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Address by Mr. Karl-Eric Knutsson
Deputy Executive Director (Operations) of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Deputy Executive Director (Operations) of the United Nations Children's Fund
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Mr. Chairman
Distinguished delegates to the Council:

I convey greetings from the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. James P. Grant, and express his deep regret that he is unable to be among us today. On his behalf I would like to share with you some of UNICEF's primary concerns.

For all of us engaged in the endeavors of development cooperation, the mid-1980s present a different, confusing and often frightening landscape compared with only a decade ago. The tragedies of acute human, social and economic crises in a great number of African countries have resulted in a harsh assessment of the international and national development efforts of the last decades.

During the same years, attention, debate and energy have moved away from issues of development and more equity for the poor, towards the adaptation and adjustment of the poorer to the richer. Parallel with this, the flow of resources in the world has dramatically changed through decreased transfers for development purposes and increased monetary net flows from the poor to the rich. At the same time, the theoretical debate on development has faded, although much of what is presently taking place seems to confirm some basic assumptions in the centre-periphery models and the fact that after the temporary economic advance of some countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America during the 1970s, the gap between industrialized and developing countries has again been widening.

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Mr. Chairman:

1986 is the seventh year in a row in which developing countries, as a group, have experienced negative or negligible growth of income per capita. They have seen a leveling of development aid, a stagnation of developing country exports, and a decline in overall bank lending. Among the consequences are trends leading to massive retrenchment in public expenditures for health, education and other services vital to well-being. Particularly unfortunate is the fact that, from country after country, reports all too often indicate that women and children have been bearing a disproportionate burden of the recession and adjustment to it - from the loss of incomes and employment to often particularly severe cutbacks in government support services for mothers and children. This situation presents a serious challenge calling for realistic and vigorous analysis and bold action, which can again revitalize the struggle towards a more equitable and just development globally with a necessary bias in favour of the most exposed and vulnerable.

The post-World War II era has been the first in human history in which it has been possible to think seriously in terms of bringing the basic essentials of health and nutrition to all humanity, including, particularly, small children and mothers, who have throughout history suffered most terribly from the ravages of poverty and underdevelopment. Will the 1980s mark the moment that that opportunity was lost, at least for this century? Or will current difficulties serve rather as a spur to new levels of creativity in advancing toward the goal of primary health care for all by the year 2000?

Looking ahead...

None of us can fail to be moved by the tragedy of human losses that have resulted from recent global developments. Fortunately, I believe there is a growing international conviction that broad mobilization is required - not only to stop the human suffering, but to resume the attack on the structural failures that result in continued poverty and underdevelopment.

For this new mobilization to be successful, the United Nations system, under the guidance of the Member States, must provide an important part of the leadership and vision. As I shall discuss later, a number of encouraging steps are already well underway especially with reference to Africa and to the new potential for a child survival and development revolution. However, for these initial successes to be sustained, the UN system must consolidate these gains and find a means for replicating them on a more universal scale. With these challenges before us, this Council begins its triannual review of the UN system's operational activities. Guiding us in this difficult task is the very insightful and thought-provoking document prepared by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, which this session has before it. UNICEF has been carefully studying this document and I wish to underline several points made in the report which provide direction and vision to us, and perhaps to our partners:

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The fight against poverty

Let me speak bluntly. We live in a world in which the poor are all too often relatively neglected and forced to carry an undue share of difficulties. This neglect comes from governments, economic institutions, communities, and individuals - and yet, ironically none of these actors would wish it to be so. The international system should consider advocacy and action for the poor to be among its leading tasks. We have, in the combined resources of the IMF, the World Bank, WHO, ILO, UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and others, a unique operational capacity to help national governments address more effectively the poor's unmet human needs even in an era of relatively scarce resources in many countries. The time has come both to give the attack on poverty a far higher priority than the benign neglect so often afforded it in recent years with the preoccupation, first, on adjustment for national economic survival, and then, more recently, on adjustment for a return to economic growth, and to make it a rallying point for renewed efforts in inter-agency collaboration.

Adjustment policies with a human face

The economic upheavals of the last decade have found the international community both intellectually and organizationally unprepared in several ways. Intellectually, development and finance planners tended to view the world in a compartmentalized manner with financial and adjustment concerns separate from human concerns. Organizationally, national governments and international institutions have a similarly fragmented structure. As many have documented, the results of this type of approach are far from satisfactory and have resulted in needless human suffering. I urge the Council to examine this problem with urgency. I urge you to recommend ways in which the operational agencies can support a new approach to adjustment processes that will avoid and deter not only unnecessary human suffering but economically irrational mishandling of the human factor as well. We need adjustment policies which are more consciously designed to incorporate more of a human face.

The needs of women and their role in development

Much has been said and far too little done about the need not only to incorporate women into the development process but to turn that process into development for women. All delegates are well aware of UNICEF's concern in this regard. The points I want to make are: incorporate women into the development process - YES; turn that process into development for women - YES. But let us not forget in every step of these efforts that women must not only be the objects of development, they must also be the subjects of development. This different approach is not simply a matter of equity and justice (although that certainly is a sufficient motive) but is also a pre-requisite for success. National efforts that try to obtain a greater contribution from women without also ensuring a more equitable return are doomed to fail.

I recognize that this has been a necessarily brief highlighting of some of the issues before the Council in the context of the triannual operational activities review. These concerns have been expressed in somewhat further detail by a resolution of UNICEF's Executive Board contained in the documentation which is available to this body. We in the Secretariat will elaborate still further in a report being prepared for the General Assembly.

UNICEF's role: mobilizing people

Over the coming years one crucial element of the world community's response will be the effort to reverse the present slow-down of progress in improving - and in some cases the actual decline in - the health and well-being of children and mothers in a majority of developing countries. It is fortunate indeed that just as this setback has taken hold, one new development - largely a by-product of development progress of recent decades - holds forth the potential for truly major breakthroughs, even in our current lean times. Vigorous use of this new development over the past three years is already saving the lives of more than one million small children each year; truly vigorous support could mean annually saving the lives of 5 million small children - more than 10,000 each day - by 1990, and improving the health of more than 100 million more while also decreasing population growth and dramatically improving the well-being of women.

This new development is, of course, the new capacity - the major new potential - to communicate with the poor majority in developing countries. A literal transformation has taken place in virtually every country, no matter how poor or under-developed, in its capacity to communicate with its poor majority, and the signs of this transformation can be found essentially everywhere. The ubiquitous radio is now in the majority of the world's homes. In most countries there is at least a television or two in every village, and frequently in many homes, with the result that people throughout a country can know what is going on and how to do things.

This newly evolved capacity to communicate in low-income communities has coincided with the realization that major, grossly underutilized technological advances of recent years could bring about a revolution in the survival and development of children at a cost so low that virtually all countries could afford them with a modicum of international cooperation. UNICEF, along with our partners in the Child Survival and Development Revolution, continues to champion the widespread use of these measures, which are detailed in our annual report, The State of the World's Children, 1986. Though they hold such a strong potential, these techniques are as simple as oral rehydration therapy, newly improved vaccines, growth monitoring, breast feeding, better family spacing of children, and increased female literacy, to name a few. To be effective, however, all of these measures require that parents be aware of and use them, and this is where the newly expanded capacity to communicate elevates available technology to a new level of effectiveness.

Developmental problems now facing children are indeed complex. We believe that UNICEF's main contribution to their solutions lies in our practical

programmes that draw upon these resources newly available at the family, local, community and national levels. We forward the use of "social mobilization" approaches to promote the widespread use in community settings of basic services and primary health care practices such as those I have just mentioned. UNICEF, along with our sister organizations, is advocating methods we think provide the promise not only of saving lives, but of contributing significantly to building a sounder economic and social future for the "community" (be it the family, village or the nation) that uses them.

In order to achieve this, a fundamental shift must be accomplished from project-type intervention to support of nation-covering child development processes, and that shift must include a new strategy of mobilizing all existing and relevant resources.

This scope-expanding process which involves galvanizing and drawing on all of a nation's resources to conscientize the entire population about the possibility of bringing about an immediate improvement in the lives and prospects of children, is a powerful end in itself. An excellent example of re-ordering national priorities to better utilize available resources for effective solutions to the real problems of the populace was illustrated in a statement made by Dr. Mahbub-ul-Haq, Pakistani Minister for Finance, Planning and Economic Affairs, at the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in Seoul (October 1985):

"Must we spend a good part of our development budgets to provide facilities for the rich and privileged? I discovered from my own experience that it took only the postponement of one expensive urban hospital to finance the entire cost of an accelerated immunization and health care programme for all our children."

Not only are the poor effectively reached by a programme resulting from a shift in national priorities such as this, but because of the nature of the campaign they must also be active in making it happen. Involving the populace in national-level efforts for their own advancement is also a tremendous permanent asset - a means - for enabling other development programmes to take root and flourish in a relatively brief period. The people who have understood and appreciated the benefits for themselves in such an effort through active involvement in a total national endeavour are much more receptive to the introduction of ideas and programmes relating to such issues as family spacing, literacy, or environmental sanitation, which carry a promise of further improvements in their family lives. This is the pragmatic basis of sustainability. It is also the vindication of the "demand approach" to development as distinct from the outmoded "supply approach" which was a disguised continuation of the old colonial attitude that "the power elites exclusively knew best what people needed." That system failed to create an environment in which people would be actors in the daily drama of their own lives. Rather, they were relegated to a role as mere spectators or "beneficiaries" of putative development boons.

The impact that popular and political will expressed through social mobilization methods can have in bridging the gap between available yet

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underutilized technologies capable of solving a country's problems, and the widespread use of those technological advancements in the community setting, is dramatic. This is especially so given the short time perspective of three years or less during which these methods have been consciously applied. Their potential is glimpsed in results already achieved.

- At present, countries with more than 90 percent of the developing world's children are actively moving toward the United Nations goal of Universal Child Immunization by 1990. Vaccine use was up three-fold in 1985 over 1983, with the lives of nearly 800,000 children being saved as a consequence of these programmes, and the very real prospect - assuming continued serious attention to accelerated immunizations - that this could increase to nearly 4 million by 1990.
- The use of ORS packets was up 250 per cent in 1985 over 1983, to 250 million packets distributed worldwide, as well as the unquantifiable but greatly increased use of home brews for ORT. The potential of this effort is well exemplified by Egypt, which estimates that it is now saving the lives of more than 50,000 Egyptian children each year from an initiative launched in early 1983. More than 500,000 lives are now being saved worldwide, and WHO estimates that this could rise to well over 1.5 million by 1990 if the great majority of families become aware of ORT and have access to ORS.

The crisis in Africa

As delegates are aware, UNICEF has long expressed concern over the deteriorating situation in Africa. UNICEF called a special session of its Executive Board in late 1981 to warn that conditions were deteriorating and would lead to an acute emergency if not checked. In 1984, the Executive Director launched an emergency appeal for Africa within the context of the Secretary General's own special appeal. Since that time UNICEF has organized and executed a mass mobilization for Africa that has produced, among other results, \$US 110 million from an emergency appeal as well as an increase of our own staff in Africa by more than 130 core posts. UNICEF has also been particularly proud to be an active participant in OEQA, which we believe was an exemplary effort epitomizing how much can be accomplished through interagency collaboration. The emergency mobilization for Africa is clearly an example of how the system was tested and responded to the task.

The challenge we now face is not only to maintain the momentum in meeting emergency needs but also to use these as a springboard for addressing the underlying causes of the crisis. One major step in that regard was achieved in the successes of the recent Special Session of the General Assembly on Africa.

As delegations, the media and international leaders have pointed out, perhaps the most significant accomplishment of the Special Session has been to promulgate a new spirit of cooperation for Africa. Each party's contribution has shown its preparedness to make reforms and to take major initiatives. Of

the many tasks outlined by the Special Session, I would like to highlight a few points:

- The first issue involves the critical need to meet basic human needs. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the crisis is, above all, a human crisis. It is human beings who are both the cause for concern, and also the source for solutions. This means there is a necessity to pay far greater attention to helping people meet their basic needs as a strategy both to improve the quality of the lives, but also as a means toward long-term development. A tremendous potential exists in this context to achieve the goal of immunizing all of Africa's young children by 1990 against six major diseases that currently claim the lives of three quarters of a million young Africans each year. To promote this effort the Africa Regional Section of the World Health Organization has proclaimed 1986 the Year of Immunization. An encouraging start on the use of oral rehydration therapy is also being made, for which there is equally important potential in the years between now and 1990.
- Secondly, the concluding document of the session breaks new ground in recognizing the magnitude of the key role women play in development in Africa, without which development efforts will simply not succeed. To UNICEF's knowledge no international conference has been so foresquare in facing this reality.
- My third point stresses the need for a new place for Africa in the international economic environment. UNICEF was greatly pleased to see the degree to which delegates understood the very close linkages between the way the world economic situation functions and the difficulties Africans face in meeting their basic needs. We look forward to continued progress on these major financial issues and would especially like to underline the need to consider the impact of the various financial approaches before us on vulnerable groups such as women and children.

UNICEF will continue to do its part to assure that the opportunity which the Special Session has created is not lost. To this end, we look forward to lending our full cooperation and making all efforts to support the Secretary General and the Director General in accomplishing the tasks the Special Session has laid before them.

Mr. Chairman:

Africa deserves international solidarity and public support. The public reaction to the African crisis has demonstrated that the peoples of all nations are ready to give that support. Allow me to single out one recent such demonstration - the Sport Aid events with which UNICEF was associated. At Sport Aid's culmination, "The Race Against Time", 20-30 million people participated in hundreds of cities around the world. Together these people garnered some \$US 20 million to assist in relief and development activities in Africa. But perhaps of equal significance, they helped to force this issue back on to the world stage as an issue of public concern. It has not only

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been our goal at UNICEF to respond effectively to the critical situation in Africa that has elicited such a resounding cry from the world's populace; it has also been our aim to provide a medium for that message - and Sport Aid was just such an attempt. It was in my view a firm rebuttal of the myth of "development fatigue". Such fatigue may exist and germinate among experts who have become disappointed when their recipes did not work. It does not exist amongst people who have resolved that the continued suffering of our fellow humans is unconscionable and unacceptable. They may not be used to articulating this resolve in developmental theories. They have articulated it nonetheless by telling us loud and clear: "Here is our commitment, our solidarity, our energy. Use it." It is our responsibility to do just that and in doing so, to discover new opportunities for relating the United Nations to the real people of the world.

Mobilizing ourselves

It is not enough to talk about mobilizing people and resources. For this effort we need in the United Nations, UNICEF and our sister agencies the credibility and the leadership that can only be generated by better mobilizing ourselves - programmatically, organizationally and financially. This must be based on a clearly demonstrated commitment that every cent provided to us by government or private donors is a cent in trust and that it is entrusted to an organization of international civil servants who spell servants with a capital "S".

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to illustrate some steps taken by UNICEF in this direction. In 1981 we committed ourselves to increase the efficiency of our operations so as to permit maximum emphasis on programme delivery at field level - and maximum support to those who are on the "front lines" of that delivery. A few very brief examples of concrete results that have sprung from that commitment include:

- The consolidation of our widely scattered Headquarters Supply operation begun in 1983 has resulted in nearly one-quarter fewer staff now providing about double the output - with considerably shorter delivery times.
- The reduction of core personnel at Headquarters locations in New York, Geneva and Copenhagen and a major reallocation within the field. This was planned and executed within the past two bienniums to provide significant staff increases in Africa. 83 per cent of total UNICEF personnel are now in field locations, and there has been a decrease in the total numbers of staff at Headquarters locations. As we begin preparation of our budget proposals for the 1988-1989 biennium, we plan for an actual reduction in total posts. For 1986-87, consultant services have been reduced by 40 percent and travel by 25 percent.

Each of these adjustments was initiated even before the hard realities of the last years began to impact on UNICEF. But not even "pre-crisis" adjustments are easy. The human cost for staff members who are separated or relocated, and also for those on whose shoulders extra burdens are placed, is

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heavy. In terms of management time, the efforts reflected in these accomplishments have imposed heavy demands.

In restructuring and mobilizing ourselves as well as in supporting restructuring and mobilization in developing countries, our programme goal is, of course, to aid children and their societies in developing countries. However, the methods that we utilize are also geared to strengthen the whole family of multilateral institutions.

In this time of world crisis and of a crisis for multi-lateralism, the UN system should draw its strength and its solutions from its roots. The opening words of the Charter read "We the peoples of the United Nations" and it is to the people that we must now return. The economic and social problems before us require that people be mobilized; the political crises which confront us require their wisdom; and the difficulties that face our institution require that we bring them and their concerns back into these deliberations.

By inviting not only the peoples of the developing world but also their more privileged global co-citizens in the industrialized world to participate in a practiced, do-able and effective development for the generations of the future in a people-based movement, we will again be able to move the concerns for the "wretched of the earth" into the living rooms of people everywhere. This in the end is the only basis for a development cooperation that will last.

In this spirit of heralding the people-base of our efforts, on the occasion of our 40th Anniversary, we in UNICEF note with respect the dedicated efforts of tens of thousands of individuals, ranging from delegates to Executive Boards and government officials to volunteers and staff of National Committees and non-governmental organizations and members of the Secretariat, colleagues within the United Nations system, and allies in many fields. These are people who for forty years have crafted and sustained UNICEF as the world's lead agency for children.

We affirm anew that children should not die needlessly while means are readily at hand at modest cost to prevent their deaths, and that children must be assured a family and community environment in which they may grow - protected from disease, with adequate nutrition, proper sanitation, appropriate education, and opportunity for development as contributing citizens of their communities, their nations and their world.

We therefore appeal to all governments, organizations, institutions and individuals throughout the world, to:

1. Demonstrably strengthen their attention to the vital needs of children and their families as an essential protection for the future of each society despite current economic and political difficulties;
2. Mobilize all necessary efforts to achieve the significant acceleration in Child Survival and Development which is now possible, for which

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accomplishment of the United Nations goal of Universal Child Immunization by the year 1990 and expanded awareness, access to and use of Oral Rehydration Therapy represent readily achievable and essential first steps for the strengthening and expansion of primary health care and basic services for all communities; and

3. Sustain their determination that the first priority of society must be the protection, growth, and development of children, with whose future each current generation of humankind is entrusted.

Through these commitments to the work ahead, we strongly believe that UNICEF's 40 years of service for children can be commemorated in the most befitting manner, and that an essential contribution can be made toward fulfilling the Charter obligation of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations" by building a healthy foundation for the encouragement, nurturing and protection of a more peaceful world.

I thank the members of the Council for your support in the years past, and for your partnership in the years ahead.