

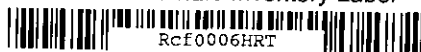
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Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly

New York
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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues in the United Nations:

It is a pleasure to contribute once again to the discussions of the Second Committee on operational activities in development.

We meet at a time of both severe hardship and great hope. Several in this chamber - including the DG and the of UNDP this - have referred to the grim economic realities which still grip approximately one sixth of humankind - almost 900 million people - even during this decade of relative prosperity for most of the industrialized world.

Earlier this week you were discussing the extreme difficulties developing countries have faced as a result of unmanageable debt burdens and massive negative net transfers.

As the Secretary-General's report on debt pointed out, in this bleak decade for the world's poor, we have become familiar with the fact that it is most often the poor, and the most vulnerable among the poor - especially children and women - who bear the heaviest burden of the suffering. In my address to the ECOSOC in July, I referred to several social indicators which reflect this sad reality: falling weight-for-age of young children; reduced spending on health and education; and, in some places, even declining school enrollment. In other words, it is children who are bearing the heaviest burden of debt and recession in the 1980s.

And yet this decade has also produced cause for great hope. In the field of child health, the lessons we are learning from great advances of this

decade point the way for a virtual revolution in the health and well-being of children, and they offer an example for progress on other social and economic issues as well. Thus, for example, within the last 12 months, the lives of 3 million children have been saved, and comparable numbers have been protected from lives of crippling disabilities, as a result of two interventions alone: universal child immunization against the six main child-killing diseases, and oral rehydration therapy (ORT), the simple sugar and salt home remedy to combat the lethal effects of dehydration due to diarrhoeal diseases.

Mr. Chairman, another cause for great hope, I believe, is associated with increasing confidence in using multilateral institutions and creative new approaches to resolving global, regional and country-level problems. As many have pointed out, more of this progress has been seen in the political arena than in economic and social spheres. I am convinced that the operational activities of the U.N. system could play a key role in addressing this, and we look directly to the work of this Committee for direction and guidance in making the operational activities of the United Nations still more effective.

Operational Goals and Strategies for the 1990s

Under a separate agenda item, you, the members of this Committee, have paid serious attention to the question of the International Development Strategy. Many delegations have stressed, here, and in their Plenary statements, the importance of this exercise. Setting achievable, ambitious, consensus goals, around which the international community then mobilizes, will be vital to international economic development and co-operation.

Surely, we all agree that we must apply this same awareness to the discussions of operational activities. Such "management by objective" does take place in the individual governing bodies of the U.N. system -- WHO's Health for All by the year 2000 and similar exercises show this. Yet, oddly, when we arrive at the discussion of Operational Activities, we continue to overlook the importance of molding our country level U.N. coordination mechanisms around the national goals and strategies. One could say the same for regional and global goals. As the Director-General said at ECOSOC, we must give greater attention to these challenges.

I stress the importance of molding operational coordination mechanisms around national and international priorities not simply for abstract reasons. On the contrary, UNICEF's practical experience has been that this approach is fundamental to the substantive progress in child survival and development to which I referred a moment ago. With our national and international partners, we have focussed on internationally achievable and nationally agreed-upon goals, such as infant mortality reduction; Universal Child Immunization; the expansion of uses of oral rehydration therapy; and water and sanitation facilities. This has enabled international development assistance to move to a programme approach -- where the U.N. system is part of the national government's comprehensive strategy -- and, thus, have an impact far beyond that of individual projects, no matter how well conceived and coordinated administratively.

Increasingly, some individual organizations and sectors have moved to such an approach. The challenge before us is to further extend this direction, and thus help support the substantive linkages that go beyond individual organizations and sectors. I believe such a shift implies that this Committee and ECOSOC must increasingly review the substantive direction of operational activities, as you are the U.N. System's only comprehensive fora.

As I will describe below, the past year has seen considerable progress in refining the mechanisms of coordination, and still greater progress is close at hand. This is thanks, in large part, to your guidance, to the leadership role of the Director-General, and to the hard work of the U.N. organizations - through such fora as the ACC committee on operational activities (CCSQ/OPS).

As encouraging as it is to see the important, agreed-upon and emerging refinements in mechanisms - and they are truly worthwhile - we must now turn our priority attention to mobilizing support for the substance for which they are to be used. Without this attention, the mechanisms will lack impetus, and support or interest in them will quickly dissipate.

Attached to my written text is a list of Goals for Children and Development, approved jointly by the WHO and UNICEF governmental representatives to our Joint Committee on Health Policy. As you can see, it proposes major, yet achievable progress, including infant mortality and maternal mortality reduction targets, through such goals as the eradication of polio, universal child immunization, access to safe drinking water, universal basic education, and other priority areas. At its last session, the UNICEF Executive Board favorably reviewed a "Strategy" paper that outlined approaches that national governments may choose to adopt towards achieving these goals - with the assurance of international consensus and support.

The Executive Board also favourably reviewed a policy paper on UNICEF's approach to interagency collaboration to support these strategies and the work of our other U.N. partners. As I discussed in more detail in my July speech before ECOSOC, the paper outlines our efforts and our directions for "strategic alliances" in such fields as nutrition, water supply and sanitation, education, health and child survival, and adjustment policy.

While time does not permit me to review our efforts at establishing operational goals and strategies, I have made available in the back of the room our Executive Board papers on both Strategies for Children for the 1990s and our policy paper on inter-agency action. UNICEF's approach to operational activities (which incorporates the conclusions of donor/recipient consultative fora such as the "Bellagio Group"), might be described as seeking to create international consensus for tangible, operational achievements for which all development partners are mobilized, with accountability through management goals.

We recognize, Mr. Chairman, that children's goals cannot be achieved in isolation from other goals. For example, goals and strategies for nutrition have implications in the food and agriculture sector. A whole range of issues such as employment generation, adjustment policy, and financing issues must also be faced.

To close my point, I reiterate: if operational activities are to be effective, we must give greater attention to substantive directions. I believe my views on this closely parallel some of the Director-General's recommendations, and I am hopeful that the individual country reviews, when available, will illustrate these points in a concrete manner.

Operational Mechanisms

The Director-General has urged a refocusing of our attention on the substance of operational activities, and we share a number of common points of view on how to achieve this. Similarly, the ACC committee on operational activities voiced support for several of the Director-General's recommendations.

First and foremost, I believe that we have agreed to a renewed commitment to the principle that the ultimate responsibility for defining goals and strategies, and the subsequent coordination for them, lies with the national government. This is a matter of principle, but also the only practical and effective approach. It has often been reiterated, and in fact, at the country level, much practical work to support the national government's role is on-going. Yet, in our discussions at the international level we have done too little to draw together the experiences in individual countries and of individual organizations. UNICEF has urged that country level support to the government's role for the 1990s goals/strategies/coordination process be given a higher level of priority in operational activities, and a more serious focus of our policy work among organizations and in the inter-governmental review.

Second, it is clear that these major undertakings cannot be addressed by the United Nations system acting alone, nor by the bodies of the U.N. interacting only among each other. Our collaborative efforts must extend to other multi-lateral organizations, bi-lateral agencies and NGOs.

Third, within the United Nations system, we can do considerably more to ensure that we help support each other to achieve success in mobilization efforts. The role of the Resident Co-ordinator System within the United Nations system is an important one and should be strengthened, in particular by many of the specific actions recommended by the ACC committee on operational activities and the Director-General. As the Director-General's reviews have shown, the Resident Co-ordinator System is not lacking in authority or formal structure, but rather has not been adequately supported and utilized.

I place particular emphasis on the Director-General's recommendations for more regular meetings at country-level on programme issues (the results of which, I believe, should be regularly monitored by senior levels at headquarters); training, orientation and policy support; and the formation of country-level groups focussed on specific sectors or themes. As you know, for several years I have urged that these measures be adopted.

In a similar vein, I believe that mechanisms for strengthening interagency collaboration in programme processes would also be useful. Much of this

should come at the earliest phases, as part of the support to the national governments' goals and strategies I discussed earlier. We must also ensure that we make stronger links between the analytical capacities of the U.N. system and its operational work, both within organizations and between them. Making greater use of mechanisms such as Consultative Groups, Round Tables, cross-participation in programme preparation processes or mid-term reviews are also important steps. The JCGP organizations have already decided to harmonize their programme cycles around those of the national governments.

In discussing strengthening the collaboration in programme processes, I am also aware of the delicate balances needed. Collaboration must not reduce effectiveness. I agree strongly with the Director-General that the diversity of the respective programme procedures of organizations within the system which have different mandates is a strength of the system that should be built upon. Similarly, strengthening of collaborative mechanisms within the U.N. system must always be structured to enhance what I have referred to as our foremost objective - the support to the national government's own role. I am convinced that these considerations can be met - if we pay careful attention to how we approach these issues. I attach great importance to the ACC Committee's task force set-up for this purpose, and I hope its results, due this Spring, will be carefully reviewed.

In closing this section, I wish to underline the positive leadership role played by the Director-General and his staff. What is especially important is not so much the specifics of each and every recommendation, but the process that has begun of analysis and action. We are perhaps only in the middle of this process - the most far-reaching since the Restructuring of 1977. It will be important to approach this Review in ways that allow this process to continue and to permit us to continue to evolve and refine our thinking.

Perhaps at this point, Mr. Chairman, I might add a word of thanks for the strong inter-agency support I have received in my just-completed role as the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for "Operation Lifeline Sudan". This is not the place for even a partial report on this unprecedented relief effort in which, for the first time, two major warring groups have agreed to a common relief effort and on "corridors of tranquility" along which barges, trains, trucks and airplanes have delivered over 100,000 tons of supplies this year to both government and SPLA-controlled areas of Southern Sudan. But, I do want to acknowledge the strong co-operative effort - especially of UNDP, WFP, the ICRC, the NGOs and certain bi-lateral agencies - in successfully seeking to avoid a repetition of last year's disaster which took the lives of 250,000 civilians, a majority of them children.

It is also most gratifying to see the swelling of support at the highest level in the international arena for a World Summit for Children. The purpose of holding such a meeting would be to mobilize practical action worldwide to achieve the readily possible two-thirds reduction in child deaths, to accelerate the national consideration required for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to secure for children a permanent position of priority on national and global political agendas so that progress in their survival, protection and development can be sustained. Over 100 governments are now officially on record in support of the Summit proposal -

virtually two-thirds of the total membership of the United Nations. Resolutions of support have been adopted by the Francophone Summit (Dakar/May), the OAU Summit (Addis Ababa/July), the Non-Aligned Summit (Belgrade/September) and the recent Commonwealth Summit (Kuala Lumpur/October), as well as many other parliamentary and other bodies, including the United States Congress, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the World Council of Churches, etc.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman,

As we embarked upon the Third Development Decade, in 1980, my concluding remarks to this Committee emphasized the "increasing strong perception in the international community of children as our most precious resource - for families, for nations, and for the human community. It is increasingly clear," I said, "that the future of tomorrow's world will be decided in large part by our attention to the children of today." Today our attention to children is greater than it was a decade ago, and that is a great measure of progress.

The challenge now before us is to further translate this attention into yet more concrete actions which benefit children. Furthermore, a profound need and a unique opportunity exist to ensure that this attention to children's issues both supports and is supported by the broader range of operational and development activities. This, ultimately, is why UNICEF is deeply committed to the review which you are about to undertake.

WHO/UNICEF COMMON GOALS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN BY THE YEAR 2000

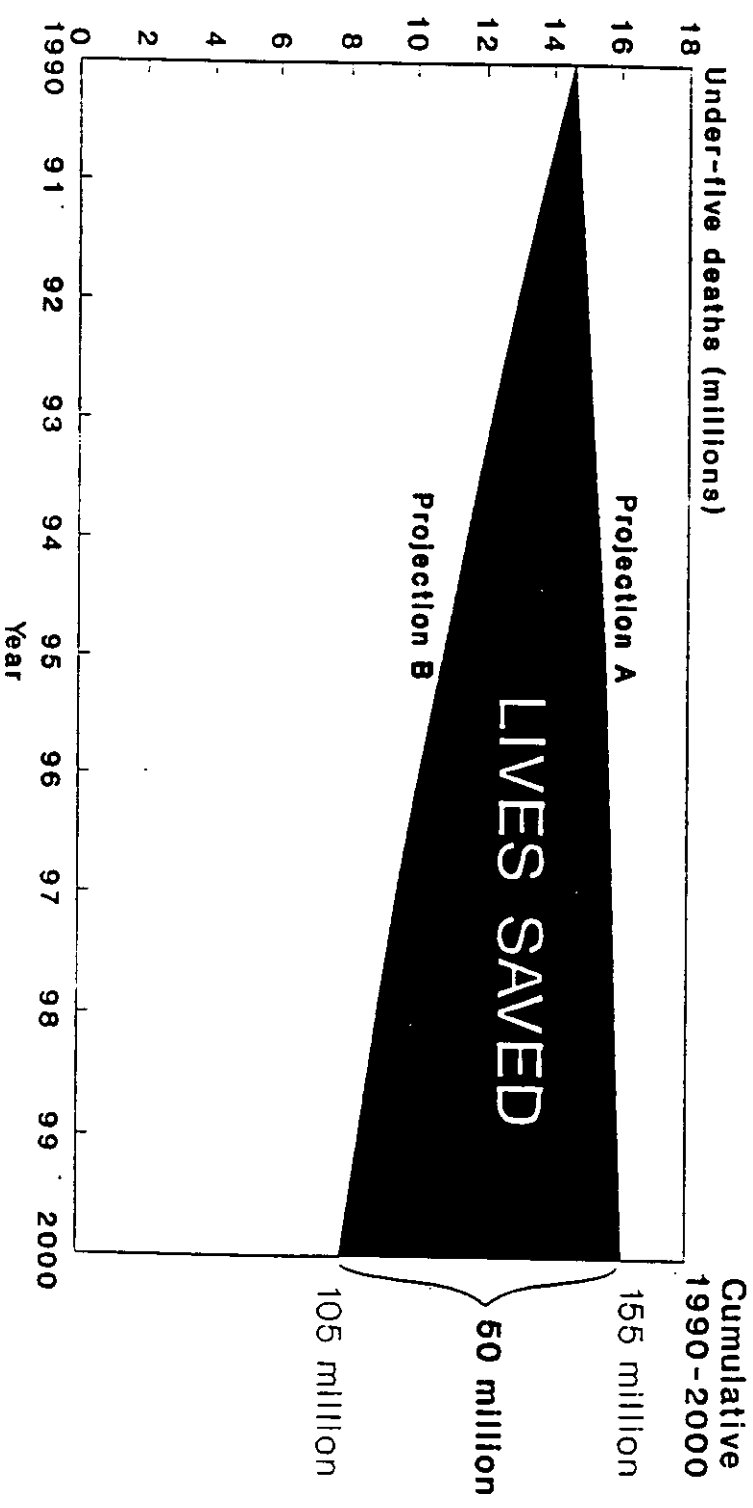
The goals have been grouped under: Reduction of mortality, Women's education and health, Better nutrition, Control of childhood diseases and Control of the environment.

1. Reduction of mortality
 - 1.1 Reduction by 50 per cent of maternal mortality rates from 1980 levels.
 - 1.2 Reduction of 1980 infant mortality rates by at least half or to 50 per 1,000 live births, whichever achieves the greater reduction.
 - 1.3 Reduction of 1980 under-5 mortality rates by at least half or to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever achieves the greater reduction.
2. Women's education and health
 - 2.1 Achievement of universal primary education and 80 per cent female literacy.*
 - 2.2 Access by all couples to information and services for child spacing.
3. Better nutrition
 - 3.1 Reduction of the rate of low birth weight (2.5 kg) to less than 10 per cent.
 - 3.2 Enable all women to exclusively breast-feed their child for four to six months and to continue breast-feeding with complementary food well into the second year.
 - 3.3 Virtual elimination of severe malnutrition among under-5 children and reduction by half of moderate malnutrition.
 - 3.4 Virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders.
 - 3.5 Virtual elimination of the blindness and other consequences of vitamin A deficiency.
4. Control of childhood diseases
 - 4.1 Global eradication of polio.
 - 4.2 Elimination of neonatal tetanus by 1995.
 - 4.3 Reduction by 95 per cent in measles deaths and reduction by 90 per cent of measles cases in 1995, compared to pre-immunisation levels as a major step to the global eradication of measles in the longer run.
 - 4.4 Reduction by 70 per cent in the deaths due to diarrhoea in children under the age of five years; and 25 per cent reduction in the diarrhoea incidence rate.
 - 4.5 Reduction by 25 per cent in the deaths due to acute respiratory infections in children under five years.
5. Control of the environment
 - 5.1 Universal access to safe drinking water.
 - 5.2 Universal access to sanitary means of excreta disposal.
 - 5.3 Elimination of guinea-worm disease by 1995.
 - 5.4 Achievement of a safer and more sanitary environment, with significant reductions of radioactive, chemical and other microbiological pollutants.

* Each country to define the age group.

GLOBAL LIVES SAVED

Children under five years of age



Projection A

The 1990 under-five mortality rates remain constant to the year 2000.

Projection B

Countries progress to reach their year 2000 under-five mortality reduction goals of 70 per 1,000 live births or half their 1980 rate, whichever is lower.