



File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1994-0028

Message from Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
to the  
Fourth Children's Health Conference International

Karachi, Pakistan  
7 April 1994

	UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label
	Rcf0006107
<b>Item # CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02463</b>	
<b>ExR/Code: CF/EXD/SP/1994-0028</b>	
Fourth Children's Health Conference International. Message	
Date Label Printed 24-Sep-2002	

cover + 2pp + 06



United Nations Children's Fund Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia  
Детский Фонд Организации Объединенных Наций 联合国儿童基金会 منظمة الأمم المتحدة للطفولة

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1994-0028

Message from Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
to the  
Fourth Children's Health Conference International

Karachi - 7 April 1994

I am delighted to send greetings to the important Fourth Children's Health Conference, auspiciously scheduled for 7 April -- World Health Day.

In the Alma Ata Declaration on Health for All, issued in 1978, the nations of the world dared to define health as a fundamental human right and embraced a strategy -- primary health care -- and even a deadline -- the year 2000 -- for guaranteeing health not for a few, not for a privileged minority, not for the industrialized countries alone, but for all. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that the Declaration represented a great intellectual and moral leap forward for humankind.

The history of these past 15 years since the Alma Ata Conference sponsored by WHO and UNICEF is one of spectacular, if uneven, achievement. Even during the prolonged economic crisis of the 1980s -- that 'lost decade' for most of the developing countries -- human development indicators steadily improved, and they improved or held their ground even where debt-burdened governments were forced to cut back on social services.

In little more than one generation, malnutrition rates have been reduced by about 30 per cent in the developing world; life expectancy has increased by about a third; the proportion of children enrolled in primary school has risen from less than half to more than three quarters; and the percentage of rural families with access to safe water has risen from less than 10 per cent to more than 60 per cent. Average family size is now falling in almost every country.

In 1978, two out of every ten children died before their fifth birthdays. Today that number has been cut in half, and child death rates due to largely preventable malnutrition and disease are continuing to decline, particularly in Asia, Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East.

Over 20 million deaths of young children have been averted since 1983 through low-cost interventions and mass mobilization, backbones of what we at UNICEF call the Child Survival and Development Revolution.

cover + 2 pp + 06

Overcoming the major diseases, drastically reducing child deaths, ensuring that every community has 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 to lift themselves out of absolute poverty, to slow population growth, and to ease the pressure on the environment.

At the 1990 World Summit for Children, most of the world's political leaders agreed that advances in knowledge and communication have made it possible to achieve most of these goals by the year 2000. Specific targets were set building on success in reaching the 80 per cent immunization goal and over 100 developing nations, with 90 per cent of the world's poorest children, have now drawn up or are near to finalizing national programmes of action to reach the new targets.

Ten priority mid-decade goals have been agreed upon by the Executive Boards of WHO and UNICEF, as well as the political leaders of the developing world. These 1995 targets include the elimination of neonatal tetanus, a 95 per cent reduction in measles deaths, an 80 per cent use rate for the oral rehydration therapy that can prevent death from diarrhoeal disease, the elimination of guinea worm disease, the eradication of polio in selected countries, an end to vitamin A deficiency on today's scale, the universal iodization of salt supplies, and the achievement of 80 per cent immunization in all countries that have not yet reached that goal.

WHO's Director-General, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, and I have written to all heads of state and government urging them to ensure that every effort is made to achieve the mid-decade targets. Reaching these goals would prevent the deaths of over two million children a year and protect millions more against the major causes of child blindness and mental retardation.

Rarely does humanity get the chance to do so much good for so many, in such a short time, and at so little cost. We owe it to our children -- and to ourselves -- to make achievement of the goals a top priority of every society. Success in Pakistan will be critical for global achievement of the goals for children.

Your Children's Health Conference is, therefore, extremely timely and can help accelerate the momentum of progress for all children. I wish you the best of luck in your deliberations.