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Remarks by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Annual Award Dinner of The Better World Society

Waldorf Astoria Hotel – New York
3 October 1989



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Thank you President Carter.

I accept this award for UNICEF and the millions of people and thousands of organizations that work with us in UNICEF's Grand Alliance for Children. Not the least among our members, of course, are President Carter -- as Co-Chair of the United States Committee for UNICEF -- the effective agriculture and health projects of the Carter Presidential Center in the developing world, as well as the many ambitious communications projects of the Better World Society and Turner Broadcasting.

As the world moves out of a long era of confrontation

and into a promising new era of collaboration, we must ensure that children have their rightful place at the center of society's attention. As nation's move away from preoccupation with avoiding mutual destruction, and begin to plan for their common futures, we must ensure that they take serious action to protect the futures of their children.

Fortunately, that is beginning to happen. The Child Survival and Development Revolution has begun to rise to the top of political agendas in scores of countries. This has been manifest by recent Summits of the Organization of African Unity, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Central American Presidents and Arab Heads of State.

It will happen again later this year, as we expect the United Nations to adopt a historic new commitment to human rights for children -- the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms humankind's highest values for children in every region, on every continent -- and society's obligation to protect the special rights of children to survival, protection and development.

(Far more than a piece of paper, this piece of paper signed by governments will give those of us who care, one more important weapon to go to governments and say "You Promised"!

And we will go.)

The Child Survival and Development Revolution comes not so much from dramatic advances in medicine and technology; it comes by empowering parents with basic knowledge of how to improve the well-being of their families.

It is unconscionable that one-quarter of a million small children still die every week from easily preventable illnesses -- a silent emergency that claims more than two Armenian earthquakes every week! Fully half of these illnesses could be prevented if families knew how to act differently

We must do more to take advantage of the unprecedented communications revolution -- with almost 400 million transistor radios, globally, 92 million television sets, the rapid spread of video and revolutionary advances in communication from organizations like Turner Broadcasting and the Better World Society.

Together these new channels of communication help us to reach the unreached who need the information the most.

I also am pleased with the growing collaboration between UNICEF and the producers of Turner Broadcasting's new series "Earthbeat" -- with its emphasis on exploring

existing, low-cost and practical solutions to the problems of child survival and children in the environment.

(Tonight, among so many distinguished guests, I'm reminded of a favorite passage by George Bernard Shaw. Shaw wrote:

Reasonable people adapt themselves to the world.

Unreasonable people persist in trying to adapt the world to themselves.

Therefore all progress depends on the unreasable people.

President Carter, Ted Turner, our co-honorees, and all who support the Better World Society, surely you are among the "unreasonable" men and women who George Bernard Shaw knew were so vital for making this truely a Better World.)

Increasingly, the survival and dreams of the world's 1.6 billion children are in our hands. Thank you.