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Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the
Inauguration of the New Building
of the Child Development Centre of China (CDCC)

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of the Child Development Centre of China (CDCC)

The idea of the Child Development Centre of China originated from the vision of the Chinese leaders, the officials of UNICEF and several internationally renowned scholars of child development who were involved in negotiating and planning the resumption of UNICEF co-operation in China in 1979 and 1980. Their vision was to establish a multi-disciplinary research and development centre that would address important questions related to children's survival and development, promote international co-operation on these questions and serve as an example for developing countries. The national policy of one-child family and the need for raising well the single child in each family lent a special significance to the work of the proposed Child Development Centre.

The centre, under the administrative umbrella of the All-China Women's Federation, represents a new concept of practice and policy-oriented research and technical support for action programmes, for which there does not exist much of experience or precedence in China. It has been also a new venture for UNICEF because there has been no comparable experience of assistance for the development of a new institution of the breadth of concern and scale of CDCC. It was, therefore, not surprising that progress in some aspects of the project has not been made as anticipated. There has been, in fact, considerable accumulation of useful experience and learning about serving as the midwife and the nurse-maid for a new institution on the part of both the All-China Women's Federation and UNICEF.

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With strong support of the state leaders and the commitment of the leaders of the All-China Women's Federation, important steps have been taken in the development of the centre in the last few years. The list of research projects, publications, training and international and national experience exchange activities is a testimony to what the new centre has been able to achieve. The network of associate and regional centres that has developed indicates the potential for a wide-ranging impact of the centre's work. The physical facilities that now house the centre, which have been completed in a very short time, and which are being formally opened today, themselves is an evidence of the importance attached to the role of CDCC by the national leaders of China.

UNICEF, as you know, is engaged in promoting and supporting world-wide goals in child survival and development with such specific targets as establishing a system by 1990 for immunizing all children against six deadly but preventable diseases, widespread adoption of the use of oral rehydration therapy for controlling children's diarrhoea, systematic monitoring of child growth, and reversing the declining trend in breast-feeding of infants. These and related measures are aimed at drastically reducing deaths and diseases among infants and children and creating the condition for their normal growth and development.

UNICEF co-operation in China, as is the case in every country programme of co-operation, represents a national adaptation of the global UNICEF goals in conformity with the specific needs in China and its national objectives.

During the current cycle of China-UNICEF co-operation for the years 1985-1989, the largest component of co-operation is the universal child immunization project with the aim of immunizing an average of 85 per cent of the children in every province by 1988 and fulfilling the same target in each of over 2,000 rural counties by 1990. This is of very special significance, not only for China, but for the whole world, since achievement of the goal in China will mean reaching almost one-fifth of the global target of universal child immunization by 1990 and will be a source of inspiration and practical lessons to the whole world.

Child immunization, however, is only one, although a very important one, of the elements of the comprehensive child survival and development efforts needed in all of the developing world. In the case of China, with important strides taken in respect of children's physical survival and in the context of the policy of limiting family size, it is critical that total development of the young child, including his or her psychological and intellectual growth and stimulation, is given adequate attention. This is where the Child Development Centre of China has to play the central role. The centre has to develop itself into the premier institution in China for research, training, dissemination and exchange of knowledge both in the country and internationally, and discussion of policies regarding children's welfare and development.

To play this role effectively, the centre has to strengthen itself in its professional leadership, in its professional staff and in its capacity to collaborate professionally with other concerned institutions and

organizations. The centre's sponsorship by the All-China Women's Federation offers a special advantage in respect of disseminating research results, developing contents and methods of training, and influencing policies and programmes because the All-China Women's Federation has a broad mandate in child development and has an extensive network of cadres reaching out to all corners of the country.

I visualize CDCC to develop as a focal point for international exchange of knowledge on child development through fellowship and training support for Chinese professionals and workshops, seminars and consultancy in which foreign experts participate. We should think of the needs for such exchange and capacity development for the coming decade and work out a programme to which UNICEF as well as other national and overseas organizations can contribute.

UNICEF remains committed to working closely with both the Child Development Centre of China and the All-China Women's Federation and organizing technical and financial support for CDCC with the aim of fulfilling its ambitious but important objectives. I expect that this co-operation will continue into the next programme cycle since it takes time for a new ⁱⁿstitution to plant firmly its roots.

We also visualize CDCC becoming a foremost institution in China which will ensure and protect the rights of the child and women, together with the All-China Women's Federation. It will be setting examples for many countries to follow. We hope the United Nations General Assembly will be able to pass

the Convention of the Rights of the Child in its 1989 session and the work of the Child Development Centre of China will contribute towards the achievement of this goal.

No large, low-income developing country has ever set such ambitious development goal for its children as China. Their attainment would mean that China, by the year 2000, has reached the child survival and early child development levels of the industrial world today, but at a vastly lower income level. Also, no country, large or small, rich or poor, has ever set such ambitious one-child, small family goals as China. Their successful attainment will have a profound impact, not only on the size, but also on the quality of its population. The Child Development Centre of China has a vital role to play if these heretofore impossible goals are to be attained with all their implications for so many children, our world's most precious asset.

It is with a sense of satisfaction that I join in this ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new building of CDCC, because UNICEF has been associated with the centre from its inception and I have been following its progress regularly. I believe that the centre has a historical role to play, and I wish the Director and staff of the centre as well as those in the All-China Women's Federation and other organizations supporting the centre all success in their efforts.