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DRAFT Address of Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Christian Children's Fund

Richmond, Virginia
7 June 1989



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(? TITLE)

Thank you very much (? Lyndon Trigg), I must say I did not know - up until this moment - that you were the son of the parents that I've known so well and I knew you as a youngster, if I may put it that way - but special greetings to the International Staff Conference of the Christian Children's Fund and to my many friends in it, including particularly, Paul Mc Cleary with whom I've worked off and on for, I guess Paul its been some 20 years now that we've collaborated on various end runs on the obstacles for children and for the poor, and certainly the Christian Children's Fund and UNICEF has been deeply involved together on many things and as I said at the beginning, I'm very regretful to have missed this opportunity to see you face-to-face. I should add that a special touch of the collaboration between our two organizations is the fact that Paul is the Chairman of the Non-Governmental Organization Committee for UNICEF, so he has a real capacity to influence our work through that channel as well.

I know that you're considering the status of children in the 1990s - what can be done about them, and the starting point seems to me for any consideration of the '90s for children is to review what the situation is

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today. And really there are two basic things one looks at - what is the immediate status as if one was taking a static picture, and the other is - what are the trends at work. Many of these have been identified in the paper that Paul Mc Cleary prepared for your meeting on the "World of the Child in the 1990's", including, basically, the fact that we have this paradoxically situation in 1989 which is both, the worst of times and the best of times for children. He identified some of the reasons why we consider these the worst of times and it is worth noting that after 35 years of unprecedented progress, up until about 1980, for children when we could say that there has been more progress for children in the past 35 years than in the preceding 1,000 years in many ways.

We have seen that acute economic crises, particularly in Africa and Latin America are sliding some 900 million people, a significant percentage of humanity, back down the poverty ladder. And this is particularly because of the acute economic crises of Latin America and Africa which has been symbolized by the debt crisis, which, in turn, is the sum of many other economic problems - from falling primary products prices, rising interest rates and poor management in some cases. And we see the results in the fact that last year some \$40 billion flowed from the poor countries to the rich countries, more than the reverse of what was true ten years before when \$30 billion flowed from the industrialized countries back to the developing countries. And this is a manifestation of the fundamental ill that we face - per capita incomes are down about 10 per cent, 10 to 15 per cent in Latin America and about 25 per cent in Africa, as compared to the start of the decade. Now, this means that many countries have had expenditures across the

board, but it also has meant that in many, many cases, the adjustment has fallen particularly heavy on the weakest and the most vulnerable and so we've seen in many countries the expenditures for health and education cut by 25 to 50 per cent. And in a tragic summary for Latin America and Africa, we said in our "State of the World's Children" report last year, that more than 500,000 children died last year as a consequence of this economic situation - that we see in those two continents alone, some 1,000-a-day, more than a 1,000-a-day in Africa as a consequence and some 500-a-day in Latin America.

However, it is worth reminding ourselves as we talk about what are the worst of times is that frequently there can be some healthy movements that have negative consequences for some and worldwide, for example, we have seen the shift toward market economies, greater use of the market economies. This has been true in China, it's been true in the United States in the '80s, we're all aware of what's happening in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe but it's also happened in the U.K. And in this process of shifting towards market economies as people have been grappling with their economic problems and trying to find new patterns of growth there often has been a tendency to let the social services, particularly those for the vulnerable, to get left behind. And we see this in China, for example, where when the communes and the neighbourhood associations were all cancelled out in the early '80s - these were also the financing mechanisms for the world-famous "barefoot doctors" in China and for much of the pre-schools. And within five years, roughly half of the pre-schools in China, for example, closed down and a very substantial number of the health services provided by the so-called "barefoot doctor" health system had been very substantively set back - including health

education in schools, checking on water. And within the United States, we see where as we've shifted toward a more market economy approach in many areas that for the bottom half of our population there has been a retrogression in many ways on the safety net for the poor and the vulnerable even though we've had seven years of prosperity. And it's against this background that, I think, we all have to be conscious of the fact that as (? Michele C _____), the Managing Director of the IMF, has said, "Adjustment does not have to lower basic human standards" and unfortunately he has also said, "Too often in recent years it is the poor segments of the population that have carried the heaviest burden of economic adjustment".

And it is this factor which has lead UNICEF and others to articulate what we call "adjustment with a human face", that as countries adjust to the new economic reality that they have to cope with - whether it's in Latin America or in the United States - there is a need in this adjustment process to protect the investment in the social side, particularly for the most vulnerable, and also there is a need for the social sectors to become far more efficient than they have been in the past. And it's not just a question of industry and agriculture trying to become more efficient, we (?created) an "our" sectors - if I may call it that - education, health, social welfare; we need to find some more effective techniques.

And, this is what then brings me to what I call potentially, and Paul calls potentially, the best of times. Now, Paul in his paper said this is potentially the best of times and cited, very validly, the breaking out of peace in the world, the reduction - the very marked reduction of East-West

tensions, the fact that it looks like the Cold War - if it's not coming to an end - is both in its military and in its ideological sense of being dramatically reduced - and, this does hold out a major potential.

But, let me cite three other manifestations which are (?illustrative) of the fact that these may become the best of times. One of these, it may come as a surprise to many that at the last super-power summit between General-Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan a year ago in Moscow, the only Third World development sector discussed by them was that of children and the joint communique issued by the two leaders then stated "both leaders reaffirm their support for the WHO-UNICEF goal of reducing the scale of preventable childhood deaths through the most effective methods of saving children". They urged other countries in the international community to intensify efforts to achieve this goal. And since then, there's been a real follow-up on that; on the Soviet side for example, I've had two communications from Mr. Gorbachev and they have increased their financial contribution, albeit from a rather small base by some 12 times and they've said this is just a starter for what they plan to put in, into ways of increased funding in the future.

Second, a surprising manifestation is the fact that some of you may remember that last December the question was thrown out, "Why not a World Summit for Children?". Well, there are now some 75 Heads of State and Government who have endorsed the idea of holding a Summit for Children before another 12 months pass. And I would say the odds are better than 50-50 that there will be such a summit - it's hard to believe that all these Heads of

State in the key countries of the world will get together to discuss children. And, that many people may be asking why there should be such a high level consideration on a topic which they claim, as you know, is as mundane as children. But its been interesting in the last 2 or 3 years to see how children issues have been the focus of debate, declarations, resolutions, and joint support from such fora as the Summit of the Seven South-Asian Countries (SARAC), three times now; the OAU Summit for Africa, twice; and the recent Summit of the seven Central American countries; and it was just two months ago that 500 Parliamentarians from 98 countries meeting in Budapest for the 100th Anniversary of the International Inter-Parliamentary Union devoted their entire topic discussions to children's issues and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And just two weeks ago, at the Francophone Summit, they devoted considerable discussion to children and interesting enough the 44 governments there, including that of France and Canada, called for an early convening of the Summit for Children.

The third sort of manifestation that something is happening is the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child which was first proposed in '79 by the Poles - and I can remember thinking at that time, that this will never see the light of actuality in my lifetime - knowing the reluctance of people to sign binding contractual arrangements about how they will handle their children that are commitments to other governments. But in the last in the last two years, suddenly this one has taken traction and, as I think many of you know, it looks as if this Convention which covers child survival, child protection, and child development will be adopted by the General Assembly this fall - November-December, and already is a text that is fully agreed - with only two differences still to be hammered out.

Well, one can say, "What's happening for children?, What are these forces in what is generally dark economic times?, What is it that has allowed all this to happen?" and this, I think, brings us back to the fact that there are two central new developments of recent years which have come together to give us a tremendous new potential for children.

And the first of these, as you know, is the realization that there are a series of grossly under-used major technologies that have been developed over the years which are not being used, and that if they were used there could be a tremendous improvement in the condition of children. This was brought out very clearly by Dr. Nakajima last fall when in a speech in Houston he said, "Parents and families properly supported could save two-thirds of the 14 million children who die every year if only they were properly informed and motivated. Immunization alone could save 3 million lives and another 3 million deaths a year could be prevented by oral rehydration, a simple and cheap technology." In effect, what is happening is a realization not only that 14 million children - 40,000 a day are dying every day, but that two-thirds of these are readily preventable if we only have the will to do so. The cost is not large, financially, and I think we're aware of the technologies in '82 - that we coined the phrase "GOBI-FFF". There is quite a few of you who will remember to symbolize those technologies which had this potential, immunization was the "I" of GOBI, the "B" was promotion of breast-feeding and proper weaning practices, and the "O" was for oral rehydration therapy and the "G" was for growth monitoring of children; the three "F's" were female literacy, family spacing and food supplementation - the use of vitamin A and iodine to counter iodine-deficiency diseases. And

when we realize that in the early '80s that only 10 per cent of the world's children were immunized and that in 1980 that less than 1 per cent of the mother's of the world knew how to do oral rehydration therapy against the single biggest killer of children - it dawned on us in the last several years that there is this tremendous gap between the knowledge that's available and its actual use. Now this question of use, of course, brings us to the fact that all these technologies require the active participation of the family and how do you get the family motivated, informed and motivated, to bring their children in 3 times to be immunized before age one, and how do we get families to change their habits and use oral rehydration therapy, how do we promote a return to breast-feeding when so many mothers have identified the fashionable and the best thing to do for their children as a shift to bottle feeding.

And this is where the second great advance factor has come in, and that is, the sort of belated recognition/realization among us, that there has been a communication revolution in most developing countries in the past 15 or 20 years which we've only just begun to use for this - for the purposes of empowering people with knowledge and changing their motivation. And there's the ubiquitous radio; in many parts of the world the television is exploding; there's a schoolhouse in virtually every village in the developing countries now; religious groups, as you know, have new patterns of communication and they are among the most effective users of these modern communication means, and if only the religious groups will involve themselves in this - they can be great communicators, particularly with the poor.

One can go on with this communications revolution that has come to developing countries but what we are discovering is that when you put the two together that there's a great synergism and that you can get dramatic results. Since this major effort started in the mid-1980s, we can now say that some 7,000 children are not dying each day as of the start of this year because of the accelerated use of these technologies and that this number could be doubled to 14,000 in 2 to 3 years if only the will is there to push it through - great additional expenditures are not involved. Well, this has been a powerful factor in making children into "big politics" again - if a government, a leadership is willing to really push forward on immunization it can be very good politics indeed; at the same time, increasingly it can become bad politics if it is not used.

Now, what are the implications for us of all this as we look forward to the 1990s? Well, first I would say that there are a whole series of goals beyond that of universal child immunization/oral rehydration therapy, that have been so much at the fore that can be added during the '90s on these techniques. And the Joint Committee on Health Policy of UNICEF and the World Health Organization came up with - and if I weren't with you physically today I would be distributing to you - the list of goals, they put five clusterings of them, that they now believe can be achieved if you can really mobilize this new power to communicate. And these included, for example, reduction in mortality and under that heading reduction by 50 per cent of maternal mortality rates from the 1980 levels, reduction of 1980 infant and child mortality rates by at least half by the year 2000; on women's education and health - the achievement of universal primary education and 80 per cent female literacy; on

better nutrition - they see the capacity to virtually eliminate severe malnutrition among under-5 children and reduction by half of moderate malnutrition. Recognizing here, that to a tremendous extent, malnutrition is a consequence that can be avoided by family control practices - even among poor families; and certainly, we can virtually eliminate blindness and other consequences of vitamin A deficiency; it is criminal that iodine-deficiency disorders remain so widespread in so many countries when it is so easy to eliminate. On the childhood diseases side: we now have it within our capacity to eradicate polio before the end of this century; and we can probably come very close to eradicating measles which still takes the lives of some 2 million children a year; and we can also think of the virtual elimination of neo-natal tetanus by 1995; and of controlling the environment in such a way that by 1995 we should be able to come close to eradicating the guinea worm disease which is such a major problem in many countries; and that it should be possible by the end of the century to have virtually universal access to safe drinking water.

Well, there are a series of these goals which I think we need to identify and gather our field efforts to achieve and this is an important task that UNICEF, the Christian Children's Fund, and others can play a major role on - but I would say there ought to be a more general goal for the 1990s which is that we should really be seeking the change status for children.

What we have seen in the last early '80s is that when push comes to shove, when the Titanic goes down in an economy in most countries, not all, in most countries its been vulnerable mothers and children last and not first, and we

must somehow in the 1990s change this ethos so that we come closer to a doctrine of children first and that people really do believe that there is a new morality which (? marches) with this capacity.

You know one of the great developments of the last 30 years has been the development of a series of new ethos on a number of subjects. When I was a boy, the ethos about imperialism was that it was always here - and I was a Britisher in those day and, gosh, I was a rather proud subject of the King - but today by their post-war World War II period in the early '50s suddenly the ethos changed and we saw the Empires dissolve and colonialism come to an abrupt end. We've seen a change in ethos about race, a change of ethos about women and they're not finished yet but these changing attitudes are very powerful indeed.

And in the field that the Christian Children's Fund and we work together in, where we've seen a big change of ethos, has been with respect to disasters. Forty years ago, 50 years ago, if there was a major calamity such as the Bengal famine of '43 basically people touted about them, some groups - usually church groups raised some money for it - but there was no major response. I was in Calcutta at the tail end of the Bengal famine when a million and a half people died on the streets of Calcutta while the grain stores were full and the government felt no sense of responsibility to move the grain from the shop to the people who were dying on the street 30' away. We know now from the last 10 years from the Kampuchea crisis, from what happened in Ethiopia in Africa in '84/'85 and now in the Sudan - that world public opinion when it really becomes aware that these things are happening

are insistent that governments act, and it becomes bad politics for governments not to act and good politics for them to act.

We're not yet in that same status with respect to children. This is I think exemplified by the fact that I think most of you remember the (Bahopal) chemical disaster in India several years ago and it was a terrible disaster that commanded the headlines of every paper in the world but few people realized that very same day the number of children that died in India because they were not vaccinated exceeded the number of people that died all-told as a result of the (Bahopal) disaster, the number of children that died in India that day of diarrhoea, dehydration from diarrhoea, also exceeded the (Bahopal) disaster and it was not just a one-time event, it was true the day before, the week before, the month after. And in effect, the world now had the ethos of response to retrogressions whether it's the Armenian disaster or the South Sudan disaster but what we need to build is an ethos that is just as strong for these opportunities to deal with historic problems of which, thanks to advances of technologies and communication, we can do something about.

Second, in addition to identifying what are the goals we should work for, I would say, we have a common challenge of how to make the public and policy-makers in both developing countries and the industrial countries aware that for so many aspects of dealing with children the issue is increasing, the issue is increasingly less what to do but whether we are going to do it, how do we generate the political will to do the do-ables and this of course is where the Summit comes in. At the present time if I take for example, two

very (?simplistic) examples, we can say that as of this summer more than 90 per cent of the children of the world have access and are ?

End of tape - nothing on flipside.