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Remarks by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the
Eleventh Annual U.S. Committee for UNICEF Ball

Washington, D.C.
19 March 1994

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Thank you Mrs. Katharine Graham, Dr. Gwendolyn Calvert Baker, Mr. Abe Pollin and Ms. Terry Lierman. Thank you for your kind and overly generous words addressed to me, but I would like to accept this award on behalf of UNICEF... the entire UNICEF family of almost seven thousand dedicated staff members working in 130 developing countries... and our hard-working National Committees for UNICEF in 35 industrial countries, including the splendid U.S. Committee. So on behalf of all of UNICEF, I accept this distinction with deep gratitude.

For nearly half a century, UNICEF has indeed sought to be a real "children's champion". Last December, at the White House launch of our 1994 State of the World's Children report, President Bill Clinton described us another way; he was kind enough to say that UNICEF is "the best friend the world's children have ever had". We are proud to receive such praise; we are humbled and inspired by it.

Of course, in all candor I must add that credit should go to many others as well as to UNICEF; as in any global undertaking, credit rightfully belongs to the many partners active in the Grand Alliance for Children -- Third World governments, the donor community, other UN agencies, religious leaders, educators, NGOs, the media and countless ordinary people, including children, in every corner of the globe. And here I would like to make special mention of the role of the United States -- especially a bipartisan Congress and USAID, and recently, the Executive -- which has provided unwavering support to UNICEF and children living in the world's poorest countries.

In early 1983, when our Child Survival and Development Revolution was just getting underway, a successful businessman came to see me with a piece of paper in his hand. The paper wasn't burning but it certainly had set the man on fire. The man's name was Abe Pollin and what he had in his hand was a column by Stephen S. Rosenfeld, published in the Washington Post on the last day of 1982. It was titled "Billion-Dollar Bargain" and described our low-cost strategy for cutting child mortality in half and saving many millions of children by the year 2000. As I said, the article had set Abe Pollin on fire -- and he went on to establish the Washington, D.C. Advisory Council for UNICEF, which, among other

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activities, organizes these annual fundraising balls, has funded almost \$2 million worth of assistance to UNICEF efforts in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and serves as a vivid reminder to Congress and the Executive Branch that people in Washington, D.C. do care about what happens to children elsewhere.

Abe is still on fire today, and this year the Washington D.C. stalwarts he leads are working to get much-needed assistance to the children of Bosnia-Herzegovina, victims of unspeakable violence, cruel deprivation and incomprehensible hatred. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you, Abe, and your associates, for the leadership and dedication you have shown.

Let me give you the briefest idea of how much has been accomplished over the past decade. When Abe came to see me about getting involved in the just-proposed Child Survival and Development Revolution, UNICEF had about 2,000 employees, an income of \$342 million, and was receiving about \$42 million a year for general resources from the U.S. government. A decade later, UNICEF's staff had trebled, its budget had risen to approximately one billion dollars, and the U.S. contribution had increased to not only \$100 million for general resources, but also supplementary financing of \$22 million for emergencies and special projects.

Most importantly, of course, the lives of well over 20 million children have been saved, and some 100 million more are living healthier and more productive lives, thanks to the simple technologies and basic services provided to the world's neediest communities. Immunization alone is now saving 3 million lives a year; oral rehydration against diarrhoea is saving another million. Achievement of the December 1995 mid-decade targets toward the World Summit for Children year 2000 goals would mean saving the lives of an additional two million children annually by 1996, and bring many millions more into primary schools. On every continent, in every culture, we are witnessing dramatic reductions in births as parents receive a modicum of education, become increasingly confident their first-born will survive, and have increased access to family planning information and services. The 1990s have also seen the World Summit for Children, the first truly global as well as largest summit ever held until then, and the explosive spread of the Convention on the Rights of the Child -- with 156 ratifications already the most widely ratified human rights treaty. Truly, a revolution for children is in process.

Reducing child deaths, ensuring that every community has a safe water supply, providing at least a basic education for every child, making family planning universally available -- these are some of the most effective and affordable ways of helping people lift themselves out of poverty, to slow population growth, and to ease the pressure on the environment. We have a major opportunity in the 1990s both to meet some of the crying human needs in the

world of today and at the same time to pre-empt some of the greatest problems facing the world of tomorrow.

The question we face now is can the world -- will the world -- sustain this accelerating breakthrough for children, a breakthrough getting underway in the United States as well? The answer is, the world certainly **can**; what remains to be seen is **will we**? A large part of the outcome depends upon the actions of people like us around the world.

I have just spent this past week in Ethiopia and Nigeria --the two largest countries of sub-Saharan Africa. These nations were making good progress in the period 1989-1990, until their programmes were overwhelmed by massive events -- a military overthrow in Ethiopia after armed struggle of many years, and two major coups in Nigeria accompanied by numerous countrywide strikes, including by civil servants, and a great deal of economic chaos. After talking at length with leaders -- including the two presidents -- NGOs, the media, ambassadors and international agency personnel -- including, of course, UNICEF staff -- I left both countries with reasonable confidence that most of the mid-decade goals can be achieved if we in the world community continue to demonstrate our strong interest in and support for their children. As a modicum of stability returns to a country after a period of crisis, pressure quickly mounts to restart and accelerate immunization, ORT and other programmes that millions of parents and others now value and demand. The external world, including importantly UNICEF, must remind all levels of society of our willingness and our readiness to continue the assistance they need.

At the White House ceremony I mentioned earlier, President Clinton said that:

"investing in the children of the world can be the most cost-effective way not only to relieve suffering, but to advance economies, to promote self-sufficiency, to promote democracy and to avert future conflicts."

And he went on to call on "Americans in private and public life to join with leaders in developing nations to help ensure that we do make tangible progress."

Friends and colleagues, you have heeded that call. You are here tonight to help keep the promise of the historic 1990 World Summit for Children. It is a promise to the world's children, and a promise to ourselves. I thank you on behalf of the children, and I thank you on behalf of UNICEF.

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

THE WASHINGTON POST, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1982

Stephen S. Rosenfeld

Billion-Dollar Bargain

It gives a nice glow to send or receive a UNICEF holiday greeting card; you are doing your bit for the world's children. Just how much you are doing, and how little, you can discover from "The State of the World's Children, 1982-1993," the annual report of the United Nations Children's Fund put out by its executive director, James P. Grant.

Grant, well known in Washington for his work at AID and the Overseas Development Council, is a great packager and promoter of the do-able. In his new report, he offers something eye-popping: how to cut in half, from 40,000 to 20,000, by the year 2000 the number of children who die from malnutrition and infection every day, and how to do this for a mere \$1 billion a year, with existing technology and infrastructure, and without further political changes or risks for the Third World nations where the kids now die.

UNICEF's four aces:

1) Oral rehydration therapy (ORT), a new technique developed in Bangladesh using cheap, easy-to-use materials to stop the diarrhea-caused dehydration that is the single biggest killer of children in the world.

2) Universal child immunization, made feasible by scientific advances (more heat-stable vaccines) and by the delivery system of com-

munity organizations and paraprofessionals now increasingly in place in the Third World.

3) Promotion of breast feeding, which has declined steeply in recent decades in poor countries, to reduce "the most unnecessary malnutrition of all."

4) Mass use of home child-growth charts to make mothers the more knowing and participatory neighbors of their children's health.

These four "low-cost, low-risk, low-resistance people's health actions," as Grant describes them, "do not depend on the economic and political changes which are necessary in the longer term if poverty itself is to be eradicated. They are available now"—given, as always, the political will.

Nor will such a children's "survival revolution" merely run up population growth rates, Grant argues. As parents become more confident that their children will survive, they tend historically to have fewer births.

I heard a roomful of development professionals dissect the UNICEF program for an evening. Basically, no one could lay a finger on it.

But so much for the hopeful side. The sobering side starts from an awareness that economic distress has halted the postwar improvement in global child health. The numbers of children living and growing in ill health are set to increase.

UNICEF's new program centers on improving the use of available food. But as many as a third of the families in need lack the requisite land, job or income. For them, UNICEF supports, with the rhetoric that is its sole recourse in this realm, "political and economic change to allow the poor to both participate in, and benefit from, the increases in production which can most certainly be achieved."

Meanwhile, UNICEF isolates the world's poorest families, finding them caught in a cycle of ill health, low energy and poverty—from which they still could be released by consumer food subsidies targeted on undernourished pregnant women and young children.

Is this getting a little too radical-sounding for you? Is there a bit too much of the proclivity for broad-scale social justice and social engineering that often seems to be mixed with the water up there at the United Nations?

If so, then perhaps you will accept an obligation to spell out your alternative. The unfortunate fact is that the simplest way to remain moderate and to be regarded as "sound" in the face of great deprivation is to avert your gaze from the conditions that incline many of those who observe them closely to more far-reaching solutions.

In any event, UNICEF finesses that choice in the short run by offering a program within the ideological reach of just about everybody. Think of it: for a lousy billion dollars a year and no revolution, millions of kids can live.

The New York Times

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1982

Children at the Window

A Christmas without children would be like a sleigh ride without snow. What gives this day its special grace is the glimpse it yields of a child's belief in the better angels of a grown-up world. Selfishness recedes, good will and gentleness for a blessed moment prevail. It is the enduring gift of the Magi, this vision of a peaceable kingdom ruled by the quintessential Child.

The harder realities do not belong in Santa's stocking. But for the adoring parent, on this of all days, a reminder is not amiss. The death of children is a pathetic commonplace in too much of the world. More than 14 million children, 40,000 a day, died needlessly last year from malnutrition and infection. And for every one who perishes, six are disabled by hunger and ill health.

So reports James Grant, director of the United Nations Children's Fund, who abandons the usual grayness of U.N. prose in his annual accounting of this invisible toll:

"No statistic can express what it is to see even one child die in such a way; to see a mother sitting hour after anxious hour leaning her child's body against her own; to see the child's head turn on limbs which are unnaturally still, stiffer than in sleep; the unspoken, haunting noise in every which

are still the clear and lucid eyes of a child; and then to know, in one endless moment, that life has gone."

It is all the more horrifying because low-cost methods exist to prevent most of the deaths. The biggest single killer of children — five million a year — is the dehydration brought on by diarrheal infections. A mixture of sugar, salt and water is an effective treatment. Measles claimed 1.5 million children last year; the vaccine against it costs about 10 cents a shot. Children could be immunized against six major diseases for \$5 each.

A third way of saving children is to reverse the trend toward bottle-feeding in poorer countries. Bottle-fed babies are three to five times more likely to die in infancy than breast-fed babies. This is a contentious matter, and the makers of infant formula insist that their product, properly used, is safe. But improper use is widespread.

As today's children will find out all too soon, ours is not a peaceable kingdom. They are the heirs to intractable evils. But it takes only modest resources, and a modicum of concern, to save the imperiled children whose faces are at the window. The failure of richer nations to do more for them mocks our own children's faith in the sentiments that mild this day