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Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. Chairman,
distinguished delegates:

As you begin your deliberations on the operational activities of the United Nations system, it is, of course, impossible to escape the harsh reality that these are particularly critical times for the world's children.

1986 is the seventh year in a row in which developing countries, as a group, have experienced negative or negligible growth of per capita income. They have seen a leveling of development aid, a stagnation of their 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 shouldered a disproportionate burden of the recession and adjustment to it - from the loss of incomes and employment to particularly severe cutbacks in government support services for these groups. The grave results show in such glaring indicators as a slackening in the decline of - and all-too-often an actual increase in - infant mortality rates.

Until these reversals occurred, the post-World War II era had been the first in human history in which it seemed reasonable to think seriously in terms of overcoming the worst aspects of absolute poverty and bringing the basic essentials of health and nutrition to all humanity. We have the know-how and the physical capacity to do so. But will the 1980s mark the moment that the opportunity of accomplishing this long-sought goal was lost, at least for this century? Or will current difficulties - as has happened so often in the past - 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?

Unfortunately, the likelihood is for losing this historic opportunity - and this was so even before the global recession deepened. But there is hope

if these dark times generate new creativity and new initiatives. As the members of this Committee are aware, innovative breakthroughs in our ability to mobilize social groups - from governments to populations to non-governmental organizations and above all to our own U.N. family of agencies - are proving so promising as to provide just that realistic glimmer of hope.

For this new mobilization to be successful, the United Nations system, under the guidance of the Member States, must play an important role - helping to provide leadership and vision. One important step in that process is this Committee's discussion of operational activities.

In addressing this agenda item I draw your attention to two documents before the Committee. One is the excellent and thought provoking triannual Policy Overview Report of the Director-General; the other is the report of UNICEF's Executive Board. As Executive Director of UNICEF I should begin with our Board's Report, but I would like to emphasize at the outset that there are a striking number of parallels, and in both cases we find priority accorded to the fight against poverty, the needs of women in development, a continuity between emergency and development activities particularly in Africa, and the need for alternative adjustment policies that better integrate social concerns.

Our common goals

The fight against poverty

Providing for the basic human needs of children in developing countries is the core of UNICEF's work and has been explicitly emphasized by General Assembly resolutions for the last 20 years. Sadly, as I outlined earlier, much of the momentum of the 1960s and 1970s towards achieving those goals has been threatened by the unfavorable developments of recent years. The challenge of today is how to adapt the basic needs approach by emphasizing certain "leading edges" or areas ripe for rapid progress so as to maintain - and even accelerate - that progress in the face of these difficulties. It was no doubt with this in mind that in 1982 the General Assembly, at the initiative of this Committee, urged the UNICEF Secretariat and myself:

"...to continue and intensify their innovative efforts to adapt the basic services approach for children in light of the current economic crisis, in accordance with the relevant decision of the Executive Board of the Fund."

In response to your instructions, the Executive Board and the Secretariat have evolved a strategy by now familiar to you as the "Child Survival and Development Revolution" - with its most visible components of Oral Rehydration Therapy and Universal Child Immunization. I know there is no need for me to repeat to you the details of these approaches, but I do wish to report to you the "bottom line" indicator of our progress: in 1985, WHO estimates that the lives of 800,000 children were saved as a result of accelerated immunization efforts and 500,000 children's lives were saved by accelerated oral rehydration efforts. Saving the lives of this many children in developing countries while reducing birth rates - and often actually saving money through

these initiatives - is of course a cause of great satisfaction for all of us. The members of this Committee and our Executive Board can surely share this satisfaction.

Adjustment policies with a human face

In spite of this, the economic upheavals of the last few years have cost many children's lives and dashed many hopes. We have been forced to re-think our expectations and re-evaluate our understanding of the development process. Last year numerous speakers before this committee (myself included) spoke of an emerging recognition that strategies to deal with the adjustment problems needed to be re-thought, and fresh approaches needed to be developed.

Let me make it clear, Mr. Chairman, that in no way does UNICEF blame any particular institution or any country for this. We are commenting on the way the whole international economic and financial system is tending to operate at the moment. The cut-backs and adjustments which many countries are undertaking reflect in part the severe constraints imposed by the international economic system and in part on the way countries have re-formulated their policies in response to these pressures.

I am pleased to be able to say that we can now begin to see growing evidence of an international consensus supporting the view that alternatives need to be formed. I will cite one particular authority - Jacques de Larosière, Managing Director of the IMF - who, in his address to ECOSOC this summer, stated:

"Adjustment that pays attention to the health, nutritional and educational requirements of the most vulnerable groups is going to protect the human condition better than adjustment that ignores them. This means, in turn, that the authorities have to be concerned not only with whether they close the fiscal deficit but also with how they do so."

The challenge now before us is to move from a consensus on principles to concrete actions. We must broaden the adjustment process so as to include a minimum floor for basic human needs; we must restructure the health, education and social sectors so as to meet these needs; and finally, we must restructure the economy so as to emphasize employment policies and action which provide both increased output and more income for the disadvantaged.

It is appropriate to deal seriously with this issue within the context of operational activities, for these new approaches will require the systematic linkage of policy advice with operational support. We will need to mobilize support for these broader objectives in the UNDP Roundtables and the World Bank Consultative Groups; to forge better links with food assistance; to replicate in other sectors the low-cost/high-impact measures which are characteristic of the Child Survival and Development Revolution, and to mobilize as yet untapped people-based groups and resources.

Building a new Africa

It is in Africa that we see virtually the entire range of UNICEF's priorities being put to the test, particularly in view of our increased

emphasis on reducing infant and child mortality and reaching those most urgently in need.

UNICEF's attention to the critical situations in Africa - and the imperative of responding to the emergency conditions with long-term development strategies - continues to increase. Today, 40 per cent of UNICEF's resources - double that at the start of this decade - are directed to Africa. One-third of our core field staff and 44 per cent of all project staff are now posted in Africa. UNICEF, as you are aware, was particularly active in stimulating establishment of the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa, and has sought to be supportive in every possible way in follow-up to the General Assembly's Special Session and the programme of action which emerged from that Session.

I will discuss later UNICEF's contribution of "Sport Aid" to promote greater public support for the Special Session with its focus on regaining development momentum beyond the immediate crisis. And in early September, all UNICEF Representatives in Africa met in Dakar to discuss means for promoting the follow-up programme. Our focus, of course, was on its goal of reducing infant mortality, particularly by accelerating oral rehydration and immunization efforts which, by 1990, could be saving the lives of one million African children.

We are also deeply concerned with supporting the necessary adjustment process in Africa, but especially mindful that it is in Africa that assuring a "human face" to adjustment is most urgent.

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 with women and for women. As Mr. Ripert aptly quotes in his report, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) has stated:

"After Nairobi, the message is clear: women are powerful agents of development. Development needs women as much as women need development. And the time for development is now."

All delegates are well aware of UNICEF's concern in this regard. We recognize that the health of women is essential to the health of children, and that the literacy level and social empowerment of women reflect directly on the well-being of children. We have taken quite seriously the World Bank's World Development Report statement which asserts:

"Educating girls may be one of the best investments a country can make in future economic growth and welfare."

In support of the Nairobi Conference's "Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women", the 1987 Board session will examine an implementation strategy on UNICEF's response to women's concerns with verifiable objectives and a time-frame for implementation.

Children in especially difficult circumstances

Also at the request of the Executive Board, UNICEF this year presented a policy review paper on the subject of children in especially difficult circumstances, with special attention to: children in situations of armed conflict; exploitation of working children and street children; child abuse and neglect in a global perspective; and children affected by natural calamities. In its review, the Board gave special emphasis to the fact that UNICEF has a unique potential to bring relief to children trapped in armed conflicts by applying the concept of children as a "zone of peace" in such troubled areas. The "days of tranquility" on six different occasions in El Salvador - to allow all children to be immunized against diseases which killed more young El Salvadorans than all the casualties in a year of fighting - and the "corridors of peace" which allowed the transport of vaccines through the hostilities in Uganda, are but two very vivid examples of what can be done when combatting parties are reminded that children have no politics - and that, without children, nations have no future.

The Executive Board sees it as essential that we continue such efforts, capitalizing for the benefit of children on the respect and access which UNICEF enjoys without regard to the politics of hostile forces.

Our leading edges

Mr. Chairman, it is clear from this brief discussion that UNICEF's programme activities are multi-faceted and interdisciplinary - despite the limited nature of our financial resources, of which you are all aware. In the last few years we have given emphasis to and seen startling results from our Child Survival activities. Furthermore, as these elements were selected in part because of their inherent low cost, we have been able to maintain our support for the numerous other areas to which we remain deeply committed. One of the principal challenges before us now - and on which we are making encouraging progress - is to link the outstanding advances in immunization and oral rehydration therapy in a manner that will achieve similar accelerations in other areas of basic needs. It is of course a highly ambitious goal, but one which we will not fail to pursue.

...with heightened efficiency

Mr. Chairman,

Ambitious goals require ambitious actions, and in these times mobilizing ourselves for these actions necessitates significant increases in efficiency and effectiveness. Thanks to the generosity and support of you, the Member States, and the public at large, UNICEF is not faced with a financial crisis, even though your contributions to General Resources will be put to work - expended - within a few months and sometimes only a few days after they are received. But, if our reasons for searching for efficiency are more positive they are no less urgent, since the demand for increased UNICEF assistance is pressing. A large number of steps have been taken; more are planned, and still more will be expected. I will cite a few brief examples:

- The consolidation of our widely scattered Headquarters Supply operation begun in 1983 has resulted in nearly one-quarter fewer supply staff now providing double the output - with shorter delivery times.
- The reduction of core personnel at Headquarters locations in New York, Geneva and Copenhagen and a major reallocation within the field over the past two bienniums; 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.
- Between 1984 and 1986, in response to Africa's needs, professional staff in West Africa were doubled and in the East and Southern African Region were increased by 40 per cent. The bulk of this has come from shifts of core posts from Headquarters and from the Asia regions.
- In our current budget review, we are proceeding within guidelines requiring staff reductions in all categories of core staff, as we had proposed to our Board last April and as they approved. These reductions involve a saving of more than 80 posts, ranging from the D categories to general services.
- For 1986-87, expenditure on consultant services have been reduced by 40 percent and travel by 25 per cent from previously approved levels.
- UNICEF - perhaps especially among agencies, given our mandate - recognizes that no institution can be truly efficient or effective if it denies itself the contribution of half the possible human resources upon which it could draw. We are therefore determined that women must not be only an object of UNICEF's effort, but equal participants within our staff. Today, 29 per cent of UNICEF's international core Professional staff are women, up from less than 25 per cent a year and a half ago. We are committed to continue to increase that percentage at a pace that will, by 1990, result in women holding 33 per cent of our core professional posts.

But we cannot and will not rest here on heightening efficiency. We will be undertaking still further measures and in doing so will be actively seeking advice and counsel, especially by drawing on guidance from within the system. For example, we hope to strengthen our on-going linkages with expert bodies such as the Board of Auditors and the ACABQ, and I will propose to our Executive Board that they too give heightened attention to these matters.

Collaboration within the U.N. system

These are times of great constraint when the different members of the UN family need to show they can effectively work together, especially for operational activities. Constrained resources demand this; efficiency demands it; governments demand it.

In the report prepared by the Director-General you have before you a number of clear, well-reasoned and practical suggestions on how to do more. I urge that you give this report the same careful consideration accorded to it by the Economic and Social Council. As Executive Director I have no

hesitation in saying that UNICEF is firmly committed to doing more to promote collaboration, and in many ways our thinking and our actions closely parallel the recommendations in Mr. Ripert's report.

As our Executive Board noted with regard to collaboration among sister UN organizations, over the past year we have taken a number of important steps. For example:

- The Child Survival and Development Revolution would not have had its success without the support of WHO, one of our closest and most long-term of partners, and the active participation of UNDP, UNFPA, and the World Bank, as well as the major bilateral assistance agencies. This work continues on a daily basis.
- The rapid and effective response of the U.N. system to Africa's crisis would not have been possible without the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, of which we were pleased to help initiate and to be an integral part. UNICEF is equally committed to being an active partner in the inter-agency effort under Mr. Ripert regarding follow-up to the Special Session of the General Assembly.
- The numerous developments of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, composed of UNDP, UNFPA, WFP and UNICEF, focus on issues such as the health/nutrition nexus and we have also been exploring new initiatives with IFAD in support for women and household food securities.
- Our work on adjustment policy has involved collaboration with the IMF and the World Bank, as well as with a number of governments and non-government groups in different countries.

I could go on, Mr. Chairman. But my point is not to recite all the examples; it is rather to stress a commitment to collaboration and that its effectiveness depends in major part on the operational agencies working together in headquarters and at the country level.

Mr. Chairman,

As Mr. Ripert's report points out and as the ECOSOC emphasizes in its considerations of these matters, there could be much gained by strengthening the links among ECOSOC and the governing bodies of the U.N. organizations. This point is particularly apparent to UNICEF since it and WHO have long benefited greatly from the Joint Committee on Health Policy of our two governing bodies - perhaps the only one of its kind in the U.N. system. UNICEF's Executive Board has taken a recent initiative in this regard by transmitting to ECOSOC a resolution outlining issues it feels are of priority concern in the area of operational activities; I commend this resolution to your attention. Here again there are striking parallels among the thoughts of our Executive Board, the Director-General, and ECOSOC.

We in UNICEF's secretariat will do all we can to enhance the coordinating role of ECOSOC by helping to strengthen the communication between our Board, ECOSOC, and other governing bodies.

Collaboration with inter-governmental organizations

UNICEF, and more importantly - children - have long profited from the priority given to child needs through collaboration among regional inter-governmental organizations such as the OAU, the OAS, SADCC, and the Arab Gulf Fund. An inspiring instance of intergovernmental collaboration is evolving among the seven countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation - SAARC - the newest among formal groupings of contiguous nations. At a Summit meeting begun Sunday in Bangalore, heads of state are currently considering sympathetically a wide ranging proposal to include in a declaration of the Summit the need to give priority to meeting the essential needs of children in South Asia, including the achievement, among other goals, of universal child immunization by 1990.

The proposal, drafted by high-level government officials and leading citizens from member countries at a SAARC Conference on South Asian Children less than three weeks ago, will be historic if passed. In the eleven short months of SAARC's existence, its member countries - which are home to 400 million of the world's children (6 million of whom die annually) - have already set a heartening example and high standard in the collaborative efforts they have made on behalf of children.

Another regional cooperative effort in behalf of children is exemplified by the Conference on Arab Children which was convened in Tunis late last week by the League of Arab States, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and UNICEF.

Collaboration amongst peoples

We in UNICEF, in collaboration with our partners have been actively seeking ways to strengthen links with the public in order consciously to facilitate their support, to help raise awareness of development issues and to help generate funds in support of UNICEF programmes and those of our sister agencies. No doubt many delegates recall the Sport Aid events of this spring, which were designed to help mobilize public support for the General Assembly's Special Session on Africa. At a time when some may question the degree to which the public may still identify with the United Nations as "humanity's last best hope", this U.N.-focused activity was by all accounts the largest mass public participation event in history (and is already the subject of a 2-page report in the new Guinness Book of World Records!). Some 20 million people, expressing solidarity with Africa's plight and with your deliberations, participated in 286 major cities and countless towns and villages throughout 83 countries.

In financial terms, Sport Aid has been an even more unexpected success, with net proceeds in excess of \$30 million. Of this, UNICEF receives more than half, and the rest is devoted to similiar African development projects carried out by our development partners.

A second effort by UNICEF is helping to mobilize public support for the U.N. system and its goals in the First Earth Run. This is the largest single event celebrating the International Year of Peace. It is involving millions

of people throughout the world on the theme "Give the World a Chance; Children Need Peace". As of this morning this historic event has passed through 33 of the 50 countries on its route around the globe, and since its 16 September send-off in New York on International Peace Day as the 41st General Assembly convened, it has involved millions of people and has received the support of 28 heads of state with nine more expected to participate. Its arrival here on 11 December (UNICEF's 40th Anniversary) will mark the close of an event that was not only commemorative but also served to help accentuate UNICEF's programme cooperation with many developing countries.

Into the fifth decade

The progress of the First Earth Run serves as a count-down to the end of UNICEF's first 40 years and the beginning of our 5th decade. These are moments to reflect not only on the "what" of UNICEF - what we are and what we do - but also the "why".

Why did the General Assembly establish UNICEF 40 years ago next month? Was it not because the peoples of the United Nations - especially those less devastated by the destruction of the 2nd World War - recognized their responsibility, as human beings, to come to the aid of the children of the rubble and ruin of Europe and China? To treat them as their kin? To embrace them as their own?

And why was UNICEF's mandate extended and expanded after the post-War devastation had been relieved? Was it not because human society recognized that all children are the world's concern?

We have strived hard; we have accomplished much. Not UNICEF alone, but UNICEF as part of the U.N. family, and in partnership with many others. Hundreds of millions of children who might otherwise have grown up sick, disabled or abandoned - or not grown up at all - have instead been protected and nurtured by a world that embraced them as their own.

Yet millions more are still to be reached.

Our work is far from finished.