



MEDIA STATEMENT

MALAYSIA HOSTS 3RD HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON CHILD RIGHTS

ASIA PACIFIC NEEDS SMARTER CHILDREN TODAY FOR STRONGER ECONOMIES TOMORROW

Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2016 – On 7 and 8 November, the Government of Malaysia hosts the 3rd Asia-Pacific High Level Meeting for Child Rights (HLM3) in Kuala Lumpur with support from UNICEF. Entitled *A Billion Brains: Smarter Children, Healthier Economies*, this 2-day event draws over 200 delegates from Asia and The Pacific countries comprising Ministers, senior government representatives and policy makers from 28 countries. The main objectives are to accelerate progress and leverage resources to build the cognitive capital of the billion children in the region towards more sustained economic growth.

The meeting will explore ways to jointly boost child rights around three key themes, namely universal health coverage; preventing violence against children; and social protection for children, women and family. The regional conference also provides a unique opportunity to create momentum around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through strengthened cooperation among the Governments of Asia and The Pacific.

The HLM3 opening ceremony will be launched by YB Dato' Sri Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, and will also be attended by UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Omar Abdi.

In line with the first two HLM meetings held respectively in Beijing and New Delhi, the 3rd HLM seeks to strengthen cooperation among the Governments of Asia and The Pacific, by providing a platform to share best practices and lessons learned in relation to the conference themes that are useful for advancing children's rights and maximizing their potential.

Over the past few decades, the well-being of numerous families has drastically improved as result of rapid economic growth across Asia and The Pacific, which is place for more than 1 billion children – nearly half the world's children. However, some pressing challenges such as poverty, malnutrition and unemployment, need to be further addressed as social and other inequalities

remain affecting the life of millions of children across the regions. Investments in children's health, education and welfare are of strategic importance to the future long-term economic growth and continued social advancement of the region.

"Asia and The Pacific represents an incredible pool of untapped human capital - the brains and futures of one billion children. Those upon whom we are all counting on to help shape a better, more sustained future for us all," said UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director, Omar Abdi. "This high level meeting is a platform for all governments to voice out and increase investments for their children. Investing in children is a smart thing to do for a better, more sustainable future for all of us.

In contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, young people around the world have demonstrated that they can be catalysts for positive change. The HLM3 event will also showcase the potential of youth from across the region to play a crucial role in driving social change and sustaining socio-economic progress over time. Through the *Youth Innovation Challenge*, young people aged 15 to 24 have had the opportunity to develop creative and impactful solutions to issues affecting their generation around the conference themes.

In total, over 660 ideas were generated by youth from 16 countries across Asia and The Pacific. More than 40 young finalists are currently participating in a boot camp to further refine their ideas and get the chance to pitch their proposal to an elite judging panel of private sector leaders, government officials and policymakers. One winner per theme will receive seed funding and four months of mentoring support to help them make their project a reality for the most vulnerable children in their respective countries.

For more information and related documents, please visit: <http://billion-brains.org/> For more information, please contact: Ms. Sasha Surandran, UNICEF Malaysia, +6019 658 5160, ssurandran@unicef.org or Mr. Mohd Raziff Zulkafli, 012 3250464, raziff@kpwkm.gov.my

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Corporate Communication Unit
Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat
Aras 35, Persiaran Perdana
PUTRAJAYA
Tel: 03-8323 1102 E-mel: info@kpwkm.gov.my