

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1988-0021  
See also: E/ICEF/1988/CRP.0028/Rev.1

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
at the  
Closing of the 1988 Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York  
29 April 1988

	UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label
	Rcf0006HPH
<b>Item #</b>	<b>CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02077</b>
<b>ExR/Code:</b>	<b>CF/EXD/SP/1988-0021</b>
Closing of 1988 Executive Board Session. Statement by Mr.	
<b>Date Label Printed</b>	<b>17-Jan-2002</b>

cover + 5 pp + 0/6



United Nations Children's Fund Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia  
Детскому фонду Объединенных Наций 联合国儿童基金会 منظمة الأمم المتحدة للأطفال

File sub: CF/EXD/SP/1988-0021  
See also: E/ICEF/1988/CRP.0028/Rev.1

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1988/CRP.28 Rev.1  
6 May 1988

ENGLISH ONLY

FOR INFORMATION

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board  
1988 session

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
at the closing of the 1988 session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York - 29 April 1988

Madam Chairman,  
distinguished delegates:

This Executive Board has moved steadily and expeditiously through its business in these past ten days. I will therefore keep my remarks brief, in respect for that spirit of forward movement.

Members of the Board will recall that two years ago, in the 40th anniversary session of the Board, business did not move so swiftly, nor as collegially as we have experienced this year. Indeed, the Board ended in a marathon session that threatened "to burn the midnight oil".

In the year between the 1986 and 1987 sessions, we initiated a number of efforts and practices aimed at improving understanding and collaboration between the Board and secretariat. We made considerable progress with last year's session, except, perhaps, for one or two issues that seemed to defie all efforts to rapidly resolve.

In concluding last year's session, I commented that:

"One of the clear benefits of the problems that have occurred is the lesson it teaches us, and reminds us: to do more, not less, in the year and years ahead, in engaging you in dialogue and in involving you in our work and preparing for your important deliberations.

"I pledge that to you. We will do more, not less. That commitment is genuine; it is genuine because the advantages for UNICEF, and the resultant benefit for children, are so obvious."

Madam Chairman, I think that the very positive atmosphere of this year's Board session, and the very constructive debate which we have heard and the important decisions which the Board has reached on every issue, is definitive testimony that we have, indeed, in the past year, done "more, not less,...in engaging you in dialogue and in involving you in our work." And the advantages for UNICEF, and for children, are obvious. We will do more in the years ahead.

#### Hallmarks of the 1988 session

Madam Chairman, I would like to highlight four substantive issues addressed at this session. First, I think that this Board will be remembered well for the important contribution which it has made to furthering self-reliant primary health care for the most vulnerable populations through the Bamako Initiative. I am very pleased that the Executive Board - with enthusiastic support from every continent - has so strongly approved this special UNICEF/WHO focus on the desperate plight of Africa's children and families. But the success of this initiative will only be possible if now, having endorsed it, you each return to your Governments to build real participation in it. Your support will be needed; your contributions will be counted upon.

Second, when the Executive Board convenes next year, we will be well into the 10th anniversary year of the International Year of the Child, and the die will be cast as to whether the world will indeed mark "IYC + 10" with completion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I hope we will all do our utmost to move the drafting along, to fulfill the General Assembly's request that it be enabled to act upon the Convention next year.

Third, the Board's instructions to us on strategies for children for the 1990s will make an important contribution to preparations for the International Development Strategy for the IVth Development Decade, and I'm sure will also strongly advance the cause of adjustment with a human face.

Finally, Madam Chairman, I must remind us that the "miracle in the making" in which we have been engaged for these past six years - stimulating revolutionary progress for the survival and development of children - must not be taken for granted. The United Nations goals for 1990 stand as an invaluable stimulus to further acceleration and achievement, especially as the target date draws near. While a vast alliance of governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other institutions and popular forces are now deeply engaged in the Child Survival Revolution, UNICEF remains, and must remain, the "lead agency" for the world's children - at the vanguard of the effort to enlist ever more partners, to pioneer new approaches, to support ever broader efforts, and to insist upon sustainable progress.

#### Proud farewells

UNICEF has, from its founding, derived its greatest strength from a formidable staff of talented and dedicated people. Since this Board last met, we have lost some prime members of our ranks to retirement, and we are about to lose more. I would like to acknowledge a few of them who were most known to you.

Our few moments in this fora do not allow me to adequately pay tribute to Tarzie Vittachi, who retired in January after seven years with UNICEF as Deputy Executive Director (External Relations) and shortly after the death of his beloved wife, Martine, following her valiant fight against cancer. I have known Tarzie for 32 years, since he was a renowned and vigorous newspaper editor in his homeland, Sri Lanka. Tarzie has always been a brilliantly articulate spokesperson for those most in need. While UNICEF will miss his contributions to our immediate tasks, we rest assured that his eloquent style in speech and pen will continue to make its mark on the world, and that he will remain a powerful ally, working toward common goals.

As you have already heard in this session, we are about to lose another longtime UNICEF "giant". David Haxton is retiring in May, a few months short of three decades as a principal moving force within this organization. Before assuming the role of Regional Director for Southeast Asia in July, 1980, David, a national of the United States born in Canada, served as UNICEF Representative in Indonesia, Brazil, and Peru, in addition to several other posts. A self-proclaimed "spokesperson for the field", David also made his own unique "impact on Headquarters" - and, indeed, headquarters will never quite be the same without him on the other end of our telex line! But, especially, David is the preeminent champion of the fact that ownership of development activities, including those for children, rests with governments. In his statement to this Board last week, David said that the greatest asset of UNICEF is its staff. I concur, and as one of UNICEF's three Executive Directors, all of whom have been privileged to have David as a staff member, as well as to know and appreciate the strength and support he derives from his able wife, Lynnn, I can say with conviction that his creative and innovative contributions to global work for children - country by country - have been immense. His active participation will be sorely missed, but his influence will long be felt.

Pravit Sarabanchong, a national of Thailand, joined UNICEF in 1955 in the Bangkok office. He subsequently served in Manila, Islamabad and New York, where he retired as Assistant to the Director of the Programme Funding Office in July. Iskender Muhtesip, of Turkey, served in various posts as a Supply Officer and as a Programme Officer in Ankara, Kampala, New Delhi (where he was Chief of Supply Section), and twice in New York, where he retired in December as TAD Coordinator, after a career that spanned nearly 30 years with UNICEF. Luis Centenera, a national of the Philippines, joined UNICEF as an Assistant Cashier in New York, where he progressed through the ranks to Auditor, and finally, to Chief Accountant, a post he held for seven years until his retirement in December. William Cousins of the United States, with whom I worked in India in the mid-1950s, retired in December as Senior Advisor/Urban Affairs, a role he had filled since September 1984. He came to headquarters from New Delhi, where he had been involved in urban issues with UNICEF since 1975. Jacques Danois-Maricq of Belgium, whom I first met in Kampuchea in 1980, has been telling the world about UNICEF's work for 18 years - first as Information Officer in Paris, then as Chief of Visual and Radio Services in New York, as Senior Information Officer in Bangkok, and finally as Regional Information Officer in Abidjan, a post which he had held for five years at the time of his retirement in September. Kavasseri Ramachandran, a national of India, has served UNICEF for more than 30 years. He was recruited in Calcutta in 1956, and held posts in the accounting division there and in Lagos, where he was Administrative and Finance Officer at the time of his early retirement in September. Paul Audat, a national of France, retired in January. He first joined UNICEF in Abidjan in 1967, transferring to Algiers where he became Representative in 1972. He served as Representative in Dakar from 1977 until 1983, when he transferred to Hanoi. In 1987 he came to Geneva as Special Advisor to the Director. Lawrence Ostlund, a national of Sweden, has served primarily in Supply Division during his 12 years with UNICEF. He joined the organization in Dhaka and was transferred to Bangkok in 1979, where he will retire this month as Senior Regional Supply Officer. In August we will be losing Carl Schonmeyr, also of Sweden, who joined UNICEF in 1964 as Representative in Kabul. He left the secretariat for a while, serving as a member of the Swedish delegation to the Executive Board in 1968 and 1969, but re-joined as Representative in Islamabad in 1969, and then to Beirut in 1972 and Dhaka from 1976 and New Delhi from 1977. He came to Headquarters in 1980-81 as Senior Programme Funding Officer, returning to Government service with SIDA until 1983. Carl then re-joined UNICEF again, first as Representative in Kingston, and then returning to Islamabad since 1984.

In the midst of these farewells we are heartened by the expectations of continued collaboration with these talented and dedicated workers for children. We count on them to share the wisdom of their experience in various support roles as new staff develop the characteristics to pick up the baton they have passed along. As Dave Haxton said last week, with so many children in the world still dying unnecessarily, "we cannot rest our oars".

It is far sadder to say farewell to a friend and colleague who is laid to rest. We were all saddened by the untimely loss of Louis Leefers, who died of cancer in August. Louis, a national of the Netherlands, could be counted on for effective action, regardless of the complexity of the tasks, whether as Programme Officer in Ouagadougou and Jakarta, where Ethel and I first met Louis and his charming wife, Alma Yanira or as Deputy Director of the Geneva office. After nearly seven years on the front lines of emergency work in

Ethiopia, Wendy Ann Bjoerck died in September, following major surgery. A national of the United Kingdom, Wendy began her career with the United Nations in 1964, first joining UNICEF in Bangkok in 1970 and then in Paris. After brief service with the International Court of Justice, she rejoined UNICEF in Dhaka, and since served with distinction in emergency and hardship duty stations - in Phnom Penh from 1974-75; Hanoi from 1975-79; and again in Phnom Penh in 1979-81, which is where I first saw her in action. From 1981 until her illness, Wendy served in Addis Ababa. Both Louis and Wendy were well-loved colleagues and joys to work with. Our hearts remain with both of their families.

#### A special spirit

Madam Chairman, there has always been something of a special spirit - that mystique about which I have spoken before - of UNICEF. It is a spirit which has always characterized not only our work in the field and our administration at headquarters, but also the efforts of the millions of volunteers who work with us around the world - in the grand alliance that has always been the UNICEF family, and in the Grand Alliance for Children which our UNICEF family spearheads. And that spirit has also, always, characterized the business and proceedings of UNICEF's Executive Board. Even when issues have been sharp and stressful, that spirit has prevailed. But it is reflected best, I think, when your proceedings are as deliberate, resourceful, business-like, creative and collaborative as they have been at this year's session.

That is the spirit with which your secretariat happily, proudly, and respectfully embraces this Executive Board. And it is the spirit with which we, together, can go forth from this conference room, determined to do more, and to do better, for children.

We who serve you, in serving them, thank you.