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CITY OF ATHENS
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PRESS RELEASE
ATHENS BACKS CITY OF PEACE INITIATIVE

Athens Mayor Nikitas Kaklamanis and World Centres of Compassion for Children International (WCCCI) founder and chairman Betty Williams today underlined the need to take action to raise public awareness of issues affecting children. During a press conference at City Hall, Mayor Kaklamanis and Ms Williams announced details of a benefit concert featuring Mario Frangoulis and Laria Fabian, to take place tomorrow evening at the Herod Atticus theatre.

The concert is being co-organised by the City of Athens and WCCCI with the aim of supporting the latter and creating the first "City of Peace" for children who live in high-risk regions.

WCCCI constitutes one of the most significant modern "relief" and protection efforts for children who live in regions considered high-risk due to war, political instability, economic and social poverty. The organisation plans to create a "City of Peace" in safe areas. Nobel Prize winners the Dalai Lama, Mikhail Gorbachev, Lech Walesa and Oscar Arias Sanchez count among WCCCI's supporters.

In welcoming Ms Williams, a Nobel Prize recipient herself, Mayor Kaklamanis stated:

"The world in which we live reserves many surprises for us – both negative and positive. It is disturbing to think that our children, the future of our world, are trapped in the dead-end of a world they did not choose. A world which was built with illegal and barbaric means. A world which deprives them of happiness, optimism and innocence.

The world, however, also reserves good surprises for us, as we confirm the existence of great reserves of humanity and interest. In order to put a stop to the exploitation of children, for which adults are responsible, we are obliged to draw attention to humanitarian work and set an example for others to follow.

We decided to embrace and support this 'relief' effort to establish a 'City of Peace' for children who live in regions considered high-risk due to war, political instability and economic and social poverty. We are pleased and honoured to welcome Nobel Prize winner Betty Williams, Lara Fabian, WCCCI Italy representative Enzo Cursio and Mario Frangoulis to the city of Athens.

We would like to invite everyone to unite their voices with those of Mario Frangoulis and Lara Fabian so that we can take action and strengthen the fragile future of our planet. Compassion and humanity are values which form part of our way of life.

When the voices of Mario Frangoulis and Lara Fabian are combined with emotion, the result is enthralling. Such initiatives offer a ray of hope in a world near devoid of humanity. We invite you to share this optimism with us tomorrow evening at the Herod Atticus theatre."

WCCCI chairman Betty Williams thanked Mayor Kaklamanis and stated:

"Mr Mayor, I am eternally grateful to you. Your example is an inspiration to many others. Both you and the city of Athens will go down in history as the city which etched out a path aimed at securing a better future for our children."

Ms Williams then outlined the role and aims of the WCCCI:

"It is all for the children. The statistics speak for themselves. More than 30,000 children die each day due to war, epidemics and abuse. WCCCI is a vehicle for change which points to a new road. A philanthropic movement which supports the rights of those who cannot protect themselves... our most vulnerable citizens, children! The area of Basilicata in Southern Italy is our first partner in this dream which we hope to turn into reality, one which will take on global dimensions. However, we do need your help."

Ms Williams noted that Greece must feel enormously proud of Mario Frangoulis, a WCCCI Ambassador of Peace. She said tomorrow's concert was one of five Frangoulis would present, one on each continent. Ms Williams said WCCCI aims to create "Cities of Peace" throughout the world.

Internationally-renowned performer Lara Fabian said:

"Children are the future and Betty Williams is carrying out very important work. When children do not have the opportunity to achieve their goals as people, the rest of us suffer. We are obliged to give children the opportunity to live life so that we can ensure the continued existence of humankind.

As a woman, mother and artist, peace is a concept which concerns me a great deal. I call on all of you to convey this message of peace in order to save the children and protect the future of our world."

Mario Frangoulis made the following statement:

"Music unites us. It brings harmony to a chaotic universe, in the same way the issue of children's rights unites all of us! It goes beyond differences in religion, age, culture and country of residence. My role as Ambassador of Peace is to represent this movement as music can speak to the hearts of children and knows no limits. I believe it is the best way of communicating the intelligence and truth of a child's soul. When you look into the eyes of a child, it is as if you are listening to music. When a child plays, again you hear music. That is why I believe music is the best way to convey the messages of children. It is also a unique way for us, as adults, to communicate with the innocent child inside each one of us."

For further information see the website www.wccci.org or contact:

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