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Message by Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
to the  
Conference on Children, Peace and Development

Erevan, Armenia  
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Message From James P. Grant  
Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund  
To The Conference on Children, Peace and Development  
Erevan - 31 August 1986

Children are our future. They are the ones who will carry forward our progress and our hopes for progress.

This is a seemingly obvious statement - one upon which all of us would agree. Yet when viewing the state of children in the world today, it is all too clear that these considerations are not heeded. Infant mortality remains at shockingly high levels; each day malnutrition robs many of our children of their future strength and each day the lack of adequate education pushes many of our children further into a realm of darkness. For much of the world, the last few years have been difficult ones and for many children conditions have not only failed to improve - they have actually deteriorated.

These sad facts assume a heightened sense of tragedy during the International Year of Peace. On the occasion of this special year, the United Nations has affirmed that peace is not merely the absence of war but the affirmative presence of development, health, education, and well-being.

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Fortunately, we need not simply accept our present inability to reach these goals, for our experience has shown that tremendous progress can be made despite difficult times. This conference can contribute much toward fostering an international response aimed at improving the living conditions of children. To achieve this goal of peace - with this Conference's focus on peace as the presence of social and economic development for children - we must mobilize all social organizations in the fight for measures that will affect child survival and development, including immunization and health for all, universal literacy, and many others. Achieving this mass mobilization requires the active participation of all social groups, particularly youth and children's groups, whom our experience has shown can and do play an especially valuable role. With governmental support and UNICEF involvement, youth groups in many countries have, for example, helped mobilize their communities to immunize their children, taught families to practice oral rehydration therapy, promoted breastfeeding, and helped move forward the numerous other steps needed to achieve what the U.N. General Assembly has called "a Revolution in Child Survival and Development".

Past successes show the potential for a truly dramatic breakthrough for children of the world, and therefore for the future of the world. It is a breakthrough that can only occur with support and participation of groups such as those represented at this Conference. Through your deliberations, I know we can help achieve a rapid acceleration of the involvement of child and youth-related groups in the campaign for peace through child survival and development. To these ends you can count on UNICEF's strongest support. I am eagerly looking forward to your success.