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International pop star Shakira honoured by UN agency for work on social justice



ILO Director-General Juan Somavia (left) and recording artist Shakira

3 March 2010 – The United Nations labour agency today honoured internationally-acclaimed recording artist and humanitarian Shakira for her efforts to promote the advancement of children and youth worldwide.

Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labour Organization (**ILO**), described the artist as a “true ambassador for children and young people, for quality education and social justice,” as he presented her with a medal as part of the agency’s ongoing events marking the World Day of Social Justice.

Shakira was honoured for her Barefoot foundation which provides nutrition and education to more than 6,000 children in her native Colombia, as well as support and training for their parents and their communities.

She is also one of the founding members of the “ALAS foundation,” which promotes public policies for children across Latin America and the Caribbean.

“We are pleased to honour what you are doing, to enable children and young people living in poverty to benefit from the empowering role and the transforming capacity of a quality education,” said Mr. Somavia.

Shakira noted that the work done by Barefoot and ALAS is deeply tied to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and the agency's commitment to justice and peace by creating decent work for parents, protecting the working conditions of teachers and eradicating child labour.

"It's not too late to keep our promise to our children, but we must act now. Together, we can make education and decent work for all a reality," she told the hundreds of guests at today's ceremony in Geneva, which included ILO staff, members of the diplomatic community and high-level representatives from UN organizations.

The Grammy award-winning musician, who is also a global Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**), said witnessing poverty, injustice and inequality "shaped my dream and my vision of social justice: to see a world where every child can live a dignified life with the opportunity to reap the benefits of a good education and a chance to pursue their dreams."

In 2007, the UN declared 20 February as the World Day of Social Justice to draw global attention to efforts to eradicate poverty and promote social well-being, equality and full and decent employment.

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