



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Canada to be Represented at the  
International Tent Pegging Championships  
by UNICEF Team Canada**

*Ancient equestrian event features Canadian team for the first time*

Toronto, Ontario – 06 January 2007

*"I am humbled to compete alongside some of the world's foremost equestrian athletes, but proud to do so on behalf of Canada," said Akaash Maharaj. "I am especially honoured to serve as a UNICEF representative, and to ride not only for our country, but also for the cause of children toiling in child labour."*

"I am pleased to announce that UNICEF Team Canada will represent our country when the Sultanate of Oman hosts the International Tent Pegging Championships in March," said the Hon Hal Jackman, team Equerry. "The UNICEF Team Canada Stewards - the Hon Frank McKenna, the Hon David Peterson, and the Hon Brian Tobin - join me in wishing Akaash Maharaj, our team's rider, the best of luck as the first athlete to take the maple leaf to the international championships of one of the world's oldest equestrian sports."

Tent pegging has been practiced for 2 500 years and is one of only ten recognised disciplines of the Fédération internationale équestre, the global governing body for Olympic and international equestrian sport. Galloping riders use sword and lance to spear targets. The term "tent pegging" descends from the historical use of tent stakes as targets during exercises held in cavalry encampments.

"I am humbled to compete alongside some of the world's foremost equestrian athletes, yet proud to do so on behalf of Canada," said Maharaj. "I am especially honoured to serve as a UNICEF representative, and to ride not only for our country, but also for the cause of children toiling in child labour."

In a unique Canadian arrangement, the team declined to seek corporate sponsorship, and instead donated its naming rights to UNICEF. "By riding under UNICEF's banner in Oman, our team hopes to lend prominence to and therefore advance the organisation's efforts to help working children realise their right to education," said Maharaj.

An estimated 246 million children worldwide are engaged in child labour. Many of these children have no access to a quality education that could help pull them out of the cycle of poverty. With this initial event, UNICEF Team Canada is supporting the organisation's work with the Sishushiksha Karmasuchi (SSK) project in West Bengal, India, to establish community-based alternative learning centres for children working in dangerous conditions. The children who will benefit from these centres work primarily in zari (embroidery) workshops, sewing beads and glitter for up to 20 hours a day, or scavenge for coal near open pit mines.

“UNICEF relies entirely on voluntary contributions and support for our work,” said Nigel Fisher, President and CEO of UNICEF Canada. “Akaash has a life-long history of service to UNICEF, and this landmark partnership through UNICEF Team Canada will help mobilise the will and the resources to protect some of the world's most vulnerable children.”

- 30 -

#### **Contact**

Tilla Seh  
Media Relations Officer  
UNICEF Canada  
(416) 482 4444 ext 814  
tseh@unicef.ca

Michael Van Dusen  
Office of Akaash Maharaj  
(416) 570 0203  
mvd@sympatico.ca

#### **Editors' Notes**

- See [www.unicef.ca](http://www.unicef.ca) for additional information on UNICEF Canada
- See [www.tentpegging.ca](http://www.tentpegging.ca) for additional information on the members of UNICEF Team Canada, the sport of tent pegging, and the championships.

