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Decision to call a World Summit for Children (Memo to the Secretary-General from James Grant); 1989: 14 November

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Notes

Attachments: *Statement of Agreement on the World Summit for Children - Statement on the Call for the World Summit for Children. [Copy in room 1326-2.]*

Print Name of Person Submit Images


Signature of Person Submit

Number of images
without cover

EDWIN RAMNER

8

14 November 1989

TO: The Secretary-General
FROM: James P. Grant 
RE: Decision to call a World Summit for Children

Thank you very much for your time last Friday, and for your continuing encouragement and support on the World Summit for Children initiative.

I am pleased to report that, at their meeting here in Geneva Sunday and yesterday, the Governments of Canada, Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden formally decided to call the Summit. They are now reporting this decision to other Governments, and their Permanent Representatives will request a meeting with you next Monday (20 November) to report the decision and to ask for your "good offices" in assisting them. Ambassador Fortier, as the only Permanent Representative who participated in Geneva, will request the meeting for his five colleagues.

I am also pleased to report that, in response to the concern about "discriminating" between Heads of State or Government (ie, "inviting" the 41 UNICEF Board members, while only "welcoming" the rest), the six Initiators agreed that the Heads of all Member States should be invited equally. The only distinction is that the letter to the 41 Board members should also say: "Since your country is a member of the UNICEF Executive Board, charged by the General Assembly with specific responsibility for guiding the world community's attention to children, Your Excellency's personal participation is especially encouraged."

Further, in response to the concern that you would be confronted with conflicting expectations for your participation between the General Assembly and the Summit, the six Initiators agreed to reduce the planned timeframe for the Summit - to begin only in late afternoon on Wednesday, 26 September, and then meet all day on Thursday, 27 September 1990. Importantly, they decided that they will ask that the General Assembly suspend its General Debate during these eight hours. They are confident that they can secure support for this proposal with other Governments, and are now beginning to lobby for it.

The Initiators will establish an expanded Planning Committee to manage the Summit preparations. They propose to add eight countries to their group, almost all of whom have already expressed strong interest in participating. The eight are: China, India, Indonesia, Ireland (as the next President of the European Community), USSR, USA, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. The Initiators will ask your advice on Monday prior to inviting these additional Governments.

I should add that, now that they have taken the decision to call the Summit, the six appreciate their responsibility to ensure widespread support among other Governments and strong attendance by Heads at the Summit. The six are instructing their Permanent Representatives in New York, as well as their various Embassies, to begin that effort in earnest immediately.

These decisions are reflected in the enclosed "Statement of Agreement on the World Summit for Children", which details their plans, and in the text of the letter of invitation, as approved by the six Governments, which they propose for your signature. A brief "Statement on the Call for a Summit" is also enclosed.

The six Initiators are anxious that public announcement of the Summit be made soon so that Governments can take full advantage of the ten months remaining to prepare for it, and so that participation can be scheduled on the calendars of Heads of State and Government.

I assume that Mr. Dayal has informed you of the favorable outcome of our discussions on Friday afternoon. I believe that the above-cited decisions by the Initiators greatly reduce the possible problems.

On several occasions in the past year, you have noted the successes of the United Nations in the military/security field, and expressed the hope that we could find comparable opportunities to contribute on the economic and social side. The conviction of the six Initiators that the Summit for Children represents just such an opportunity led them to seek to strongly associate the United Nations, and your own leadership, with this independent initiative. I, too, am convinced that it offers the opportunity for a major United Nations success, and I look forward to working closely with our UN colleagues and sister agencies to ensure that it does.

cc: Mr. Dayal
Mr. Blanca
Mr. Gomez
Mr. Wyzner

Statement of Agreement on The World Summit for Children

Their Excellencies Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada, President Mubarak of Egypt, President Traore of Mali, President Salinas of Mexico, Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan and Prime Minister Carlsson of Sweden have agreed to call a World Summit for Children, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Wednesday and Thursday, 26-27 September 1990, to enhance political commitment for the benefit of children, nationally and internationally.

Personal Representatives of the six Initiating Heads of State or Government have consulted among themselves and with other Governments and with the Secretariat of the United Nations Children's Fund. They concluded their exploratory discussions with a meeting in Geneva on 12-13 November 1989, which agreed to the following elements as the basis for a World Summit of Heads of State or Government on Children.

Purpose

The purpose of The World Summit for Children is to bring attention and promote commitment, at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children, as key elements in the socio-economic development of all countries and human society. The meeting will also emphasize the particular impact on children of critical global problems. The aim is to stimulate new initiatives in all countries, and among the international community, to address those issues that most critically affect children for the decades ahead. The meeting will result in a Declaration of commitment to achieving these goals in the 1990s. The Initiators believe that the Summit also can accelerate ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Experience in recent years with the approaches known generally as the "Child Survival and Development Revolution" has demonstrated that dramatic progress can be achieved in reducing child deaths and improving child health and well-being. The necessary mobilization of multiple sectors of government and society to achieve this progress invariably requires the personal and active involvement of national leaders. It has also been demonstrated that this improvement in the survival of children through the involvement of parents contributes to a subsequent greater voluntary reduction in births.

The growing impact on children of several critical global problems - war and violence, poverty, debt, degradation of the environment, and drugs - must be a major concern of all political leaders. These issues present a challenge which demands concerted international action.

The Initiators would view a new commitment by the world's leaders to protect the lives of children and to promote their well-being as a reaffirmation of the obligation under the Charter of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations". Making the survival, development and well-being of children a focus and a test of successful development efforts would affirm that the ultimate purpose of development is to enhance human capabilities and the human condition.

Date and Venue

The Summit is called for Wednesday afternoon and Thursday, 26-27 September 1990. The Initiators propose and request that the General Debate of the 45th session of the United Nations General Assembly be recessed during the proceedings of The World Summit for Children.

Invitations

The Initiating Heads of State or Government, through their Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to extend invitations in their behalf personally to all Heads of State or Government, with special encouragement to the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the Executive Board of UNICEF. It is hoped that the invitations can be extended at the earliest possible date to allow all States to take full advantage of the available preparatory period.

Facilities and Secretariat

The Secretary-General is requested to make available for the Summit the facilities and services of the United Nations, and to provide a secretariat through the Secretariat of UNICEF and the United Nations Department of Conference Services, under the responsibility of the Executive Director of UNICEF.

Planning Committee

A Planning Committee for The World Summit for Children is constituted of Personal Representatives of the Initiating Heads of State or Government, as well as of such additional States as the Planning Committee, in consultation with the Secretary-General, may determine. The Personal Representatives of the Initiators shall facilitate the work of the Planning Committee.

Review by the Executive Board of UNICEF

The principal policy recommendations regarding the agenda and proposed substantive product of the Summit will be shared with the Executive Board of UNICEF for review and comment.

Draft Agenda

The draft agenda for the Summit includes the following:

1. Opening of the Summit, election of two co-chairs, adoption of agenda.
2. Statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
3. Address by the Executive Director of UNICEF.
4. General discussion of Objectives for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s.

[Several possible formats for the structure of the general discussion have been suggested, including: (a) 5-minute plenary statements by each participating Head of State or Government, or by representative Heads of State or Government; (b) a free exchange of views on key issues, in either closed or public session; or (c) some combination of the above.]

5. Adoption and signing of a World Declaration for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s.
6. Conclusion of the Summit.

Participation of all sectors of society

In the process of preparing for the Summit, all sectors of society are encouraged to consider their possibilities for contributing to the improved survival, protection and development of children. Important work in this field can be done by international organizations and institutions, non-governmental organizations, the media and professional associations, community organizations and public leaders, as well as authorities of government at various levels. The Initiators welcome efforts by UNICEF and other institutions to encourage this participation, and in various ways to seek to derive maximum benefit for children as a result of the call for the Summit.

Financial contributions toward the costs of the Summit

All Governments and non-governmental organizations and institutions are encouraged to contribute to the financing of the Summit and related activities, according to their means. The early pledges by Canada (C\$250,000), Pakistan (US\$50,000) and Mali (US\$50,000), as well as pledges totalling US\$150,000 by NGOs, are noted with appreciation.

Budget and administration

The Initiators request the Executive Director of UNICEF to propose a Budget and plan of administration for the preparation and organization of the Summit. They request the earliest possible review of this Budget by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and its advice to guide the Planning Committee in the establishment of a Budget. Voluntary contributions to this Budget by all Member States and non-governmental sources are encouraged.

The Initiators recognize that the Executive Board of UNICEF may also wish to authorize supplemental expenditures in support of activities related to the Summit, and to appeal for voluntary contributions to finance those activities.

The Initiators further request the Executive Director of UNICEF to propose a workplan for the Planning Committee, particularly including identification of those issues which can be addressed by a working group in New York to be designated by the Planning Committee, and those issues which should be reserved for action by the formal Planning Committee.

Geneva
13 November 1989

Statement on the Call for The World Summit for Children

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada, President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, President Moussa Traore of Mali, President Carlos Salinas de Gotari of Mexico, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan and Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson of Sweden have agreed to call a World Summit for Children, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Wednesday and Thursday, 26-27 September 1990, to enhance political commitment for the benefit of children, nationally and internationally.

The purpose of The World Summit for Children is to bring attention and promote commitment, at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children, as key elements in the socio-economic development of all countries and human society. The meeting will also emphasize the particular impact on children of critical global problems. The aim is to stimulate new initiatives in all countries, and among the international community, to address those issues that most critically affect children for the decades ahead. The meeting will result in a Declaration of commitment to achieving these goals in the 1990s. The Initiators believe that the Summit also can accelerate ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Experience in recent years with the approaches known generally as the "Child Survival and Development Revolution" has demonstrated that dramatic progress can be achieved in reducing child deaths and improving child health and well-being. The necessary mobilization of multiple sectors of government and society to achieve this progress invariably requires the personal and active involvement of national leaders. It has also been demonstrated that this improvement in the survival of children through the involvement of parents contributes to a subsequent greater voluntary reduction in births.

The growing impact on children of several critical global problems - war and violence, poverty, debt, degradation of the environment, and drugs - must be a major concern of all political leaders. These issues present a challenge which demands concerted international action.

The Initiators would view a new commitment by the world's leaders to protect the lives of children and to promote their well-being as a reaffirmation of the obligation under the Charter of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations". Making the survival, development and well-being of children a focus and a test of successful development efforts would affirm that the ultimate purpose of development is to enhance human capabilities and the human condition.

The Initiators will request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to extend invitations on their behalf to the Heads of State or Government of all States, with particular encouragement to those whose countries are members of the UNICEF Executive Board. The Initiators will also request that the Secretary-General make available for the Summit the facilities and services of the United Nations, and that UNICEF undertake responsibility as the Secretariat for the preparation and organization of the meeting.

In the process of preparing for the Summit, the Initiators encourage all sectors of society to consider their possibilities for contributing to the improved survival, protection and development of children. Important work in this field can be done by international organizations and institutions, non-governmental organizations, the media and professional associations, community organizations and public leaders, as well as authorities of government at various levels. The Initiators welcome efforts by UNICEF and other institutions to encourage this participation, and in various ways to seek to derive maximum benefit for children as a result of the call for the Summit.

Governments and non-governmental organizations and institutions are encouraged to contribute to the financing of the Summit and related activities, according to their means.

Geneva
13 November 1989