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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to
El Salvador's Seven Presidential Candidates

New York
7 March 1994

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Message from Mr. James P. Grant

**Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to
El Salvador's Seven Presidential Candidates**

New York - 7 March 1994

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund, to warmly congratulate El Salvador's presidential candidates for coming together to pledge to give children the highest priority in your electoral platforms and -- if elected -- in your policies and programmes of government. In doing so, you are helping to keep the promise made by the 71 heads of state and government, and senior representatives of another 88 countries, who attended the 1990 World Summit for Children.

By embracing the World Summit for Children principles and goals -- with particular emphasis on achieving the mid-decade goals by the end of 1995 -- you are setting an example of civic responsibility and political seriousness that can only benefit the peace and reconstruction process underway in El Salvador. What better way to heal the wounds of war and bridge ideological gaps than to unite around children? With this gesture, the candidates are saying that the essential needs of children must not be subordinated to partisan political agendas.

At the Central American Summit held in Tegucigalpa in 1991, the leaders of the region united in reaffirming their countries' commitment to achieving the World Summit for Children goals. At the time, I urged them to reduce military budgets and use the resulting "peace dividend" for accelerated efforts for human development, with top priority for children. And we have seen the beginnings of significant action on this score, in spite of the economic crisis that continues to affect the region. Clearly, much more can be done -- by the Central American governments, primarily, but also with greater assistance from the donor community.

As a recent poll taken in El Salvador showed, there is widespread public support for reducing military spending and stepping up human development efforts. In true democratic fashion, you presidential candidates have put aside their differences to take a stand for children. This bodes well for the future of El Salvador and its children.

UNICEF stands ready to continue our cooperation with the government and NGOs of El Salvador. Once again, we congratulate you for your splendid gesture that is so deserving of universal emulation.

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