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Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the opening of the
36th Annual United Nations Art Exhibit

New York
21 April 1987



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STATEMENT BY MR. JAMES P. GRANT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNICEF

AT THE OPENING OF THE
36TH ANNUAL UNITED NATIONS ART EXHIBIT

21 APRIL 1987

I am very happy to join you here this evening for the opening of the 36th Annual Exhibition of the United Nations Art Exhibition Club for the benefit of UNICEF. This annual event draws many visitors to the United Nations and brings a message of co-operation by the members of the Secretariat and the Missions in a joint effort to present works of art and to show solidarity and support for the world's children.

UNICEF has been associated with art almost since its inception and certainly as long as the United Nations Art Club has held these exhibits at the United Nations. It was actually a child from Czechoslovakia who sent in a thank-you greeting to UNICEF in the late 1940s and her picture became UNICEF's first greeting card in 1949. It showed children dancing around a Maypole, a very happy occasion, and certainly a very appropriate symbol for this time of the year when we are celebrating Spring again.

I have just come from the second day of meetings of the Annual UNICEF Executive Board which reviews the situation of children, the situation of our collaboration with the programmes of health, education, water, sanitation and social services as well as emergency assistance in developing countries. These meetings again bring home the sad fact that there are still close to 40,000 children who die each day from preventable causes, and another equal amount of children who suffer disabilities. We have been able to pinpoint

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major breakthroughs in low-cost technologies to provide each child with simple health measures, including vaccinations and Oral Rehydration Therapy, to allow each child not only to survive but to develop properly.

As you see, UNICEF is primarily concerned with the very basic needs of each child, but a very important element of UNICEF's concerns for the proper development of the child is also its educational, its creative and artistic progress. We are supporting very actively early stimulation and pre-school programmes. And in a way, we are all beneficiaries of this work because, as you will see just across from me, the United States Committee for UNICEF has exhibited some of the art work of children from around the world. There is a high degree of artistry, a high degree of personal expression and of creativity in all of these drawings. While the artists' styles vary, the themes found in the art come from many interests and experiences depicting various peoples. Many children depict themselves working and playing in school and at home, with their families and their friends.

The United States Committee for UNICEF maintains a collection of international children's art from over 160 countries. Each year 13 pieces of the art are chosen to illustrate the UNICEF wall calendar. Other pieces are grouped into exhibits, such as this one - A Child's Life - or are designated for libraries, museums or any other place where a large number of people have the opportunity to view the art. The wall calendar as well as UNICEF Greeting Cards are available in our Gift Shop downstairs and I hope you all will be coming back in the next days to study the art more carefully and to buy some UNICEF products.

Again I would like to thank the United Nations Art Exhibition Club and all participating artists for giving us this opportunity to see their works and for their support to UNICEF. I would like to express to you all my sincerest congratulations.