A World Fit for Children

Established by the United Nations to promote the well-being of children around the world, International Children's Day is celebrated annually on November 20, the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child spells out the basic human rights that all children should have. A Child's Rights consist primarily of:

1. the right to survival;
2. the right to develop to the fullest;
3. the right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation;
4. the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

Since its adoption by the UN in 1989, after more than 60 years of advocacy, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified quicker and by more states than any other human rights instrument. Malta signed the treaty in January 1990 and ratified it in September 1990. Its basic premise is that children, defined as all human beings below the age of 18 years, are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings.

The Convention is a comprehensive instrument which sets out rights that define universal norms for the status of children. It enunciates children's fundamental human rights and freedoms and takes into account their need for special assistance and protection due to their natural vulnerabilities. It is the only international human rights treaty to include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Upon ratification, States commit themselves to respecting all these rights. It is the full responsibility of these states to ensure that the Convention is implemented to recognise inherent dignity and equal rights to all children and to celebrate freedom, justice and peace in the world. This Convention does not distinguish between race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

A safe family environment is paramount for the full and harmonious development of a child's personality. Children must be brought up in an atmosphere shrouded in peace, love, dignity, happiness, freedom, equality and understanding. By reason of physical and mental immaturity, children need special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, from the womb.

Celebrating Children's Rights

Promoting and safeguarding Children's rights is an integral part of the mission of Agenzija APPOGG. APPOGG safeguards children's rights to be protected, to live in a family and to voice their wishes and thoughts. It does this not only through services which help children directly, but also through other services which help the parents or carers, the family and the social system in which the child lives in.

APPOGG believes that the child lives within, and belongs, to the family. Thus, by

providing support and guidance to the family, it is helping the child to live in a healthy and safe family environment. APPOGG also believes that a child's right to live within a family is to be safeguarded as much as possible and whenever possible.

APPOGG also offers therapeutic services to children and families which aim at offering therapy and support to children victims of abuse, children living out of thier own home, children witnessing domestic violence, children with challenging behaviour and others, as well as to their parents or carers. Various other specialized services for children facing difficult situations are offered, including Child Protection services, Fostering services, and services for children experiencing family breakdown and court procedures. Also, APPOGG operates a childcare and family day centre in Cottonera and now also in Birkirkara, and also offers a wide spectrum of other support services in order to provide a holistic service to all service users and aimed at promoting the well-being of children and families.

Children's Day 2007

Children's Day is celebrated internationally on the 20th November. UNESCO observes this day as the **Universal Children's Day** "to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children. It recommended that the Day was to be observed also as a day of activity devoted to promoting the ideals and objectives of the Charter and the welfare of the children of the world". (*Source: www.unesco.org*)

Each year in commemoration of International Children's Day, Agenzija APPOGG calls on various entities to celebrate and promote children's rights, which are the foundation for a thriving human rights culture. Agenzija APPOGG will once again take up the commitment to commemorate and mark the International Children's Day locally, creating further awareness of their rights, and conveying messages to society at large on pertinent issues specifically related to childhood.

This year, Agenzija APPOGG has once again teamed up with the Ministry for Education, Youth and Employment, the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, and the Office of the Commissioner for Children, to hold an afternoon of activities for all children and their families. This event is possible with the collaboration of the *Kunsill Malti għall-Isport* and the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, and is being sponsored by the HSBC Cares for Children's Fund.

This fun and joyful event, entitled (Awaiting feedback from Charlo` re this) will be celebrating childhood with the maximum possible participation of children, youth and the whole family. It is going to be held at the picnic area at Ta' Qali on Sunday 25th November, between 12pm and 4pm. The chosen theme for this year's International Childen's Day is (unkown – Charlo`). The general public especially families with children are being encouraged to attend this event, which will be free of charge!

During this activity, the Ta' Qali picnic area will be transformed into an activity area where children, young people and all family members can enjoy four hours of free entertainment. In this area, there will be various games organised such as tug-of-war, volleyball, football, basketball, bouncy castle, bicycle rides, mountain climbing, and many other games. There will also be animators, balloon shapers, face painters, pony rides, Xummiemu show, an open air disco, film and cartoon characters to provide the best entertainment possible. The Police Dogs, Scouts and the Fire Brigade will also be

participating.

At the same time, there will be young local talent, who will be singing and dancing on the main stage, together with the participation of well-known artists. Various sports, political and television personalities, among others, have been invited to pass on their positive messages throughout the event on this day dedicated to children.

Another initiative included in this event is the discussion corner. Children and young people present will be invited to participate in a short discussion about children's rights, based on the style of speakers' corner associated with the popular Hyde Park in London. The Education Department is also promoting this initiative among children and young people in schools.

The environment and its conservation will also be highlighted during this activity. The Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, with the 34U campaign, is organising a tree planting event as part of the celebrations on World Children's Day. This will be accompanied by various plays about the appreciation of our environment. Moreover, children and young people are being invited to celebrate International Children's Day by planting a tree as part of the 34U campaign. Those interested in participating are being requested to send an email on 34U@gov.mt.

Furthermore, there will be stands providing healthy food which will help in promoting healthy eating amongst children and their families. Safe use of the internet is another theme that will be highlighted in this year's Children's Day. Agenzija APPOGG together with the Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology will be setting up a stand with a set of lap tops in order to promote and provide information on the safe use of the Internet.

For further details on APPOGG and its services one could call Agenzija APPOGG Supportline 179 or visit www.appogg.gov.mt. Agenzija APPOGG forms part of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, which also incorporates Agenzija Sedqa (www.sedqa.gov.mt) and Agenzija SAPPORT (www.sapport.gov.mt).

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