government's Deputy Minister for the Family and the Status of Women and the National Commission to Combat Child Labour. Documentation has been circulated in schools to state the prohibition of corporal punishment.

9. Additionally, issues - such as legal fostering arrangements that will help "the child to express his will through consent or refusal to be voluntarily cared for by parents other than his own" - were taken into consideration. By taking these steps, Algeria wanted to clarify the Nationality Code, the Family Code and other legislative texts that assist in promoting children's rights. Among the new internal measures that the Committee welcomed was the transmission of citizenship to children through maternal as well as through paternal parentage and a bill on child protection, increased expenditure and commitment to education and health care.

10. However, there are factors and difficulties that are impeding the implementation of the Convention. There are concerns regarding the lack of a comprehensive coordinating mechanism to implement the CRC, the absence of an independent monitoring structure and gaps in the legal framework in the field of children's rights. There are other areas of concern such as the impact of terrorist violence that prevailed in the 1990s which has affected children physically as well as mentally.

11. The country made great progress since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since the last report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Ministry of Justice continued to develop its Child Protection Code. This bill is divided in six themes: generalities, protection of endangered children, delinquent children, protection of the child placed in institutions, penal measures and final measures. It is said that this code would compile, update and harmonise all the laws pertaining to the protection and promotion of children's rights as recommended by the UNCRC in its last Concluding observations of 2006.

12. The rapid development of the civil society in Algeria has led to a significant improvement in the local dynamics and participation in the protection and promotion of children's rights. Moreover, it set up the mechanisms needed to work out a National Plan of Action in favour of children (2007-2011), following- up on the Special Session for children and the implementation of the document "A World Fit For Children", with the very active participation of civil society, children and adolescents as a unique event.

II. Trends

1. As for human development, the poverty ratio (1 Dollar per capita per day) reduced by half (0.8 per cent) in 2000 has been reached. Extreme poverty as defined by the MDGs remains marginal and its total eradication is possible. The objective of reducing the proportion of people living below the minimum level of food equivalent to 1.5 Dollar PPA, evaluated at 1.6 per cent in 2004, has also been reached. However, the upward move on the poverty line observed between 1998 and 2004 (0.7 per cent annual average) does not confirm that the MDG objective will be reached by 2015.

2. The evolution of malnutrition among children under 5 years of age has slightly deteriorated, growing from 9.2 to 10.4 per cent between 1992 and 2002. While the proportion of moderately underweight children has stabilized, that of severely underweight children has increased by one percentage point.

3. In terms of education, the high level of enrolment (97 per cent) is maintained. The observed tendency along with the projected human development perspectives will enable to reach universal enrolment in the very short term (indicator no 6: net enrolment rate in primary education). It will be reached for girls with a slight time lag. The objective to raise the percentage of pupils completing their fifth year of primary education should also be reached in the short term.

4. Regarding the 15-24 years old literacy rate, and with regard to the efforts devoted in particular to women (14% improvement in five years) and to vocational training for youth, the literacy rate for this category seems very likely to improve so as to reach 100 per cent in 2015 (90.10 per cent in 2002). However, the system remains marked with distortions. School drop-out remains very important at all levels. Intra and inter-regional discrepancies are recorded. The outcome of the educational system is weak due to school drop-out and high rates of repeated classes. Teacher training should be enhanced.

5. As far as gender equality and women empowerment is concerned, with regard to the most significant indicators such as the boy-girl ratio in primary education, it can be stated that in primary education, as well as in the other cycles, girl enrolment evolves more positively than that of boys, which places Algeria above the average for developing countries.

6. The child mortality rate is at 30.4 per 1,000 in 2004 (a recent estimate of the Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform (MSPRH) in 2005 lowers this figure to 29.7 per 1,000). The infant mortality rate still represents two third of child mortality and seems to stagnate in the same proportions. To reach the

objective set for 2015, the incidence of infant mortality must be reduced, especially that of early infant mortality.

7. The measles immunization rate (MDG indicator) is estimated by the MSPRH to be 91 per cent in 2005, with a 3.3 per cent discrepancy between urban and rural areas. According to WHO/UNICEF joint report and SOWCR 2007 report, this rate is 83 per cent.

8. Maternal mortality so far remains difficult to evaluate in Algeria in the absence of a reliable system to collect mortality data by cause. MSPRH estimates the figure to be 96.5 per 100,000 live births in 2005 (99, 5 in 2004 against 117, 4 in 1999) placing Algeria among the countries where a major effort remains to be made.

9. All the indicators reflect an upward trend of the HIV epidemic. HIV infection prevalence in adults is 0.1 per cent. By December 31, 2005, 700 cases of AIDS and 1908 HIV- positives were recorded. The analysis of the notification of the HIV cases indicates that the risk of an epidemic rise should be considered. The government is putting together all the available resources to maintain this low prevalence rate. The investigations of HIV monitoring sentinels indicate that close to 4% of prostitutes screened for HIV in 2004 tested positive.

10. The examination and the assessment of the situation, as well as the prospects for the eight MDGs, show the capacity of Algeria to carry out the commitments made for 2015. The same applies to the various indicators related to the fight against poverty, the promotion of education, the improvement of health, gender equality, as well as environment issues.

11. Concerning the global partnership for development, the conditions should support a larger opening of the economy to the world trade flows to eradicate poverty, which will have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the citizens in general, and of women and children in particular.

12. Violence against women, despite its prevalence, remains one of the most invisible human rights violations in Algeria, although State institutions have begun to acknowledge and address the issue. In this regard, the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, developed by the Minister Delegate on Family and the Status of Women in consultation with other stakeholders, is a most promising initiative since it emphasizes a multi-pronged approach based on a human rights and an empowerment perspective. The full implementation of the National Strategy, which will also imply serious resource commitments, will enable the Government to address many of the problems outlined in this report.

III. Capacity building efforts

1. UNICEF in Algeria is working to guarantee each child and adolescent's right to 1) survive and develop, 2) learn, 3) protect themselves and others from HIV/Aids, 4) grown up free from violence and 5) be first in public policies, to make the MDGs a reality for all children. Given the levels of disparities specific attention is given to redressing regional inequalities in the southern regions, highlands and in poor urban communities, promoting adolescents participation and citizenship. UNICEF's added value in Algeria lies in its capacity to mobilize actors in civil society,

government for children's rights, leveraging the formulation of public policies, resources and attitudes to change the lives of millions of children.

2. UNICEF is supporting Algeria in the child health sector by reinforcing central government policies and strategic guidelines as well as program capacities in the areas of management, monitoring and evaluation as well as health-care facilities (Baby Friendly Hospitals) in priority target regions, particularly in the highlands and the south, with a view to providing quality maternal and child health care. A five years plan was signed as a joint activity with Government, UN agencies and UN AIDS to fight against HIV-AIDS.

3. In the field of child's right to a quality education, the program includes two intended outcomes. The first is that preschool programs will be developed based on high quality norms and standards and teachers will be trained to provide stimulating education that enables the preschool child to learn and flourish. More than 300 schools benefited from the UNICEF Child Friendly Schools program. The second intended outcome is that education personnel (principals, inspectors and teachers) will master modern teaching approaches and methods.

4. UNICEF is supporting the Government of Algeria in the field of Child protection. The program has three intended outcomes. The first intended outcome is that the protection system will be strengthened by: (a) bringing national laws into line with international laws; and (b) adopting new laws for children and promoting them among professionals and the public. The second intended outcome is that social and legal protection programs and institutions will be improved by: (a) building the capacities of professionals in the fields of legislation, child psychology, the treatment of children and communication with children; and (b) exchanging experiences with other countries regarding social and legal protection. The third intended outcome is that knowledge of the situation of children with special needs will be enhanced through analyses, studies and research and to establish a permanent database. To the extent possible, the program will meet the specific and urgent needs of refugee children in Algeria.

5. In the field of Advocacy and partnership for child and adolescent rights, the program has three intended outcomes. The first intended outcome is that by 2011 duty bearers will recognize and undertake to realize the rights of children and adolescents, while promoting their participation in the process. This outcome will be achieved through: (a) the analysis of the expectations and perceptions of adolescents regarding the ability of duty bearers to realize their rights; (b) support for the establishment of forums and structures that facilitate the participation of adolescents in the development and performance of civic activities; (c) the encouragement of adolescent participation in decision-making on policies and programs which concern them; and (d) support for adolescent participation in the development of media programs. The second intended outcome is that innovative social policies which place children at the centre of national agendas will be developed through ongoing advocacy with the national authorities to: (a) develop a national plan of action (2007-2011) to meet the commitments undertaken at the special session of the General Assembly on children; (b) implement and disseminate the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and (c) ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child done in 2006. The third intended outcome is that an information and monitoring system for

child rights will be put in place through a national child rights Observatory launched by the Government in December 2007.