



File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1989-0013
See also E/ICEF/1989/CRP.0015

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the close of the
General Debate of the 1989 Executive Board

New York
19 April 1989

	UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label
	 RcF0006HR6
Item # CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02138	
ExR/Code: CF/EXD/SP/1989-0013	
Closing of the General Debate of the 1989 Executive Board	
Date Label Printed 18-Jan-2002	

COVER + 18pp + 8b

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1989-0013
See also E/ICEF/1989/CRP.15

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1989/CRP.15*
20 April 1989

ENGLISH ONLY

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1989 session

FOR INFORMATION

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

at the close of the General Debate of the 1989 Executive Board

New York, 19 April 1989

Madam Chairperson,
distinguished Members of the Board
and colleagues:

Mrs. Mubarak, in accepting the Board's presentation of the Maurice Pate Award, told us of the admonition of a wise Egyptian leader who wrote:

"A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started. He is going to sit where you are sitting, and when you are gone, attend to those things which you think are important. You may adopt all the policies you please, but how they are carried out depends on him."

Something tells me that, when this Board session concludes next week, you will have adopted the kind of policies that that child will be pleased to carry out.

* re-issued with technical corrections

7411G

Cover + 18pp + 8b

The spirit in this room these past two days is truly the spirit of UNICEF ... truly the spirit which has made this Organization such a magical, mystical creation for four decades. It is a spirit of understanding and inquiry. A spirit of curiosity and creativity. A spirit of consensus and collaboration. And a spirit of determination to do what we can to build a different world for children.

How vividly that spirit has manifested itself in the General Debate! And how I am sure that spirit will sustain itself through the constructive commenting, questioning and interaction of the next several days of Programme Committee and Administration and Finance Committee. Your secretariat looks forward to that interchange.

* * * * *

Madam Chairperson, I think that Federico Mayor, the inspiring Director-General of UNESCO, captured the essence of what we are about in this Board session in his comment:

"Every child that dies from hunger and preventable diseases, every child whose development is stunted by an environment of poverty and ignorance, every child that has no access to education, is yet further proof that our civilization, with all its resources and technical capacities, is incapable of protecting human dignity. Our moral commitment must live up to our capacities. Only then shall we meet our duties, and national leaders meet theirs. It is here that we shall find the true measure of our solidarity and humanity."

Our purpose is to find ways as the Director-General of UNESCO noted, to prompt society's moral commitment to live up to our capacities. As representatives of Member States, a principal duty which you have to meet is to help your national leaders to meet their duty.

I am very encouraged that acceptance of that duty - to help our national leaders match the world's capacity to save millions of children's lives and build better lives for hundreds of millions more, with the moral commitment to do so - was implicit throughout the General Debate. It will be a privilege, in the coming months and the coming years, to work closely with the Members of the Board in seeking to generate the will, inspired by vision, to mobilize the leadership that will make the difference between a world in which many millions of children's lives are wasted because too little effort was made to save them, and a world in which very few lives are wasted because the effort was made.

External Relations issues

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Among the most meaningful developments in the past year for children has been the remarkable progress made by the international community on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Many delegations warmly welcomed the anticipated adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly this year. The delegations of Canada, Denmark, Egypt, the German Democratic Republic, Norway, Poland and Turkey also noted the supportive role of UNICEF in the final phases of preparation.

The delegations of Canada, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland observed that the adoption of the Convention is just the beginning of our work to protect the rights of children in all countries in the world, and especially those of children who are most at risk and in especially distressed circumstances. They urged UNICEF to prepare to join with governments and others to assist in its effective implementation. I am pleased by the statement of Poland that it intends to lead the process of ratification, just as it has led this great initiative from the beginning a decade ago.

In addition, UNICEF is pleased to have worked closely with the NGO community, which played such a vital role in the drafting process - especially in the formulation of the implementation strategy which emphasizes the role of international cooperation in the resolution of problems at the national level - and to have their pledge of continued support, as their representative has reiterated in his statement this morning.

The delegates of Pakistan and Switzerland have queried UNICEF's role in the implementation of the Convention. UNICEF cannot take on a monitoring role of the Convention at the country level, but, through situation analysis and other means, we, of course, draw attention to children's needs and assist Governments in responding to them. I think that we thus also provide an invaluable tool for those who are able to take a more activist role.

World Summit for Children

As I mentioned in my opening statement, strong support has been expressed by over a score of Heads of State and Government for the proposal to convene a representative World Summit for Children. More than a score of delegations at this Board - including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Egypt, the German Democratic Republic, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Lesotho, Liberia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Sao Tome and Principe, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, the USSR, Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe - have also supported the proposal. Mrs. Lisbet Palme put the matter succinctly when she said that, in terms of the world's political agenda, "the paradigm must be changed to include children."

The delegate of Belgium stated that problems must be solved at the grassroots rather than at the summit, while the delegations from the Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United Kingdom requested further discussion in terms of purpose, impact and cost of a summit. I should reiterate that the proposal is not for a summit held in isolation, but rather, as noted by the delegate from Costa Rica, summits at all levels - from the grassroots to nation-wide. I should also emphasize that we would see such summits as a means to: first, reaffirm and provide additional support to the goals of Child Survival and Development; second, solidify commitment to the goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and, third, promote child-sensitive development - development with a more human face, and particularly, a child's face. Commitment at the highest level, nevertheless, is needed, for it is through leaders that nations are mobilized. I should also stress that we see a Summit not for the sake of a grand convocation, but for the impetus and momentum which such a gathering - and the preparation for it and follow-up to it - can give to the work in which we are engaged, and as is particularly reflected in the Strategies for the 1990s paper. Who among us, I might ask, would not on reflection say that just seeking the avoidance of a needless continuing slaughter of our children worse than a daily Armenian earthquake alone justifies a summit of world leaders?

In response to Board Member's requests for further information on our concepts of a Summit, the Secretariat will prepare a discussion note on the subject for circulation to Board members and others, hopefully before the Board adjourns, and will pursue further discussion with Governments to develop the proposal.

Information/Advocacy

A number of delegations have commented positively on UNICEF's advocacy for children, including Guyana, Norway, Oman, Sweden, Switzerland and Thailand. Australia, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States have cautioned about keeping a balance between these efforts internationally and at field level. The representative of Australia said there was a danger that our global advocacy might become too general and divorced from realities in the field.

Because our work is rooted in the reality of country level implementation, I do not believe the balance between international and field level advocacy is in serious danger of being badly tilted. Whatever we do at the international level must find its meaning in country level realities. Whatever does not find such usefulness will be discarded - as it almost always will be in an organization which operates as pragmatically as does UNICEF.

The delegate of Switzerland put this issue in perspective by pointing out that the principles of advocacy should be the same as those for programme operations, and that the two types of intervention should be employed in combination to attack the problems of children. This matches very well our own thinking. The suggestions of the delegations of Poland and Switzerland

that UNICEF include children of the industrialized world in its advocacy is a useful reminder of the request of the General Assembly, ten years ago as the International Year of the Child concluded, for UNICEF to represent all the children of the world, while concentrating its financial resources for the benefit of those in developing countries. The continuing and increasing needs of children in industrialized countries was one of the most striking presentations made at the Paris Round Table.

Facts For Life

A number of delegations commented positively on the Facts for Life initiative including Barbados, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Turkey, the United States, Venezuela and the NGO Committee on UNICEF. Turkey's comments are particularly encouraging, coming as they do from a country which has already pioneered in the use of Facts For Life messages. The strong commitment of UNESCO, evidenced in the words of Director-General Mayor, reinforce our conviction that this initiative will make a powerful contribution to communication for behavioural change.

National Committees for UNICEF

The valuable contribution made by UNICEF's partners - its National Committees - to the work of the organization, has been recognized by, among others, the Chairperson of the Executive Board and by the delegates of Australia, Canada, China, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uruguay. It is clearly a reflection of the respect in which the Committees are held that some 19 leaders of National Committees are part of their Government's delegation to this Executive Board.

Several delegations, and the chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees, have eloquently pointed out the importance of National Committees in generating support - both moral and financial - for UNICEF.

The delegation of Canada has underlined the importance of responsiveness to the needs, and respect for the role of, National Committees. It is because the Secretariat is convinced of the importance of National Committees and wishes to serve them more effectively that the restructuring of responsibilities between Geneva and New York Headquarters took place. We believe that as a result of this, the Geneva Office and UNICEF Headquarters have already improved our support to European National Committees, and that the transfer of a senior-level National Committees post to New York will result in a welcome further strengthening of relations between National Committees and Headquarters. I should add that we will be having a fuller discussion on some of these points in committee, when questions raised in the general debate will be more appropriately addressed.

I was also pleased to hear the comprehensive report of the Chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF, providing an overview of National Committees' work with UNICEF. I also take note of concern that the

50 per cent goal should only be applied to greeting card products, and also of the Committees' deep interest in a strong and sound development education policy.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Several delegations - including Canada, China, Egypt, Italy, Japan, Sudan, Thailand and Turkey - addressed the significant role which the NGOs play in working for a better future for children. Indeed, NGOs continue to grow in importance as our programme partners and, as several delegates have noted, must play a key role in our external relations policy. The representative of Risho Kosei Kai has eloquently described the commitment of his organization to the well-being of children. It is this kind of commitment which forges the closest alliances between UNICEF and NGOs.

We particularly thank the NGO Committee for its important contribution in support of the Convention and during this anniversary year of IYC. We also congratulate the Committee on this year's successful NGO Forum, "Challenges for the 1990s ... planning for children". We look forward to working with the Committee in following up on many of the conclusions reached, including their support and participation in the World Conference on Education for All.

Funding issues

While announcing a major and most welcome increase in its contributions to UNICEF's general resources, the delegation of Denmark stated that the growth in UNICEF's financial resources "is a clear sign of the international community's support for UNICEF's activities." The Netherlands made a similar statement. While we are grateful for these, UNICEF remains acutely aware of the truth of the Australian comment that continuing success in fund-raising is dependent on UNICEF's adherence to the highest standards of efficiency and accountability, as well as a continued culture of cost awareness.

We would like to join the Governments of Japan, the Philippines and Thailand in their tributes to all donors for their generosity. Japan itself, a major contributor to UNICEF's general resources, has this year made significant additional contributions to UNICEF for our emergency appeals for Afghanistan, Angola, Burma, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Namibia and Sudan. We would also like to warmly congratulate Finland for reaching the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA in 1989 and joining the select few who have met this UN goal.

Programme issues

I am most grateful for the kind remarks made by several delegations expressing their agreement with the views outlined in the 1989 State of the World's Children Report, in the context of a crisis affecting many of the world's children. In view of the prevailing social and economic situation in Africa, I share the view that our priority geographical focus will have to continue to be on that continent for the next decade or so.

Adjustment with a human face

Many delegations - including Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Peru, Republic of Korea, Poland, Switzerland, and Uganda - underscored the heavy burden of external debt repayments, world economic recession and related phenomena being faced by the developing countries, and the negative impact of these trends on services for children and women. In addition, to the general reconfirmation of support to the concept of "Adjustment with a Human Face", the distinguished delegates of Benin, Cameroon, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda also mentioned how they focussed on key priority areas of child survival and development with declining resources. Perhaps the description given by the delegate of Indonesia is the most succinct when he described: "adjustments were made by shifting the budget for the hospitals to programmes which have a direct influence on human survival and development". This is a prime example of a combination of international and national efforts not only to protect the vulnerable during the process of adjustment, but also to enable them to work towards a better future.

Medium-Term Plan Objectives and Strategies for the 1990s

I am grateful for the encouraging remarks and general endorsements by the Board of the 1988-92 Medium-Term Plan. These comments, offering guidance and advice, are appreciated and will be borne in mind in the updating for next year, when we plan a comprehensive review to incorporate the strategy for children.

With regard to the proposals for goals and strategies for children in the 1990s, I am encouraged to note that support for efforts to give greater priority to human development in future strategies was expressed by the distinguished delegates of Canada, Cameroon, Egypt, German Democratic Republic, India, Philippines, Pakistan, Sweden, and Sudan. I also take note of the opinion expressed by many delegations that the goals listed in the Strategies paper and by JCHP are considered feasible and desirable - including Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Republic of Korea and Turkey.

Many delegations emphasized the need to go beyond concern for survival to improving the quality of life of children. I fully agree. Indeed, a closer examination of our proposals on the Strategies for Children in the 1990s will make it quite clear that most of the goals proposed are directly aimed at improving the quality of life of children and women, and building a solid foundation for sustainable human development.

I also wish to stress that the proposed strategies and goals can only be effective through their adaptation and application at national and regional levels. As mentioned by the delegate of Mexico, some steps have already been taken to adapt the goals to regional realities in Latin America and the Caribbean as reflected in the Cocoyoc Declaration. India, Nicaragua and Turkey mentioned their efforts to translate the global goals to their national

realities. Switzerland mentioned the need to work with governments and communities. UNICEF will be working with Governments at national and regional levels in this process of adaptation and will report on the results to the Board at its next session in 1990.

This is also the way, I believe, to deal with the concern of the Swiss delegation that our strategies paper gives too little attention to such issues as rising violence, mounting social tensions and the strains on single-parent families. The Paris Round Table included reference to these issues, but I do think that these concerns can best be addressed at country or regional level, where they can more easily be related to the specifics of the situation.

On the other hand, I also noted the caution voiced by several delegations - including Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the United States - on the need to be selective in order to guard against the danger of allowing UNICEF's efforts to be "spread too thin". We are aware of this risk and must also guard against "being spread too thick" (ie, concentrating on too narrow an agenda) - a danger that the Board has cautioned against in previous years. Ultimately, the balance between the broad concern for the whole child and focussed, low-cost, accelerated action that will have significant impact, must be judged at the country level. In this connexion, I draw the attention of Board members to paragraphs 46-49 of the Medium-Term Plan, and I hope that this will be seen as a balanced statement of UNICEF priorities. I also noted the concern of Switzerland that the strategy has to be based on an analysis of the situation of children in its socio-economic context.

Child Survival and Development

Universal Child Immunization

Numerous delegations - including Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chile, Denmark, German Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda and Yugoslavia - noted with satisfaction the progress achieved during the past year in the immunization programme, while Benin, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Sudan and Turkey all expressed confidence that they could reach UCI by 1990, and indicated that the permanent infrastructure is being put in place to sustain high levels of coverage and support integration with PHC. The People's Republic of China has achieved a remarkable milestone in 1988 by reaching the global goal two years ahead of target, and has achieved coverage levels of 95 per cent or more for each of the six antigens. This is already leading to significant reductions in child mortality and morbidity.

Although excellent progress has been made in many countries during the past few years in the immunisation programme, the next 20 months will be critical for achieving the goal of UCI globally. Both increased political will and continued financial support, especially from external sources, will be key elements to reaching this goal. In virtually every country, the immunization system is now in place - cold chain, vaccine and vaccinators, but countries with more than one quarter of the world's children need to increase

still further their political will - their social mobilization - if they are to attain this goal in 1990.

The tremendous significance of the attainment of the UCI target is that it gives credibility to the goals for disease reduction set for the 1990s. This achievement will instill the self-confidence needed to face some of the more difficult challenges. Expressed differently, if we cannot achieve one of the simplest, relatively speaking, of these world goals - UCI 1990 - how can we expect to achieve more difficult goals in the 1990s?

Three major issues appeared to have emerged during the general debate on UCI: sustainability; the importance of health management information systems; and the need to strengthen the infrastructures for primary health care. The distinguished delegates of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States, among others, stressed the importance of sustainability and said that UNICEF must continue to support the development of permanent immunization systems that will sustain high levels of coverage. I couldn't agree more, and I would only assure the Board that UNICEF and other development agencies and institutions are actively looking into this. There is an ongoing dialogue on the issues of sustainability, including the financial, technical, managerial and political dimensions. We also have an evaluation project that is expressly focussed on the extent to which UCI in different countries has strengthened - or weakened - the wider effort of enhancing PHC, and what can be done to ensure the strengthening we all seek.

The distinguished delegate of Nigeria mentioned the importance of health management information systems, with which I agree. If we are to monitor consistently programme implementation, we must have a functioning management information system that will also be useful for disease surveillance. In this connexion, we are experimenting with a rapid but low cost method of estimating mortality. The support indicated by the government of Canada for our proposed project for country monitoring is especially welcomed.

I think the need to build all these programmes into the overall system of primary health care is no longer an issue. The distinguished delegates of Nigeria and Turkey have given excellent examples of how this works in practice, as has the distinguished delegate from Turkey. The distinguished delegate of Switzerland reminded us that in countries with weak infrastructures, the "campaign approach" to immunization may sometimes take place at the expense of the delivery of other health services, although it has sometimes had a stimulating effect in countries with stronger infrastructure. The UNICEF experience has been that the campaign approach, when well prepared and planned, helps build the infrastructure in order to sustain its gains. The important lesson we have learned is that all approaches must include planning for sustainability and integration with other measures to build on primary health care. In fact, I can report that the next phase of our support for 26 countries in Africa funded by the Italian government will take a broad approach to primary health care and will include components like immunization, oral rehydration therapy and diarrhoea disease control, the Bamako Initiative, breastfeeding, and nutrition (including micro-nutrient deficiencies), using

the concept of growth promotion and monitoring. We have also taken note of the comments made on ORT and maternal mortality. These issues are of priority importance to UNICEF and we hope to move ahead significantly over the next few years.

Acute Respiratory Infections

The distinguished delegates of Australia and Oman raised the issue of UNICEF's position on acute respiratory infections, a major cause of infant and child deaths. I would like to reply that, although we do recognize the significance of ARI as a major child killer, both WHO and UNICEF feel that we need to do more work on the case management methodologies before they can be applied wholesale at the community level. UNICEF is therefore working with WHO in three countries - Bolivia, the Gambia and Thailand - to develop case management methodologies that we hope to standardize within this year in order to apply these strategies at community level through training and close supervision. We would be happy to provide a policy review paper on the subject if the Board so desires. While on this subject, I would like to mention, in response to the distinguished delegate of Oman, that we agree that ARI is an important disease in its own right. Both AIDS and ARI are important causes of death in many countries and both problems deserve UNICEF's support.

The Bamako Initiative

In their statements on the priority accorded to Africa and the deteriorating state of health care for children and women in that continent, I was heartened by the broad interest and support for the Bamako Initiative expressed by many delegations. This broad-based MCH/PHC approach followed by WHO and UNICEF was endorsed by many delegations - including Belgium, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, Norway, Sudan and Uganda.

I think the best description of the Bamako Initiative was given by the distinguished delegate of Canada:

"The Bamako Initiative represents an important challenge in the coming decade. There are several unique aspects of the Bamako Initiative. The idea came from proposals by the African countries themselves. It is a major collaborative effort with WHO. Also, the Bamako Initiative emphasizes decentralized decision-making, a basic factor in the Primary Health Care philosophy and a key element in the declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978. The Bamako Initiative develops and sustains the goals of Primary Health Care (in a way that the Child Survival and Development or Universal Child Immunization programmes could not)." [I would qualify that, however, to say "on their own."] "It introduces for the first time, on a large-scale, a structure for community self-reliance, responsibility and organization, and most importantly, income-generation that stays local."

In this context, I would also like to mention that we have taken note of the cautionary remarks of some delegations - including Belgium, Canada, Norway and the United Kingdom - on the need for attention to access to health services, ability and willingness of the poorest to pay, sustainability and self-financing and the need for ensuring adequate management. These concerns are addressed in the progress report and they will have to be resolved at the country and local levels as the programme advances. Clearly, the speed and scale at which the Bamako Initiative can be expanded will depend on the specific circumstances of the different countries adopting it.

I would like, however, to draw the Board's attention to the Benin experience, where the Bamako Initiative has increased the coverage of health services and boosted the credibility of the health system, resulting in rising attendance at health centres and a willingness of the population to pay for treatment.

I would like to express our appreciation to Italy for its statement of intent for financial support and to Japan for its involvement at the field level.

Population growth and family planning

The distinguished delegates of Denmark, Egypt, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, and France mentioned the importance of child spacing and family planning, and some delegations have urged UNICEF to work closely with UNFPA. I wish to report to the Board that UNICEF shares the concern expressed and has been collaborating with UNFPA and WHO on child spacing, based on the concept that pregnancies that are too close, too many, too early, and too late in life are injurious to the health of both mother and child. In the broad framework of JCGP, UNICEF and UNFPA are conducting several mid-term reviews this year that are intended to reinforce and complement the programmes of both organizations.

Child Development

Education

A number of delegations expressed support for greater emphasis on education, especially basic education, and highlighted its fundamental importance in development. These included Barbados, Belgium, Cameroon, Egypt, Finland, France, Guyana, India, Republic of Korea, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda and the United States. Several delegations also focussed on the importance and urgency of promoting education and literacy for women and girls. The secretariat shares these concerns, and in formulating our policy and strategy for the 1990s, the need for education - from the earliest years to adulthood - is being emphasized, as eloquently explained by Mr. Mayor, the Director General of UNESCO. Facts for Life is the best example of the empowering knowledge families must have in order to protect the health of their children. May I also express my thanks to the Bolivian government for the award of their annual literacy prize to UNICEF.

We greatly appreciate the strong endorsement given by delegations and by the NGO Committee on UNICEF, to the co-sponsorship by UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank and UNICEF of the World Conference on Education for All to be held in Thailand in March 1990. The four sponsoring agencies will endeavour to ensure adequate international, regional and national consultation and preparation before the conference. We certainly hope that this conference will map out a strategy for education equivalent to the Alma Ata declaration, and that it will renew the commitment to education for all in the decade ahead. This conference should promote creative solutions and a broadened outlook, but it should be realistic in its targets given the constraints of available resources.

Nutrition

The delegations of several countries - including Benin, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Finland, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom - referred to the importance of giving due attention to nutrition and to household food security, in comprehensive programmes for child survival and development. In addition, Barbados, India and Norway made specific reference to breastfeeding, and India stressed the important role of NGOs in promotion strategies. Sudan stressed the importance of the collection and wide dissemination of data on nutritional status. The Netherlands referred to their support for the Interagency Food and Nutrition Surveillance programme and cited its value. We appreciate the support that the Netherlands and Switzerland have given to these programmes, and we hope to attract support from other donors.

The distinguished delegate of Australia suggested that we should focus on the problems of iodine deficiency. In my opening statement, I referred to the goal of virtually eliminating iodine deficiency disorders by the end of the century. I welcome this support and will encourage the inclusion of appropriate components in country programmes. As the delegate pointed out, UNICEF has helped to fund the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders and we hope other donors will be forthcoming with support for this important body.

Water Supply and Sanitation

I would like to express our appreciation for the strong endorsement of our increasing support to the water supply and sanitation sector from delegations - including Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lesotho, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, the Sudan, Sweden, Turkey, the USSR, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States. Many delegations have also expressed support for the goal of the elimination of guinea-worm disease by mid-1990s, as it is so closely associated with water-supply, sanitation and health education. In reply to the distinguished delegate of the United Kingdom, I should point out that the elimination of guinea worm disease was established as a sub-goal of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade by its Steering Committee, in

April 1981, and endorsed by the World Health Assembly in resolutions WHA 34.25 and WHA 39.21.

Women in Development

Many delegations underscored the importance of incorporating concern for women in all UNICEF programmes, and they pointed to the close link between concerns for children and mothers. These delegations include Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bolivia, Cameroon, Denmark, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Lesotho, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, The Netherlands, Turkey, the USSR, Uganda, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Several delegations - including Egypt, Finland, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Turkey and the United States - also stressed the importance of female education. I can only agree with all the observations made. In connexion with women's concerns, may I draw the attention of the Board to the important statements made by the distinguished delegates of Bangladesh and India, underlining the importance of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) declaration designating 1990 as the "Year of the Girl Child". It is indeed a significant political move by the countries in this region.

Environment

I would like to express our appreciation to the many delegations - including Bangladesh, Benin, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Sudan, Thailand, and the USSR - for their guidance on the way that environmental concerns should be incorporated in formulating country programmes. Although members of the Board will have the opportunity to debate this issue again in the Programme Committee, I would like to mention, in response to the distinguished delegate of Belgium, that many activities supported by UNICEF already have environmental dimensions, and the policy proposed hopes to address this aspect more systematically. The response will naturally vary from country to country, and we agree that the measures proposed should naturally be part of the country programmes, without taking UNICEF into activities far beyond our present concerns. I have noted the wish of the USSR that UNICEF take part in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment planned for 1992. The Board may want to give some further guidance in this respect.

Evaluation

I am pleased to note that many delegations, as last year, welcomed UNICEF's efforts to strengthen evaluation and monitoring. I would also like to report to the Board that we are promoting the systematic use of evaluation findings, as stressed by the distinguished delegate of Thailand. In response to the distinguished delegate of Belgium, we are already producing regular reports, but I am not certain that it will be possible or desirable to produce a single, consolidated report covering all evaluation activities. A series of summary reports describing all our evaluation work already exists, and delegations can request copies from the Evaluation Office.

Inter-agency co-operation

As members of the Board are well aware, UNICEF has been especially active in promoting and strengthening its links with the United Nations system in order to develop appropriate structures for inter-agency collaboration. A policy paper outlining these issues will be discussed at length in the Programme Committee. A number of delegations - notably Cameroon, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands, the Sudan, Thailand, Turkey and the United States - referred to the importance they attach to this aspect of our work and to maximizing the impact of the United Nations as a whole. I know that the Executive Board will wish to discuss this issue at greater length during the Programme Committee, and we look forward to an in-depth examination during that discussion. I would, however, reiterate two points here. First, coordination is ultimately the responsibility of the governments concerned and they must provide the framework within which inter-agency collaboration takes place. Second, UNICEF is committed to strengthening collaborative efforts, both at headquarters levels and in the field. I recently addressed a letter to all field offices, requesting UNICEF representatives to take up the issue of inter-agency cooperation as a matter of priority. Copies of this letter [CF/EXD-1988-2926 of 29 November 1988] are available to interested delegations. I also hope that we will not overlook the important related element of links between the United Nations system and other multi-lateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations.

Operations issues

I have listened to your concerns regarding operations issues very closely, as has my colleague, Ms. Lokhaug. This year, we have continued the process of frank and open debate on issues of importance in the areas of finance, administration and supply. I agree fully with the delegation from Italy that UNICEF is fast becoming a "grown-up" organization and that, with income in excess of \$700 million last year, we, in the secretariat, must continue the process of strengthening and improving our management procedures and controls. We can assure the delegates from the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Japan that we accept the comments and suggestions of the United Nations Board of Auditors and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) as constructive. I would refer delegates to document E/ICEF/1989/AB/L.13, which outlines the actions we have taken to integrate the recommendations of those bodies into our management processes.

Income and expenditure

Regarding the projections contained in the medium-term plan, I was encouraged that the Federal Republic of Germany and Thailand were of the opinion that our income projections are realistic. We recognize the value of general resources income to UNICEF core programmes and, as noted by the delegations of India, Japan and the Philippines, we heartily endorse the importance they attribute to the need for growth of general resources income. Here, I would like to note the significant increase to the general resources contributions of the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR.

As for the concerns raised by Japan, the United Kingdom and Yugoslavia regarding the mix of programme expenditures between general resources and supplementary funds, I would point out that, when comparing these figures, programme support costs must be included in the general resources figures. On this basis, programme expenditures from general resources totalled \$271 million in 1988, which is 58 per cent of total programme costs. Any analysis of total expenditures must take into consideration that administrative costs are also charged to general resources. Also, I can assure the delegate from Japan that any increase in supplementary funded projects will not affect the sound management of UNICEF.

The comments made by the delegate from Australia regarding the need for cost effectiveness are noted, and I would like to say that we are constantly striving to achieve higher standards of efficiency and accountability. This is demonstrated by the fact that budget overhead ratios will continue to decline over the period of the financial plan.

Budget issues

Denmark, Italy and Japan have noted that UNICEF continues to expand. It is for this reason that we have had to propose an increase in administrative and programme support to our country programmes. The distinguished delegate from Uganda was correct in noting that the sustainability of CSDR programmes at regional and country levels requires provision for adequate human resources in UNICEF. The Federal Republic of Germany pointed out that the proposed budget outline is a sound one and, in this regard, I note that the delegate from Belgium approved of a modest increase in staff in New York. I am confident the concerns noted in the ACABQ report and highlighted by Japan, such as additional staff, upgrading of posts and the travel budget, will be dealt with in the Committee on Administration and Finance. I would just reiterate the basic points made on Monday that in comparing 1982-1983 with 1990-1991, we see that, despite more than a doubling of over-all expenditures, the number of international professional core posts actually declines by 5 - from 457 to 452 - and that overhead ratios decrease to less than 10% by 1990-1991 as compared to over 11% for the recent past.

The support of the United States regarding our efforts to restructure and streamline the regional offices in Africa is encouraging. As requested by the Federal Republic of Germany, I am sure the details of office restructuring both at headquarters and in the field will be clarified next week in the Committee on Administration and Finance.

I would like to assure the distinguished delegate from Uganda that the 1988-1989 budgetary reserves have been used to cover mandatory increases in the revised 1988-1989 budget for items, such as salaries and entitlement increases for existing staff, as mandated by the United Nations. Furthermore, the budget reserve proposed for 1990-1991 is also intended to cover unexpected expenditures arising from inflation and exchange rate fluctuations and not new activities.

Debt relief

The distinguished delegates of Guyana, the Philippines and Yugoslavia requested information on the progress of debt relief for child survival. I am pleased to advise that one modest donation was agreed in December 1988 - modest, yet very significant, as it represented a break-through and sets a precedent for other banks. Negotiations are at a final stage for two further donations for the Sudan, and there are other encouraging prospects under discussion. However, the distinguished delegate of the United Kingdom is quite correct: UNICEF is not a financial institution, and in accepting donations under the concept of debt relief for child survival, we have not, and should not, become involved in the legal aspects of these transactions.

There will be a briefing next week and there is also an information note on this matter which I trust will satisfy all concerned interests.

Procurement

The delegate from Yugoslavia also asked whether UNICEF could increase its percentage of procurement from assisted countries because they considered 20 per cent of total UNICEF purchasing to be insufficient. UNICEF procurement expenditure in developing countries is actually 26 per cent, and this compares very favourably with that of other agencies. In 1988, purchases were approximately \$53 million in developing countries. One of the priorities of Supply Division, through the mechanism of international bids, is to increase expenditure in developing countries, while not overlooking the necessity for maintaining balanced expenditures in major donor countries.

Human resources

The distinguished delegates of Canada and Norway addressed the issue of the recruitment and promotion of women. I would like to assure the delegates that the recruitment of women is one of the top UNICEF priorities in the area of personnel. For your information, the current percentage of women in international professional core posts in UNICEF is 29.8 per cent, which, since 1985, has increased from 24.7 per cent. A December 1990 goal of 33.3 per cent has been set and we are pleased to note your support in this area.

Several delegations - including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Korea and Yugoslavia - commended the devotion and dedication of UNICEF staff. I wholeheartedly agree with these statements. As you are all well aware, UNICEF staff must sometimes work in areas torn by war and civil strife at great personal risk to themselves. On behalf of all UNICEF staff, I extend my sincere appreciation for these kind remarks.

Both Canada and the United States encouraged efforts to strengthen staff development and training. As reflected in our medium-term plan and budget

documents, these areas are receiving increasing attention. We have included a modest increase in staff training funds in the revised 1988-1989 budget and a further increase in the proposed 1990-1991 budget estimates.

* * * * *

Madam Chairperson, I do wish to express appreciation, for myself and on behalf of the Secretary-General, for the expressions of support and encouragement offered by so many delegations with respect to Operation Lifeline Sudan and my own role as the Secretary-General's Personal Representative. Your expressions are especially genuine, I know, given the very strong financial, logistical and moral support which so many Governments have recently contributed to this urgent effort.

Let me take this opportunity to make one basic point about the Sudan Emergency Operation: there were two starting premises last January. First, that unless extraordinary efforts were made this spring, there would be a repetition of the 1988 disaster and more than 100,000 civilians would die as a result of the civil war. Second, that even though there were many reasons to be sceptical about the extent of success of even an extraordinary effort, the United Nations had no alternative but to try. Sceptics doubted there would even be a successful meeting - with a resulting plan of action - in Khartoum on 8-9 March. A successful meeting did take place. Then the sceptics said the SPLA would never agree. They have. The sceptics then said the donors, having been burned before on poor use of aid, would never respond. They did - and fully. The sceptics now say the supplies will not be delivered. They are being delivered - over 20,000 tons to date. But the sceptics will certainly be right to the extent that the full amount will not be delivered on time. We can be confident, however, that many tens of thousands more tons will be delivered - in any event we cannot allow the sceptics to keep us from trying, from doing the best we can ... and to keep the eyes of the world on this tragic situation. It is world public attention, after all, that is stiffening greatly the resolve of the main warring parties not to allow a repetition this year of the disaster of 1988.

One particular regret which I must register, before I leave for the Sudan this evening, is that my departure will prevent me from meeting personally with a number of senior delegation leaders who may be leaving New York before I return on Monday. I always count on the Board session as an opportunity to spend time with senior officials of Member Governments and National Committees - not only in this room and socially, but in individual conversations and meetings; I am sorry that my opportunity to do so this year is abbreviated.

Finally, Madam Chairperson and Members of the Board, I do wish to express my personal appreciation for the kind words of confidence and encouragement expressed by all delegations and individual delegates in response to the Secretary-General's decision - on your advice - to appoint me to a third term as Executive Director of UNICEF.

What a privilege this is for me! There really is no other position in the world which I could more enjoy, because no other position offers as much opportunity as I believe this one does - to work with wonderful people ... to serve the greatest of causes ... and to make potentially an incredible difference in the lives of so many.

And I must say that, more important than your words about me are your words about what UNICEF is doing and how we can do it better and best. The positive tone of the General Debate - which I know will continue through the two Committees - is the strongest and most explicit encouragement and praise which my colleagues and I can receive from you. To know that our work and the standards we apply to our work enjoys your confidence and respect, and that we can count on you not only as governors, but as allies and partners, is the foundation UNICEF needs to enter the 1990s ... and the assignment I welcome as I enter my third term as your Executive Director.