**DIRECTOR-GENERAL’S DRAFT REMARKS FOR THE OPENING OF THE “THROUGH THE EYES OF SOMALI YOUTH” PHOTO EXHIBITION,**

**22 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Mr. Steven Lauwerier, UNICEF Representative for Somalia,**

**Dear Colleagues,**

**Invited guests,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**I am pleased to be with you today for the opening of this exhibition of photographs by Somali children, entitled “Through the Eyes of Somali Youth”.**

**I am grateful to UNICEF for organizing this event, and for bringing these wonderful photographs to the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON).**

**As you know, these photos are the product of an imaginative UNICEF project in which nearly 1,000 Somali children were trained in photography**

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**skills, provided with cameras, and asked to express their ideas and feelings on their lives and communities through this medium.**

**The result is both instructive and inspiring.**

**Instructive because the photos give us a rare glimpse into the daily lives of Somali children, depicting the challenges they face growing up in the particular Somali context, but also showing us how much they share with kids growing up in any other part of the world, with the centrality of**

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**family, friends, school and play clearly evident.**

**Inspiring because one can see in the photos how enthusiastically the children engaged in the project, and how skillfully they were able to express their ideas and feelings, after just some basic training. These photos show a very high standard and understanding of the power of the visual image.**

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**I understand that some of the photos have already been displayed in Belgium and Scotland, in addition to Mogadishu and Hargeisa. I am glad that all of us here at UNON now have the opportunity to view and learn from them.**

**UNON is a very appropriate venue for this exhibit. This is the only UN Headquarters in Africa and in the global South. From this compound,**

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**over 3,500 staff members from some 27 UN entities work on a daily basis to assist some of the world’s most vulnerable populations, including in Somalia.**

**The exhibition is also very timely. In just three days, world leaders will gather in New York to adopt the landmark 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs will build on the incredible achievements made in the MDGs over the past 15 years and will seek to complete what**

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**has not been done, in areas of critical importance for people in Somalia, throughout Africa and around the world.**

**In conclusion, I would like to thank the UNICEF Representative, Mr. Lauwerier, and Ms. Kate Holt, who spearheaded this photography project. I would also like to express my appreciation to all the teachers in Somalia who were involved in the**

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**initiative, as well as to all the young artist-photographers who participated in the project and who allowed us to experience a little bit of the world, through their own eyes.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**

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