

LTTE Political Head and CPA meets UNICEF Head

Meeting was held between the Head of UNICEF, Ms JoAnna van Gerpan, and the Head of LTTE Political Division on 19 July morning. This meeting was preceded by a meeting with the Child Protection Authority (CPA) in Kilinochchi. Ms van Gerpan represented the 1612 Task Force monitoring body as well as UNICEF at these meetings. The issues discussed are listed below.



Age of recruitment: With respect to the 1612 Action Plan of the LTTE, Tamilselvan reiterated to the Head of UNICEF, LTTE's commitment to end membership of those under the age of 18 in its organization by end of this year.

The 135 cases from the northern districts that remain in the UNICEF database but are not with the LTTE: CPA raised the issue of alleged 135 cases of underage youths in the LTTE from the northern districts that remain in the UNICEF database. CPA has repeatedly requested UNICEF to validate the correctness of these cases because these are not with the LTTE ranks. UNICEF promised to complete such a process soon.



Eastern cases: CPA informed UNICEF that a process has been launched to deal with the cases from the east. CPA has informed UNICEF in the past that dealing with the eastern cases has remained problematic due to the attacks by the Sri Lankan military and the resulting massive displacement. CPA said that an undercover process has now been set in motion by the CPA to trace and release these cases if they are found to be with the LTTE.

Others quoting UNICEF erroneously: Two very recent biased statements by others quoting UNICEF-Sri Lanka were discussed by CPA with UNICEF at the meeting. One is an article that appeared in the 27 April issue of the Dominion Post of New Zealand. The article was written by someone from UNICEF-New Zealand. Ms van Gerpan said that if the article had been sent to her office for comments it would have been corrected but it was not sent to her. The article quoted unnamed UNICEF officials in Batticaloa but UNICEF asserted that no such communication took place. The second statement was made by Ambassador Rock in New York on 5 June where he erroneously quoted UNICEF about the number of underage recruits by the LTTE. Both were accepted as errors that will be addressed by UNICEF-Sri Lanka.

Schools as safe zones for protection from aerial attacks: CPA raised the issue converting schools as safe zones for protection from aerial attacks. UNICEF raised the problem of monitoring the neutrality of areas surrounding schools that are declared as safe zones. It was suggested by CPA that consideration must be given to mark at least schools in the heavily populated areas such as Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu cities as safe zones. This was accepted as a worthy suggestion by UNICEF that could be pursued.

19 July 2007