

*BEIJING, 4 November 2010* – Senior government ministers and officials from 28 countries across Asia and the Pacific gathered in Beijing on the 4th of November for the High Level Meeting on Co-operation for Child Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region. The meeting, held from 4-6 November, was hosted by the All China Women's Federation, the National Working Committee for Children and Women under the State Council, the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China with support from UNICEF. Senior delegates from a number of Chinese government ministries as well as regional representatives from UNICEF also attended.

Together, the participating countries represent one billion children, or 53 % of the world's total child population.

Economic progress in many Asia-Pacific countries has been remarkable, with hundreds of millions of people emerging from dollar-a-day poverty over the past few decades. Yet, at the same time, economic and social inequalities have been increasing, affecting the lives of millions of children. To help address these disparities, officials from across the region will have in-depth discussions on the promotion of children's rights to health, education and protection.

"Despite the fact that children's growth in the region and the world is improving ... many children are still suffering because of war, violence, discrimination, poverty, disease and a worsening environment," said Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping.

"These consultations represent the start of something that has great potential to help build a better future for the children of this region," said Anthony Lake, UNICEF's Executive Director. "It is my hope this meeting will not only foster closer and stronger cooperation among the region's nations, but also help strengthen political commitment to address disparities in advancing children's rights."

Officials will focus their discussion around three key themes: namely achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with equity; enhancing children's lives through improved disaster risk reduction; and child protection and welfare. The three themes were selected as issues of growing significance and common concern for countries across the Asia Pacific region.

To ensure the MDGs are achieved with equity, greater efforts are required to reach and empower the poorest and most vulnerable communities. By sharing knowledge and experiences in dealing with issues of disparity and inequity, particularly in public resource allocation, countries will greatly enhance their ability to tackle these issues and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the MDG targets.

Children in the Asia-Pacific region continue to face serious child protection challenges, varying by country, but including sex selection, early marriage, violence and abuse, and trafficking. Addressing, and preventing, these problems requires a comprehensive and effective child protection and child welfare system, which is not an easy task for any government. This reinforces the need for greater exchange of experiences and cooperation between countries.

Through greater cooperation considerable gains can also be made in child-centred disaster reduction strategies. As the recent floods in Pakistan and China have reminded us, the Asia-Pacific region is extremely vulnerable to disasters, including those related to climate change. It is children who suffer most.

This meeting will look at how countries can work together more effectively for the benefit of all children and provide opportunities to strengthen cooperation.

Source: [UNICEF](#)