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to the
Artists and Intellectuals Symposium for
Child Survival and Development in the Frontline States and in Southern Africa

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To the participants in the
Artists and Intellectuals Symposium for
Child Survival and Development
in the Frontline States and in Southern Africa:

This gathering is fertile with a profound creative potential - that of artists and intellectuals joined in the birthplace of humankind to focus your energies on the survival and development of the children - the most precious creative fruit - of this noble continent.

In the sense that, as a group, you are just beginning your work together, this symposium is like the first utterances of a human response to the suffering on this continent, especially the suffering of its children. There are but a few short days together in Harare to collectively transform the outcry of indignation which is so present in the face of such sufferings as apartheid and unnecessary child death, into a powerful statement of determination - into a refined song to touch hearts and inspire action.

Our outrage at the highly visible injustices of apartheid is well-founded. The atrocities associated with apartheid offend our most fundamental of humane aspirations. The burden borne by children in South Africa are increasingly known despite the efforts of some to suppress the facts. Less well known is the impact of apartheid on its neighboring states. In Mozambique and Angola alone some 400 children die daily as a consequence. And as conscionable beings many, most properly, are incited to take a stand.

Unfortunately, Africa faces yet another severe emergency, one which only infrequently captures the attention of the world's media and the consciousness of the world's people. It is the "silent emergency" of frequent infection and widespread undernutrition which daily brutalizes Africa's children, and is still taking the lives of some 10,000 children every day. Last year nearly one million African children died from immunizable diseases and another million died from the dehydration associated with diarrhoea - most of which were from causes readily preventable in the future if timely action is taken now. This silent emergency is not so easy to detect or report - children die quietly in their mothers' arms, in the remote surroundings of poverty, far from the public eye.

In the past, the world at large, and even the governing structures of many countries, were not necessarily aware that these deaths occurred. Those who were aware often accepted them, believing there was little that could be done to prevent them under the circumstances of Africa today. Today we know these deaths are occurring, and we have the low-cost means to prevent them.

Surely, to allow massive numbers of preventable child deaths to continue when we have the means to save these lives, and when we have the awareness that these means are not being shared with those for whom they would make the life-or-death difference, is as unconsciounable as it would be to turn our backs to the "loud emergencies" such as apartheid which rightfully command our passionate response.

The hopeful measures which have been singled out as the Child Survival and Development Revolution (CSDR), and which will be discussed at this symposium, are especially important because they are doable. They can be done - now - to save lives and improve the well being of those who suffer severely on this continent. What a forceful statement of solidarity against the inhumaness of apartheid it could be to empower African families with the knowledge to defeat those insidious, silent enemies - ignorance and apathy - which unnecessarily oppress such a vast number of Africans with preventable child death.

Indeed, increasing success in these and related measures amounts to a miracle in the making, and we are participating in it together. Already the lives of more than 1000 children are being saved daily. The historic possibilites before us to save child lives and improve the well-being of the world's poorest on a massive scale will become realities, however, if - and only if - we harness the energy of indignation at the injustices and sufferings which face this continent, and use it to work together even more actively, for the children - and the future - of Africa and the world. The challenge before us is first to dramatize the problem, and then to dramatize the solutions so readily at hand, and in which we can all participate together.

James P. Grant
Executive Director

1 March 1988