

## FOR IMMEDIATELY RELEASE

### Michelle Yeoh urges parents to put helmets on their children

*Ho Chi Minh City, 30 October 2008* - International Film Star and Road Safety Goodwill Ambassador Michelle Yeoh is visiting Ho Chi Minh City today, October 30<sup>th</sup>, to join thousands of young children in a march for road safety and to celebrate the launch of a new television commercial (TVC) about child helmet use.



The new TVC depicts helmet-wearing parents who, while riding with their helmet-less child, are involved in an accident. The helmets save the parents, but tragically the child does not have the same protection and is fatally injured. This commercial is one of a long list of critical and highly visible contributions of the Vietnam Helmet Wearing Coalition (VHWC), led by the Asia Injury Prevention (AIP) Foundation, to improving road safety in Vietnam.

Michelle Yeoh has been a tremendous ambassador for children's road safety in Vietnam. In March, she came to Hanoi to support AIP Foundation's helmet wearing campaign. While in Vietnam, she visited many children who had suffered head injuries in road accidents, chaired discussions on helmet wearing issues with young University students, and participated in a helmet wearing ceremony for *Helmets for Kids*.

Michelle Yeoh said: "I have personally seen the pain of a family who has lost a child in an accident, and I hope my visit to HCMC and the activities of the helmet campaign will help to change parents' behavior so that no one else ever has to experience such tragedy." She continued: "Unfortunately, many parents reject helmets for their kids out of a mistaken perception that helmets are unsafe for children. The new commercial is powerful and somewhat unsettling, but makes parents reflect on the risks of letting their children ride without a helmet."

Prof. Dr. Truong Van Viet, former Director of Cho Ray Hospital, said: "It is critical that parents understand that an appropriate child helmet will keep kids safe. Wearing a helmet does not injure the necks of children, and I will do all I can to make sure parents get the right information to protect their children."

One of the major efforts of AIP Foundation has been to work with the government to make sure that road safety legislation and enforcement continues to improve. Greig Craft, President of AIP Foundation said: "Besides changing parents' behavior, this commercial will hopefully influence lawmakers who should include a legal penalty for the adults driving a motorbike when they have child passengers under 14 who are not wearing a helmet." --quote Unicef--

Than Van Thanh, Chief Secretariat of the National Traffic Safety Committee said: "We have been working hard to improve the road traffic safety situation in Vietnam, and we have made impressive strides. However,

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most of the success has been with adults, and so now we are turning our attention to children. Michelle Yeoh's visit fits well within other efforts by the Vietnamese Government to improve public understanding and government capacity in order to keep Vietnam's children safe."

"We are very excited to help make Michelle Yeoh's visit possible. It will be wonderful for our city," said HCMC People Committee Vice Chairman Nguyen Thanh Tai. "We've been very involved in improving the traffic situation here for both economic and social reasons, and one of the groups we certainly need to highlight are children."

Earlier today, Michelle Yeoh, Nguyen Thanh Tai and Greig Craft joined 2000 children in a "March for Road Safety" through Le Duan Boulevard. The march started with a *Helmets for Kids* ceremony at Reunification Palace where the film actress taught pupils of Nguyen Thai Hoc Primary school about the benefits of helmets, with the support of international organizations including the FIA Foundation and Safe Kids Worldwide.

Saul Billingsley, Deputy General Director of FIA Foundation said: "Our donation of helmets for this event is only a part of our work around the world on road safety, but we think this is an ideal moment to push for a global effort on this issue. In order to do that, we are also calling on the UN General Assembly to make 2010-2020 a 'Decade of Action for Road Safety', like the 'Decade to Roll Back Malaria' which was approved in 2001."

Mitch Stoller, CEO of Safe Kids Worldwide also lent his support, saying, "Targeting injury prevention of children is the goal of Safe Kids Worldwide. We are happy to support this intervention."

This highly visible *Helmets for Kids* program and the symbolic walk around the center of HCMC will raise the visibility of children as vulnerable road users in Vietnam. The March will highlight the more than 4,000 children who are expected to die this year in road traffic accidents, deaths that could be mostly prevented by the use of a helmet.

**About Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIP Foundation):** The Asia Injury Prevention Foundation is an American non-profit organization whose goal is to improve road safety in the developing world. Since 1999, AIP Foundation has donated over 350,000 helmets through its *Helmets for Kids Program*. In 2002, AIP Foundation established Protec, the world's only not-for-profit commercial helmet company that designed the revolutionary and low-cost "tropical helmet" now produced in Vietnam. AIP Foundation also has developed a national road safety curriculum in 2004, which has been recognized by the Department of Education and Training for traffic safety in all primary schools in Vietnam.

**About the Vietnam Helmet Wearing Coalition (VHWC):** The VHWC was founded in 2007 and is a public-private partnership devoted to increasing helmet use in Vietnam. Chaired by the AIP Foundation, the VHWC includes the National Traffic Safety Committee, Asian Development Bank, AusAid, FIA Foundation, Intel Products Vietnam, Michelin Singapore, the Royal Danish Embassy, the US Embassy, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization. The VHWC has been

instrumental in formulating a comprehensive public awareness campaign to boost helmet wearing and improve general road safety protocol.

**About Michelle Yeoh:** Michelle Yeoh is an acclaimed film actress who has appeared in films including "Tomorrow Never Dies", "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon", and "Sunshine". She has increased her charitable activities and become a passionate champion for child helmet use in Vietnam as well as a proponent for global road safety in the developing world.

**About FIA Foundation:** The FIA Foundation is an independent UK registered charity that manages and supports an international agenda devoted to promoting road safety, environmental protection, and sustainable mobility, as well as funding specialist motor sport safety research. Since 2007, FIA Foundation has actively promoted road safety in Vietnam and organized the support of Desmond Tutu and Michelle Yeoh to advocate for increased helmet use.

**About Safe Kids Worldwide:**

Safe Kids Worldwide is a global network of organizations whose mission is to reduce preventable childhood injury, a leading killer of children 14 and under. Founded in 1987 by Children's National Medical Center with support from Johnson & Johnson, today the Safe Kids network encompasses 17 countries, some of which have achieved amazing results. These grassroots efforts bring together health and safety experts, educators, corporations, foundations, governments and volunteers to educate and protect families.