

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

**National Convention on Right to Education and Abolition of Child Labour:
Freedom and Dignity for All Children**

11th & 12th December 2008 – Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

.....

NOTE FOR THE PRESS

Introduction:

On 12th June 2008, the World Day Against Child Labour had declared 'education as best response for the child labour' as its theme for this year. In pursuance of this theme, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) along with UNICEF & ILO conducted a Workshop on 12th June 2008. It was followed up with a series of Regional Consultations on the issue. These Consultations were held in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. There is a proposal to continue with such consultation in Gujarat, Maharashtra and in other States.

The Consultations have shown very clearly the need for a total abolition of child labour in the country. It highlighted the exploitation, suffering and servitude of children, who have not attended school and are engaged in work. It also showed how relentless action by both the Government as well as NGOs in some areas have resulted in a large number of children being withdrawn from work and sent to schools. The Consultations showed that it is possible to abolish all forms of child labour in the country if a serious effort is made in this direction. The Consultations also resulted in a set of principles which had to be adhered to if every child has to enjoy her right to education. These include:

- i. A very clear stand that all forms of child labour are to be abolished and a need for an amendment to the existing Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. This amendment to be in the nature of removal of regeneration of child labour and towards total prohibition of child labour.
- ii. To protect the rights of children till they are 18 years of age and ensure that all of them attend full-time formal schools as a matter of right.
- iii. A strong enforcement of the law to abolish child labour as well as an optimum utilization of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 to enable withdrawing children from work and ensuring that all of them attend schools.

The Consultations also emphasized the need to ask the question 'how' to get children to schools rather than get into endless debates on 'why' children are in work. It felt that the question on 'how' to get children to school would provide for concrete measures for abolition of child labour whereas the question 'why' children are at work will only provide excuses and rationalization for continuance of child labour.