

**Statement by the WHO Director-General on the occasion of
the global launch of the *World report on child injury prevention***

10 December 2008

I am pleased to launch the groundbreaking *World report on child injury prevention*. Let me thank our colleagues at UNICEF for joining us in this undertaking.

Let me also thank the many experts, in many fields, who contributed to the report. Your efforts help raise awareness about a health and development problem of considerable importance.

Using tools like immunization, the world has made huge progress in reducing mortality among children under the age of five years.

But once children reach the age of nine, the biggest threat to their survival comes from unintentional injuries. These injuries have a number of causes. Among the leading causes are road traffic crashes, drowning, burns, falls, and poisonings. Nearly all of these injuries could have been prevented.

The price of failure is high. On current estimates, unintentional injuries claim the lives of around 830,000 children worldwide every year.

For children who survive an injury, many will suffer long-lasting, if not permanent, disabilities.

These are high costs for families, societies, and the health care system.

Today, with the launch of this report, our emphasis is firmly placed on prevention. The report sets out the best available research, evidence, and advice about what works to prevent childhood deaths and disabilities from injuries.

Evidence is the solid starting point. What we need now is action on two fronts. First, we need to integrate these proven preventive measures into existing programmes and agendas for child survival. This is the best route to widespread implementation.

Second, as part of efforts to strengthen health systems, we need to ensure that health services for children are better able to manage the consequences of injuries, including broken limbs, burns, poisoning, mental trauma, and long-term disability.

Doing so will allow more children to thrive as they survive.

WHO looks forward to supporting world efforts to address child injuries on both of these fronts.

Thank you.