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Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
to the  
Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York  
25 April 1994

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FOR INFORMATION

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
 Executive Board  
 1994 Second Regular Session

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Before I begin, I would like to pay tribute to our colleagues of the United Nations Children's Fund who have died over the past few weeks. During the recent upheaval in Rwanda, seven national staff members -- and more than a score of their dependents -- were senselessly, brutally murdered. Several were apparently pulled from their homes and hacked to death before the horrified eyes of their families. This is the biggest loss of staff UNICEF has ever had at one time. They join the honor roll -- to which, tragically, more names have been added in the past few years than in any comparable period in the past -- of UNICEF and UN staff slain while providing emergency assistance in war and other difficult situations.

And on 8 April, we lost Michael Shower, Counsellor to the Executive Director -- a beloved colleague and friend, known to many of you as the Executive Secretary of the 1990 World Summit for Children. He was, also, one of the leading lights -- one of the unsung heroes -- of the Child Survival and Development Revolution of the past more than 10 years. You'll recall that during past Executive Board meetings he could always be found up here on this platform providing discrete and timely counsel. He will be sorely missed. And so our sympathy and condolences go out to the families of all these members of the UNICEF family, and for our Rwandan colleagues fallen in the line of duty, and for Mike, may I now ask all of us to observe a moment of silence ... Thank you.

I want to thank you, Madame Chairperson, for the strong leadership you have provided us to date. Such leadership is particularly critical as we all adjust to the new structure and arrangements for the Executive Board and its meetings. In past years, this would have been the opening week of our Annual Session;

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most issues on this week's agenda would have been dealt with by the Programme Committee. Under our new structure and arrangements, this is the second regular meeting of our 1994 Executive Board, and the Board as a whole -- rather than the Programme Committee -- will deliberate and act on the entire list of mainly programme-related items before us. Next week, at our 1994 Annual Session, we will take up broader strategy and policy issues, looking back a bit at where we have come from, but especially forward to where we are headed in this noble and historic undertaking for the children of the world.

I trust that these new arrangements will serve us well. I am confident that both of these sessions will continue the long tradition of successful UNICEF Board meetings. I will be as brief as possible in my remarks this morning, highlighting what I believe are the key items you will take up during the regular session.

But let me say, first, regarding two of the emergencies in which we are operating, that UNICEF staff is back in Kigali and have begun distributing relief supplies in the parts of Rwanda that can be reached; we have also located several staff members who had been missing. And you will all be glad to hear that the first UN aid convoy has entered Gorazde, Bosnia, three trucks of which are filled with UNICEF supplies and staff.

This week we will be focusing on the heart of UNICEF: country programmes, a particularly large number of which are being submitted for your consideration (see "round-up" paper, document E/ICEF/1994/P/L.3). I say "heart" because the country programme is where the centre of action is. It is, after all, where the children are, where their unpostponable needs are. It is the framework in which their inalienable rights and their innocent, compelling dreams of a better future can be addressed. Country programmes have been one of the linchpins of the Child Survival and Development Revolution that has averted the deaths of some 25 million children since its inception in the early 1980s, while giving many millions more a fighting chance at a life of dignity.

Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, Dr. Jolly, will introduce our country programme recommendations in greater detail, and you will be hearing from a number of our regional and country representatives about specific programmes. I would simply like to emphasize that we are proud of the country programming process; it is the source of UNICEF's greatest strength. It is, at the same time, a contribution to the UN system; other agencies are increasingly turning to country programming as the framework for their cooperation. It is a very participatory process that begins with UNICEF field offices working together with counterparts from government, other UN agencies and NGOs on a country situation analysis; then, on the basis of the unmet needs of children and

women identified in the Situation Analysis, the country programme is designed, employing strategies for cooperation that are agreed upon by both parties and tailored to the concrete conditions in each country.

As much as you have heard me speak of the importance of global cooperation to achieve common goals, the work done by UNICEF is ultimately driven by the unique reality of each country and the felt needs and priorities of our national counterparts. Successful country programmes of cooperation always adapt global targets and strategies -- themselves drawn up by and with the participation of country representatives -- to local conditions, rather than mechanically impose global constructs where they do not fit.

Our country representatives inevitably find that the needs of children and women are, quite frankly, enormous -- even in countries making rapid progress. Since UNICEF can only provide modest assistance, we must be highly selective and strategic in our choices, taking fully into account what others are or can be doing. The country programme process allows for this prioritization; for every programme dollar and input, the aim is to achieve multiplier effects and maximum cost-effectiveness.

I invite you to probe us deeply on the recommendations before you -- the 63 country programmes involved will affect the lives of many millions of children in every region of the developing world. Most are regular programmes covering four- or five-year cycles; they will carry us close to the end of the decade. But a greater number than usual are one-to-two-year "bridging" programmes. This is because we are trying to harmonize our programming process with the programming cycles of our sister development agencies of the UN system and with national planning cycles.

UNICEF is deeply committed to strengthening coordination among partners in development. We are deeply committed to building the entire UN system's capacity to make a difference in sustainable human development at the country as well as global levels. As UN agencies harmonize programming cycles and work in the framework of the new Country Strategy Notes, I am certain that we can achieve the greater efficiency so many of you have rightfully insisted upon in recent years.

Your Secretariat fully backs UN reform and the restructuring of the system's work in the economic and social spheres. On your agenda is an item on the Economic and Social Council -- it has been decided that it will be the subject of informal discussion on Thursday and be taken up formally during the Annual Session next week. We particularly look forward to hearing your thoughts on how to take full advantage of ECOSOC's enhanced role, as it evolves.

We believe that ECOSOC can not only serve as a vital forum for dialogue, but it should identify the common framework of goals and strategies within which the system's component parts must work for sustainable human development.

For example, we would like to see ECOSOC play more of a role in pushing for the achievement of the mid-decade and year 2000 goals for children and women, in recognition of the fact that meeting their essential needs will give a major boost to economic development and poverty alleviation, to slowing population growth and easing stress on the environment, to improving the status of women and strengthening democracy. We would like the members of this Board to insist, in ECOSOC, on the need to place sub-Saharan Africa at the top of the global development priority list. We would like to see the "20/20 vision" embraced by ECOSOC so that both developing and donor countries will double -- on average -- the resources devoted to human development priorities in national budgets and ODA, respectively. Discussion in ECOSOC this year clearly must reinforce preparatory work underway toward the major upcoming global conferences on population, social development and women that will shape our thinking and our common efforts into the 21st century. ECOSOC must become the "high ground" from which the entire global development landscape can be discerned, in order to concentrate the system's diverse strengths into a laser beam of focused, smart energy.

This summer ECOSOC, in its Coordination Segment, will be reviewing the very important issue of preventing drug abuse. As Board members know, this is an area in which we have tried to be an active partner -- naturally within the limits of our own mandate. In ways that are compatible with programme priorities that the Board has established, we believe we can be helpful in addressing drug abuse issues in such areas as health education, street children and a number of other established priority activities. We hope that in considering the System-wide Action Plan and the ECOSOC discussion Member States will be supportive of these concerns.

You also have before you the reports of the WHO-UNICEF Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP) and the UNESCO-UNICEF Joint Committee on Education (JCE) -- documents E/ICEF/1994/L.10 and L.13. We think these committees are a practical expression of what close collaboration and cooperation can accomplish. The JCHP is the UN's longest-running inter-agency collaborative body -- dating back, I believe, to 1950 -- and is the only mechanism in the system where representatives of members of two agencies' Executive Boards join together to give guidance on policy and action to their Secretariats. Many of the major health breakthroughs of the past few decades can be traced back to leadership exercised through the JCHP. This Board has endorsed many of the initiatives proposed.

originally by the JCHP, including the goals and strategies for the 1990s that were later embraced by the World Summit for Children.

Most recently -- as you will see in document E/ICEF/1994/L.10 -- the JCHP endorsed and contributed to the formulation of a set of mid-decade health goals achievable by the end of 1995, based on targets set by regional groupings and national leaders seeking a way to pace and accelerate the momentum toward reaching the year 2000 goals.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this Board giving these latest JCHP recommendations its strongest and most enthusiastic endorsement. If the mid-decade goals are achieved, we can expect that an additional two million young deaths will be averted annually by 1996 as compared to 1992, and among other outcomes, we will virtually eliminate the vitamin A and iodine deficiencies which are, respectively, the leading causes of child blindness and mental retardation. Achieving the highly "doable" mid-decade goals will create momentum and build confidence for reaching the more complex year 2000 goals of the World Summit for Children, which in essence would virtually eliminate many of the worst manifestations of absolute poverty in the lives of children throughout the developing world.

Although the JCE is of more recent vintage, this vehicle for inter-agency cooperation in the field of education is also proving to be most valuable. This is evidenced, among other things, by the follow-up to the historic 1990 Jomtien Conference on Education for All and last December's summit conference of the nine most populous developing countries on basic education for all. Momentum on basic education, which has lagged behind progress on the child health front, is now beginning to pick up -- as indeed it must if development is to be sustainable and democracies are to survive.

The JCE has made a set of recommendations to the governing bodies of UNICEF and UNESCO that will help sustain and accelerate momentum. The action areas identified by the JCE include systematic monitoring of progress toward universal primary education, especially as we approach mid-decade; ensuring provisions for essential learning materials and support for teachers; greater attention to maintaining education in emergencies; and according a high priority to girls' education. All of these recommendations deserve our strongest endorsement.

You will hear more about the work of these bodies from the reports of these two joint committees, but on UNICEF's part I urge you to keep the solid achievements of the JCHP and the JCE in mind when discussing their future.

Among the country programme recommendations before you, you will be looking at UNICEF's activities in Central and Eastern Europe, the Newly Independent States and the Baltic States. As you know, for the past 30-odd years, after an early initial emphasis on Eastern Europe, UNICEF has focused almost exclusively on children and women in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America -- so the countries in transition represent a whole new world for UNICEF cooperation.

Unfortunately, the more we see and the more we learn about the situation of children and women in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the more concerned we become. Recently, our International Child Development Centre in Florence published the first major study of the impact of the transition on social conditions in a number of these countries -- and, I must say, the findings are quite shocking. The book details the massive human toll that results when safety nets are suddenly torn asunder and poverty rates skyrocket overnight. The Russian Federation alone has experienced a rise in overall mortality of 500,000 additional deaths per year.

To date, UNICEF has been able to play a modest but useful, essentially catalytic role in the region without requiring large resource transfers. I believe that our studies of the social situation and promotion of intersectoral approaches solving children's problems are beginning to have a positive impact. Dialogue between governments, NGOs, international agencies, the media and other parties, including major donors, is progressing on ways to strengthen social safety nets and develop coherent social policies.

In view of the magnitude of the social crisis in much of the region and its implications for the evolution of more democratic systems -- not to mention its implications for regional and global stability -- the international community clearly needs to do more to ease and protect the transition. UNICEF needs to do more, and for the moment your Secretariat proposes to do more basically through a redeployment of some of our existing staff and resources in several countries, and through restructuring our current institutional set-up in the region. Due to the large number of common problems in need of urgent solution throughout the region, I believe that a stronger regional approach is needed to promote greater efficiency in the use of existing resources and to maximize UNICEF's impact.

To facilitate this task, I plan to create a regional support team headed by a director, which in due course, like other regional offices, should be located in the region which it serves. In order to avoid having to establish -- before the next biennium budget review -- significant new operations at another location, requiring

substantial additional resources, the regional support team will be based initially in New York and its staff redeployed from existing headquarters sections.

While we will require additional capacity and resources, I believe that this can be obtained without any significant diversion of resources. The main source of support for UNICEF's increased level of activities should come from supplementary funding, drawing on the special funds for the countries in transition that many donors have set aside -- not from traditional ODA. Next year, we will submit to the Executive Board a detailed proposal for both administrative and programme requirements in the region.

I mentioned the excellent study on Central and Eastern Europe published by UNICEF's International Child Development Centre (ICDC) in Florence. You have before you a progress report and recommendation regarding the ICDC (document E/ICEF/1994/L.9). -- I commend them to your careful and considered examination. It is clear to your Secretariat that the Centre has proven itself to be a vital hub of important research and dissemination of knowledge regarding children and development, as well as of staff development and training for UNICEF and NGO partners.

As the Board initially wished, the ICDC has been funded to date through the generosity of Italian cooperation; but in view of the Centre's excellent track record and the appreciation of its work voiced by many Board members over the past years, this may be the time to suggest a modest diversification of the ICDC's funding base to complement Italy's ongoing institutional support, which has just been renewed for a multi-year period. In fact, some donors have already expressed interest in funding specific activities and others may wish to join in this collaborative undertaking.

UNICEF's Greeting Card and Related Operations (GCO) is also on our agenda (documents E/ICEF/1994/AB/L.4, L.5 and L.6). You will see from its workplan and budget that GCO has continued to do a sterling job and that the broad scope of its activities greatly transcend today the narrower implication of its historical name. GCO has diversified from greeting cards to an entire line of UNICEF sales products, and has developed into a world-class private sector fundraising outfit, working closely with the 35 National Committees for UNICEF. Thanks in great measure to the efforts of GCO, as well as the National Committees, the United Nations Children's Fund today enjoys the highest level name recognition and public support of any United Nations agency. The private sector now accounts for 29 per cent of our budget -- we are now receiving more from the private sector than we were receiving from all sources when I came.



on Board as Executive Director. In these hard times, this contribution is truly invaluable. And we will be working harder to increase private sector support.

As for the Maurice Pate award -- which we will present next week to the All-China Women's Federation -- I simply wish to say here that the process of nominating and identifying each year's winner needs to remain as open as possible and free of restrictions that could diminish the dignity and quality of the award itself. It is, after all, UNICEF's attempt to create something approaching a "Nobel Prize". Although we seek to maintain general geographical and thematic balance in the selection of winners over the years, I do not think it would be a good idea to introduce mechanical criteria for selecting or excluding nominees for each year's honoree. The process we now have has served us well and, if you look at the list of past winners, it is a diverse and broadly representative roster of the world's leading organizations and individuals working to improve children's lives. Looking back over that list, I certainly feel proud of the recipients. We look forward to your guidance on how to preserve and enhance the prestige and impact of the Maurice Pate award.

This week we will be deliberating on many "nuts and bolts" issues that are the lifeblood of this organization, and I am confident that this will be done with the same moral and practical seriousness and sense of historic responsibility that have always characterized UNICEF's Executive Board.

But in looking closely at all the important "trees" this week, let us not lose sight of the "forest". Each of the items on our agenda, even the smallest programmatic or administrative detail, is after all part of humankind's stubborn and heroic and risky endeavour to push back the darkness of want and insecurity, of intolerance and selfishness. In dealing with each item, let us not forget that we are, in a real way, helping to shape the future that our children -- that all children -- will inhabit. What a privilege it is... what an awesome responsibility it is... to have such a task in our hands. I know that Secretariat and Executive Board -- together -- will rise to the occasion.