

## UNICEF & HARVARD Press Release

### CHILDREN AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: TRUTH-TELLING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RECONCILIATION

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#### Archbishop Desmond Tutu condemns continued violence against children

**Florence-Boston, 9 March 2010** – The systematic use and abuse of children in conflicts across the world has continued, unabated, over the past 20 years, Archbishop Desmond Tutu said today. Grave violations which persist against girls and boys include murder, rape, assault, sexual slavery and forced recruitment.

Speaking at the launch of the UNICEF-Harvard University publication, *Children and Transitional Justice: Truth-Telling, Accountability and Reconciliation*, the Nobel Laureate said that “the seemingly endless cycle of violence and conflict, turning children into instruments of war, must be stopped”.

While prosecution is essential to improve accountability for such crimes, the Archbishop said that any successful transition from war to peace must ensure that children have a place – and a voice – in helping to build a peaceful and stable future. The vision and ambition therefore of transitional justice is to enable societies that have been torn apart by conflict and violence to recover and to empower individuals – victims, witnesses and perpetrators – to recount their experiences and agree on a measure of justice to guide their future.

“The death and suffering of children in times of conflict and instability make it clear that the world has failed to prioritize the rights and well-being of children,” said Archbishop Tutu. “Transitional justice processes are a chance to set things right, and their success or failure depends to a large degree on how they involve children,” said Archbishop Tutu.

*Children and Transitional Justice: Truth-Telling, Accountability and Reconciliation* analyses practical experiences to determine how the range of international courts, truth commissions and traditional processes can be applied, both to improve accountability for crimes perpetrated against children and to protect the rights of children involved. It explores safe and meaningful child participation in different circumstances.

The book also makes clear that for a truth commission to have a lasting impact, people need to see the tangible difference in their lives after its work has finished. Education,

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vocational training and school reconstruction were all noted by children as ways to make up for lost years.

Authored by experts in international law and human rights, *Children and Transitional Justice: Truth-telling, Accountability and Reconciliation* includes legal analysis and case studies of children's involvement in the truth commissions of South Africa, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and of efforts to use judicial prosecutions and judicial processes to achieve accountability for crimes committed by the LRA in Uganda, as well as a review of new techniques employing genetic tracing for accountability and family reunification of disappeared children in Argentina and El Salvador. *Children and Transitional Justice - Truth-telling, Accountability and Reconciliation* makes clear that children must be taken seriously in post conflict transition.

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### Note to Editors

Embargoed media materials are available from the Centre's newsroom:  
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### For further information and interviews, please contact:

James Elder  
Chief of Communications  
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre  
Florence, Italy  
Mobile +393357582585  
jelder@unicef.org

or

Patrizia Faustini  
Senior Communication Assistant  
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre,  
Piazza SS. Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy  
Landline: +39-055-2033 253 fax: +39-055-2033 220  
pfaustini@unicef.org