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DRAFT Speaking Points for Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
from
The North-South Roundtable
[Tape Transcription]

"The Future of the United Nations"

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JPG SPEAKING POINTS FROM
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 (Tape Transcription)

Tape No. 1:

Introduction of panel members; I'm Jim Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, and my key points will come up in my comments to follow shortly.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I must say I have great faith in the potential of the sessions of the Roundtable to make a contribution. It was seven years ago at just about this time - two weeks later, that a North-South Roundtable on Food and Nutrition met. Out of it came this whole, what we now know as the Potential for the Child Survival and Development Revolution, that was where the phrase GOBI-FFF was invented and it's an illustration, I think, of a session where we met to discuss a problem and went from discussion of the problem to how something specifically might be implemented in a very concrete way and which has had a very great impact. We have excellent papers before us and I would like frankly to focus my comments more on the forest, and some of the shifts taking place in it that Richard Falk mentioned.

A year ago, a little over a year ago, I was in Stockholm and had the privilege of addressing a symposium that was convened by the UNA with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the future of the UN system, and at that time I identified three historic forces that it was worth taking into account as we got down to the specifics. One was the fact that the historic and unprecedented progress that we've had in the period since the end of World War II was becoming stagnated in many parts of the world and in some very important sectors we were actually seeing retrogression, notably in Latin America and in Africa. And it was shortly thereafter that (?) Barber Conable at the Bank meeting said, "the stubborn fact of the 1980's is that growth has been inadequate, poverty is still on the rise, and the environment is poorly protected. Unchanged, these realities would deny our children a peaceful, decent and livable world." His focus, I think, was first and foremost on the developing world. Shortly thereafter UNICEF published its State of the World's Children Report noting that - a very rough estimate - that the economic issues and stalemates of Latin America and Africa - one consequence was that some 500,000 children were dying who would not otherwise have died but for these economic crises.

But I think what's worth underlining is that this comment is basically applicable also to much of the North, both East and West. And in the United States, certainly in the past year, we've had a whole series of studies coming out that with, despite the relative economic prosperity of the past several years, the condition of the bottom half in terms of basic essentials of life

is in many ways worse off today than it was 10 years ago and certainly it has become clear that in the Socialist countries there is a major crisis in their whole development process and that this applies whether you are in Poland, the USSR, or Viet Nam. And I'll come back to this later.

A second historic fact that I emphasized at that time that's making a difference, is that there is a new morality that has emerged over the last 40-50 years that has really gone along with, what I said then, was captured by Toynbee when he said that "our age is the first generation since the dawn of history in which Mankind dared to believe it practical to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race." And I think the impact of this statement, of this forest that we deal with, is that morality does change with capacity, and as the world capacity to do things for people has changed, thanks to technological and other developments, the morality as to what must be done, can be done, has begun to have a major impact on the way society acts. And this has certainly effected development in the industrial world, developing world, in my parochial world of UNICEF. We see it in the sense that of the 40,000 children that die every day, if it was clear that this was a result of largely intractable, un-doable problems, unmanageable problems, one would tend to say this is something that one has to live with; but as it becomes increasingly clear that two-thirds of these child deaths are readily preventable at low cost, through relatively simple means, a new morality comes up. It becomes increasingly unconscionable, and you have seen in the last 7 or 8 years a distinct shift in what the world public opinion compels on this. I've just come from the Sudan where last year 250,000 people died as a consequence of the actions of the two military factions in the civil war there. Well, public opinion of the world has compelled a response, and a significantly different response - I think the total this year will be well below 10,000 because of the impact of this public opinion of the world.

The third factor that I stressed then is the harsh reality that few of the hard choices that have lead to major advances in the past century have been made without there first having been tragic severe crises which provided the tremendous energy to overcome the inertia of prevailing policies. Prevailing policies normally don't change because of common sense and vision - it's only when the roof seems to be falling in around you that people begin to make the shift. So, it took the Great Depression to get the New Deal in the United States; it took the tragedy of World War II to get a United Nations and to get the Brenton Woods institutions; it took World War II to really breakthrough to the end of colonialism. If you hadn't had World War II, my guess is that the Empires would still be quite in a dominant phase in many parts of the world - it's clearly advanced it by 25 to 50 years. And, it took the Cold War, in part, to lead to the Marshall Plan and a new level of economic co-operations. Now in those cases we paid dearly in terms of human suffering before it became action.

Now, the thing to emphasize of course is the tragedy may be worth it if it leads to constructive action, but as we all know too often these disasters can end up with, people act but they act the wrong way; and the Great Depression, while on one hand it brought the New Deal, also brought Fascism, Hitler, and World War II which was a terribly expensive process. And I think our concern is at the present time: Do we make the right choices? And it was about

a-year-and-a-half ago when we were at the SID meeting in New Delhi at the World Assembly that (? K.B. Lal) said before the major breakthroughs there tends to be the darkest before the dawn and he asked the question: Are we at that point of greatest darkness where maybe the breakthrough can come? And I think we would all agree that we are certainly getting close to that point. I would say myself, yes, that certainly if one looks at the Socialist block it is at a stage of seeing the need for dramatic action. In the North, there is in Western Europe, North America, Japan, I think there is, the world doesn't look that dark. On the other hand, the specific areas from the environment to drugs, and a growing recognition of the economic imbalances - that something dramatic needs to be done. And clearly, of course, in Africa and Latin America something has to happen to get off the track and get that one back on the track again.

So that this in a sense is our preface here, as this mode of crisis comes, as people are prepared to act: Are we going to come up with creative, do-able, sufficiently imaginative plans of action? And maybe it would be useful to just kind of say that since I talked in Stockholm it's worth underlining really how much has happened in one year. One, I would stress that it become very clear that the USSR sees the darkness of the current situation and is seeking to act creatively, and that this is a major factor that must be taken into account, it seems to me, as we think about the future institutions and structures of what we do. Gorbachev has received a great deal of world credit - and I think properly - for responding to his crisis; but clearly he is responding to a crisis as they see it in Moscow. Secondly, it's become very clear in these past 12 months that the USSR is prepared to use the UN system in a way that it has not been prepared to since the Cold War settled in late 1945 and early 1946.

And I must say for me the revelation on this was going to an informal session with (? Vladimir Petroski) in New York last September when we engaged in this informal discussion and some very frank dialogue that indicated the extent of the shift in thinking out of the new view of the world from Moscow. He stressed at that time that there is a recognition that the interest in humanity as a whole than in the class struggle, and that peace is more important than the perpetuation of the class struggle; and that the USSR must develop within an international economy and must participate in the international division of labour far more effectively than it has in the past, if it is going to deal with its economic opportunities. And that, looking back, they have relied too much in the past on seeing and trying to ensure security through military means without realizing the extent to which security also encompassed economic, environment, and other aspects. And he then went on to say that there was a new role of the United Nations in establishing this new comprehensive concept of security for society. It was a very interesting elaboration of the role of the UN, the acceptance of the concept of international law by the USSR, their new acceptance of compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, and on and on - and on. He emphasized then the serious second point of ecology and the potential for world cooperation on building peace through collaboration and common problems.

The third development I think has become very clear in the past year is the new role for the UN on the political side. Yves Berthelot and others have all commented on this, but really it's just the last 10 - 12 months that we've

seen this dramatic breakthrough in Iran-Iraq, Namibia - you could just go on and on - and while none of these breakthroughs are successfully consummated yet, it's very clear the UN has had a major role in them, and it is now accepted that it does.

The fourth major element is that there is a tremendous upsurge in public support for the UN in the West, as well as in the East, and it's very interesting that polls in the United States, where just two years ago the UN was at its nadir in terms of public support and its peak in terms of criticism, the latest polls showed that public support has never been higher for the UN than it is today. So there is a very critical new opportunity for public support and we see it in the Nobel Peace Prize coming to the peacekeeping forces. So this a very effective new thing.

Fifth, we have a new, more pragmatic US administration, and we are already beginning to see major new possibilities that frankly just weren't there under the prior administration, even though it's the same administration.

Sixth, I would say that it's become clearer in the past year that there has been an historic shift to the greater use of the market economy in every major world society in the 1980's. And whether you're for China, or the USSR, or the United States, or the UK, this shift in the market economy has taken place and it's been accompanied in many places, of course, with a de-emphasis on the public sector. And this in terms of our concerns on the human side, the poor side, has resulted - as we've seen in the United States - in a weakening of safety net for the poor even though there has been relative prosperity.

Seven, as Yves Berthelot and others have pointed out, we now really need for the political advances to be matched, supported and exploited by comparable breakthroughs in the social and economic side and these are covered in many of the papers. The potential is there. We, in UNICEF, have seen it in the last eight months, for example, when we proposed throughout the idea, why not a World Summit for children, to get the Gorbachev's and the Bush's and the Li Pung's and the Rashid Gandhi's and the (? Babinghida's) of the world together for children. And you know, one could have laughed, you know - these people - all getting together for children?; but some ninety countries have come out in support of this concept now. The Francophone Summit supported it, the resolution should through the Non-aligned Summit supporting it today; Friday, the US informed us that the United States would be prepared to participate in such a summit, and that they would be prepared to participate in the planning for such a summit, but that they would do so only as a part only if the USSR also participated in the planning for such a summit. And when I was in Moscow in May there was a very positive reaction from the USSR. Well, clearly, one or two years ago one would have thought something like this: The first Global Summit - East-West-North-South - on Children was a completely wild idea.

And maybe that's the place here to end, is to say that I think we payed a terrible price to be where we are now. And the Cold War is part of that price - the incredible price that we've payed over the last generation to get to where we are now - but we also have the situation in Africa, Latin America,

these other costs that we've seen. And we've paid the price, but I think it's opened up the opportunity to really move on some very big things, and I think that the danger is, at the present time, that we will think too small and too little, and not seize fully the opportunity that lies before us, and it's discussed in the papers that we have with us.

Thank you.

Tape No. 2:

My comments follow very much on (? Gamenene's and Louie's), which really are that we need a new consensus on which people are prepared to act. And I think it's really quite easy at this moment to identify the potential new areas of consensus, and I think once there is consensus, then if the existing agencies have the good sense to relate themselves to being relevant to that consensus, then things can happen. This is really the point that Maurice Strong produced out of the African emergency, where there was a new consensus that there people had to act on that situation and you were able to put together a collaborative structure, and basically existing agencies went to work and in a very short period of time a major new dimension of relevant result was achieved. In a much smaller way I've been involved since March - since really January - in the Sudan thing, and you've gotten the whole new dimension of involvement, world public opinion countering on both of the parties there to play a very different role - the government and the SPLA - and we've mobilized \$210,000,000 (chicken feed, but it's for the Sudan a lot of money - from a very jaded community), and they've developed, for the first time in history the two parties have an agreed common plan of action to protect the civilian population, with all sorts of new wrinkles: that's never been done before.

And I would suggest - and this is what we have seen in a much more limited way in some of the child survival areas, of which the most notable one has been in the field of agreement that there was an opportunity on immunization that the world could and should act on, and then you have a degree of collaboration that involves the Bank, in some more fundamental investments and the like, a very active sponsorship role, bilaterals, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP - everybody is doing it and the results are dramatic on this. So I think from these lessons, one can say, if there can be agreement on a common purpose and then if there can be enough leadership out of existing agencies to mobilize themselves for that - and it does mean usually, if you look back on these, somebody came up with some bureaucratically innovative ideas and slipped them through or pushed them through, because the normal process of inter-agency decision-making doesn't work this way very often, somebody has to take a lead. But, I think, you can identify very clearly right now that - and we'll get into this tomorrow - but the environment issue is there. I couldn't help but feel as I was listening to Ghandi the day before yesterday at Belgrave, and with this - and it was a good discussion - and he talked about the North needed to do more about itself, but that the North begins to realize that, that the elements are there, and there is certainly a lot of popular feeling on this. And I would say that one of our dilemmas here has been that with a specialized agency quasi-UNEP in this, they haven't been able to quite come up within the system, with innovative structure that gave room for everybody else. And it's been a pity in a sense UNEP's even presented the (? Brentland) Commission Report.

Very clearly in the drug field - now this is a new type of issue coming up, but Richard Jolly keeps quoting somebody, I don't know who it is, who said last year that that person said that drugs replaced arms as the second largest item in world trade. However it is, it's clear - you go to Bolivia, and to Peru and Columbia as I have in the last years, the financial implications for

these is tremendous, it really is a development problem very much as well as all the other issues. And I don't feel that we in this room, our agencies, have been particularly captured yet as how we relate to this. There really hasn't been an adequate pickup, it seems to me, of the implications of what Lal and others did in the (? Reider/Ritter) Report of, what, three years ago now, or two years ago, on the implications for the Northern economy of restoration of growth in the South. And while the Bank makes some references to this gently in its documentations, there's been nothing like the push that a major element of the solution of the economic problems of the North would be in there, in restoration of the growth in the South.

We have - one can go on, the population problem still related to the environment, has an appeal that has yet to be mobilized. And clearly on the, if you want to call it the human morality side, which is where UNICEF gets caught in both the emergency type of situations, such as the Sudan, and the African emergency, where you see public opinion of the world prepared to put mammoth pressure on this; but we are seeing the same thing, as I indicated earlier, on the new opportunities of the 40,000 children that die every day, two thirds of whom die really completely unnecessarily, and with the proper leadership you can mobilize world public opinion and governments to give this an entry point. And this of course, is where the idea of a World Summit for Children as an entry point has its way. But it seems to me that it would be very good if we leave here tomorrow - and I should put into this that we have not seriously looked at what I would call the needs of the Socialist countries. There are two sets of implications of the Socialist countries: one is with the whole new foreign policy aspects, there's a whole new willingness that we discussed - touched on, too briefly this morning - willingness of them to work in the UN in a completely different way, and this gets back also to the comment then that was made that in the Brenton Woods institutions, at the moment at least, the Socialist economies aren't there and there's a major new opportunity for pulling together, it seems to me, and for a synergism out of that.

The other side of it of course, is the needs of the Socialist countries themselves for a new basis of interaction with the Western industrial countries and with the developing countries under this new framework, and it might be a very great topic, Richard, for there to be a North-South Roundtable in Moscow or somewhere, where we discuss some of the implications of Russian leadership in this area in the months and in the years ahead. But I think one can identify the areas for a consensus that will be emerging - (? Gamenene) produced one which I think in the next two years will become much clearer, the impact of rising expectations in these poor populations through television and everything else, and that, if we are more sensitive to look at this kind of identification and then how the existing institutions relate to them, there can be a whole new dynamism in the system. And all of this - this comes back, it seems to me, to the comment to my last point here to this morning - is that the tremendous reduction of East-West tensions frees up energy, new patterns in the synergistic working-together-groups that really needs to be captured, because it's a tremendous new opportunity that even a year ago wasn't with us for many of these things.

Tape No. 3:

I'd should say that we in UNICEF have very much supported this idea of a Human Condition Report. We've had our version of it in our State of the World's Children Report, which has been more limited, but even there, of course, you have to cover a wide range. I would just say that it's clear that one of the challenges of issuing this under UNDP's mandate is it gets into politically touchy areas. Moreso, even, than children, and it'll be interesting to see what kind of rough danger signals you get on that.

Secondly, that we clearly need better work on social indicators if this is really to be meaningful because social indicators are in such a really atrocious state. And we in the 1980's have been giving a lot more attention to infant mortality rate, under-five mortality rate, but it's amazing how much investment and how much effort it takes to get reasonably good data, and the need for some new methods of getting current data is very (? vital) - and action at country-level to collect it. A great deal of this data now is done just on an abstract basis, based upon data eight or ten years old, not taking into account that there's a war going on now in the country - it's sometimes incredible how out-of-line the data is. I think there can be greater use of social indicators for aid allocation. We began in 1962, I believe it was, Richard, or '63 - '82, I mean 1982 - to use, we allocate aid to countries roughly on the basis of the number of children per capita, GNP, and their infant mortality rate. And this rather significantly changed our allocations that are available to countries.

We have also found a need to try to get some movement indicator on this and we have developed, like GNP growth rates, we have a mortality reduction rate and this does reveal many interesting things. So that if you take a Brazil, it has - Brazil and Hong Kong, for example, have the same per capita GNP growth rate from 65-80, 6 per cent a year, but the mortality reduction rate in Brazil was at a little over 2 per cent, Hong Kong's was the highest in the world at 7 per cent, and interesting enough, the countries with the highest per capita GNP growth rates - the Singapores, Taiwans, Koreas, the Japans - all had a very high mortality reduction rate. It's interesting, the United States, if you look at it, a Washington, D.C. comes out at less than 1 per cent against the national average of nearly 2.8; Puerto Rico at 4 per cent. And this too, I think, gives you insights that are very useful.

Finally, I would make two points. One is that we have increasingly to meet the problem that Richard talked about - and others - we are using national officers in our programmes; so if you're in a country, such as India, there's a tremendous reservoir of people that you could hire locally, and use locally, and they ultimately then become a major source for a recruitment in an international system. But I think this has potentials for considerably more application. And finally of course, on the human side, what should be a major help for us, is that, in trying to create new human norms, we have a Convention on the Rights of the Child, which should be adopted by the General Assembly this year and ratified hopefully within, by twenty countries, the year after - all of this in the effort to create new norms in this side. And I think we are, to this combination of needs, seeing much greater awareness, much greater focus, and much more attention.

On the disappointment side I should say that, Alex, I was disappointed that the World Bank Development Report now allocates infant mortality and all that to a sub-category under "women". You used to carry it prominently in your basic indicators, but if you start out looking for it you can't find it until you get to "women". Now it's true that women have a great relevance to children.