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Statement by Mr. James Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
upon the return to the United Nations
of the First Earth Run

New York
11 December 1986

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87 days ago, at dawn on a September morning, Native American Indians created a fire from the heat of the sun, and like Prometheus millennia ago gave that fire to us to use for our own purposes. We chose to use that fire to symbolise a message ... an appeal ... a prayer. A prayer for peace. We lit a torch with that flame, and by passing it hand to hand - from runner to runner and citizen to citizen and world leader to world leader - we sought to illuminate the world.

Perhaps history will take little note of what we have done these 87 days. Perhaps the light of our flame was not very bright. Perhaps it will not, by itself, bring the peace that we pray for our children.

But no light ever created fails to affect the dark. No light, no matter how small or how dim, can fail to reduce the darkness just a little ... to move it back, and create a space of light.

And no flame, no matter how small, can fail to warm the world around it, just a little.

We did not create a flame to engulf the world. Indeed, we desperately struggle to prevent that. We created a flame - and from that one, many; and from those many, many more - to spread light to many places and add warmth to many hearts.

And, as astronomers will tell us, no light ever kindled ever disappears. So shall these lights never disappear. Just as today we will each light a candle, the flame which we have lit shall always burn in the hearts of all who have shared it. Even among the leaders of the world.

And the prayer which the flame offers cannot go unheard: "Give the world a chance; our children peace".

Our gesture has been modest, but its purpose monumental: "give our children a world in which they can live.

Let that fire now burn in every heart.

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