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Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the
Closing of the 1994 Annual Session
of the
UNICEF Executive Board

New York
6 May 1994

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1994 Annual Session

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
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The gavel you have wielded with such wisdom and charm over the past two weeks, Madame Chairperson, will soon sound the adjournment of this 1994 Annual Session of UNICEF's Executive Board, which followed on the heels of last week's Second Regular Session. I confess that, coming into the two sessions -- particularly the Annual Session -- I was not at all sure how the new format and arrangements for our meetings would work out.

After these two back-to-back sessions, however, I can say without hesitation that, notwithstanding the few rough spots we encountered along the way, we have been able to accomplish a great deal, indeed, and our batteries have been re-charged. The experience of these past two sessions over the past two weeks will help us to iron out wrinkles in our procedures for future sessions.

Two points are raised by this Annual Session: first, whether provision should be made in the Annual Session for a one-to-two day high-level segment for the Executive Board's overview; and, second, whether some format different from the one used by UNDP and UNFPA for their annual Executive Board sessions is needed to accommodate the participation in the UNICEF Annual Board Session by National Committees, NGOs, and heads of other organizations.

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After all, they are key components of the Grand Alliance for Children, and major supporters and fundraisers for our Organization.

Thanks to the effective work of our Chairperson Hon. Anna Makinda and her vice-chairmen, and of our Secretary to the Executive Board, as well as to the constructive spirit of the delegations, we were able to seriously examine a broad range of important issues and arrive at decisions that will strengthen UNICEF and -- let there be no doubt -- benefit the children of the world.

During the Regular Session, you approved 17 full country programmes, 21 allocations of additional general and supplementary resources to country programmes, 23 bridging programmes, and 2 interregional programmes -- the heart and soul of what UNICEF is all about. Among them were the first country programme for South Africa -- post-apartheid South Africa -- and three bridging recommendations for services for Palestinian children and women.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of South Africa for giving their children -- at long last and at great cost -- the precious gift of non-racial democracy; and the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel for the Gaza-Jericho accord signed Wednesday in Cairo, which we deeply hope also marks the beginning of a new era.

During the Annual Session, our rich discussion of a wide range of policy and strategy issues was enormously aided by the statements of a number of specially-invited friends and colleagues:

* **Dr. Nafis Sadik**, Executive Director of UNFPA and Secretary-General of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in September;

* **Ambassador Juan Somavia**, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995;

* **Madame Gertrude Mongella**, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September 1995;

* **Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen**, Coordinator of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs;

* **Ms. Elisabeth Rehn**, Chairman of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF;

* **Ms. Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol**, Deputy President of the NGO Committee on UNICEF;

* **Mr. Raymond Janssens**, Chairman of the UNICEF Global Staff Committee;

* **Madame Chen Muhua**, Chairperson of the All-China Women's Federation, who accepted the well-deserved 1994 Maurice Pate Award; and

* we received the important written statement of **Dr. Jose Ayala Lasso**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who was unexpectedly sent on mission by the Secretary-General and couldn't be with us.

I know I speak for both the Secretariat and the Board in warmly thanking every one of them for their important contribution to our deliberations.

As I said, we have accomplished a great deal over the past week. I count ten main areas of accomplishment of this 1994 Annual Session:

* first, we have an excellent **Medium-Term Plan for the period 1994-1997**. It is a plan that builds on policies and strategies approved by the Executive Board over the past few years, updated to take into account new developments and take advantage of new opportunities. As I said during my response to the discussion of the first cluster of agenda items: I hear most of you saying UNICEF is basically on track. In response to your concerns, we will shorten and improve the format of the next Medium-Term Plan, while avoiding overlap with other Board documents.

* second, we have **new rules of procedure**. Let me say that I am particularly gratified that we will be able to continue to count on the active participation of Observers, National Committees for UNICEF and the NGO coalition on UNICEF. They are an essential part of what makes UNICEF the people-centered organization that it is. The UNICEF Executive Board has shown real leadership by being the first governing body to revise its rules in accordance with Resolution 48/162.

* third, there was strong reaffirmation of the need to maintain the momentum of **World Summit for Children follow-up**. It was inspiring to hear how much progress is being made

toward achievement of the mid-decade and year 2000 goals, and how programmes of action are linking efforts for children and women at the national and local levels in so many countries. The Board has reiterated the World Summit's request to the Secretary-General to arrange for a mid-decade review of the progress toward keeping the promises of 1990. And I sensed strong agreement with Ambassador Somavia's proposal that ~~leaders take advantage of the World Summit for Social Development to report on progress toward achievement of the mid-decade and year 2000 goals.~~

* fourth, UNICEF emerges from the Annual Session with a strongly reaffirmed **priority emphasis on Africa**, and a recommendation to explore the establishment of development compacts between African and donor governments in the context of National Programmes of Action and renewed efforts to obtain relief for debt-suffocated nations. Also, the Executive Board has requested the Executive Director to initiate the establishment of formal relations of cooperation with the Government of South Africa as soon as possible and to assist the Government to establish programmes for children and women.

* fifth, there was overwhelming agreement that **more resources** need to be made available to fund NPAs. I heard more interest and general support for the 20/20 initiative from a wider cross-section of developing and industrial countries than ever before. In preparation for further discussion of the concept in ECOSOC and at the upcoming global conferences and summits, I urge all of your governments to embrace, first of all, the spirit of 20/20 -- once that is done, the precise percentages and operational details can be worked out in the context of development cooperation.

* sixth, we have a new policy that **places issues of gender equality and empowerment of women** solidly at the centre of UNICEF's approach to sustainable human development, starting with empowerment of the girl child. It is a policy, moreover, that expects far more of men, and of fathers, in redressing gender inequities and assuming family and child-rearing responsibilities formerly left to women.

* seventh, strong support was voiced for UNICEF's work in **emergencies**, under the leadership umbrella of DHA. Many delegations recognized the importance of working in emergencies in such a way that, wherever possible, a continuum can be established from relief through

psychological traumas -- amidst emergencies. On **anti-personnel landmines**, many delegations spoke in favour of stronger action to put an end, once and for all, to the killing and maiming of innocents by these weapons of terror. In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, the Secretariat has spoken out forcefully against the massacres of children in Rwanda, and with your encouragement, will both ~~continue to do so and, with the assistance of donors, will~~ sustain and increase its assistance to the tragic victims. At the same time, there was consensus for keeping UNICEF's main focus on the "silent emergency" taking the lives of almost 13 million mostly poor children a year, even while responding as best we can to the "loud emergencies" of war and natural disaster.

* eighth, at the Second Regular Session you approved programmes and a new policy toward Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the **Baltic States**, where children are falling through tattered safety nets at an alarming rate. This region is a whole new world for UNICEF, and we are entering it cautiously, in such a way that will permit us to make maximum impact while not diverting scarce resources from the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

* ninth, the tremendous importance of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** and of its linkage with the World Summit goals and NPAs stood out during our deliberations. Not only is it rapidly on its way to becoming the first universal law of humankind, but it is working its way into the institutional life, development process and -- hopefully -- the popular culture in many countries. UNICEF's global role as advocate for children's rights was reaffirmed, as was the innovative and critical role being played by the **Committee on the Rights of the Child**. I believe we have only begun to grasp the implications for our work of having a powerful legal-ethical tool like the Convention in our hands.

* tenth, and finally, the Board has given us a clear mandate to further integrate the **evaluation function** in all aspects of UNICEF's work, with an emphasis on measuring cost-effectiveness and actual outcomes. We were delighted to hear so many delegations congratulate the Secretariat on follow-up to the **Multi-Donor Evaluation**, and on the just-launched **Management Study**. As I said last Wednesday, we have set ourselves a mid-decade goal: by the end of 1995, we will have settled the main framework for UNICEF governance and management for the decade ahead, taking fully into account the views expressed here this week by members of the Board.

These are ten -- but I am sure not all -- of the major accomplishments of this 1994 Annual Session. Taken together, I am certain they send a reassuring message to the children of the world -- a message that the promises of 1990 have not been forgotten, and that there is continued momentum toward the mid-decade and year 2000 goals.

~~We have certainly come a long way from the days when "helping children" was viewed as little more than charity, a moral nicety on the part of those who could afford it. Today we almost take it for granted that children have rights and are fully entitled to the care and support of the adult world. More than that, we increasingly see children and women as the cutting edge of sustainable human development; providing for their basic needs will go a long way toward solving the interlinked problems of poverty, population and environment that cast a long and ominous shadow into the 21st century. This came out loud and clear from our discussions.~~

It would be disingenuous of me, however, to speak only of accomplishments. On a number of issues, we did not advance at the pace your Secretariat would have desired; consensus proved elusive on several points. If you sensed your Executive Director pushing, at times, on an issue like 20/20 -- especially on the donor side of the equation -- it was not because I thought it would be easy to obtain agreement -- in this forum, in these difficult economic times, and in the current political climate -- on a matter involving resources. I respect and acknowledge the position of all delegations, but -- frankly -- sometimes it is UNICEF's job to push. Last 21 December, at the White House launch of the 1994 State of the World's Children Report, US President Bill Clinton said as much:

"UNICEF continues to see that all the rest of us do our part to make progress toward the goals."

Opening the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States on 25 April, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reminded us:

"At Rio, the leaders of the richest market-oriented countries reaffirmed an official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) ... But overall, the ... DAC countries provide only 0.33 per cent of their total GNP in development assistance."

... As island States and other developing countries strive to raise living standards for their peoples, they will continue to need international support. Such assistance is a necessary and

prudent investment in a more stable, more prosperous and more peaceful world."

Before closing, I want to draw your attention once more to the 1994 edition of the Proposals for Supplementary Funding -- what we call the "Sales Book". The 550 proposals for 111 countries and 24 sub-regional, regional and interregional programmes and projects it describes are a vital part of our efforts to assist children and women throughout the developing world. They complement our regular programmes and have been approved by the Executive Board. The total funding sought for these programmes and projects amounts to US\$2.2 billion over the period 1994-1998. Of special note this year is the increased emphasis on achieving mid-decade goals, as a stepping-stone toward reaching the year 2000 goals set at the World Summit for Children. Donors will find in this volume much that captures their imaginations and stimulates their generosity.

I believe that we are all -- Secretariat and Board, developing and industrial countries alike -- committed to building that better world for our children -- for all children. We can feel proud of what we have accomplished. But let us remember that over the past two weeks of Board sessions, almost half a million children still died in the developing countries of largely preventable causes -- an unacceptable, obscene toll that reminds us of the urgency of our work.

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Now -- as is traditional at our Annual Sessions and before a final closing comment -- I would like to ask our Deputy Executive Director for Operations, Karin Sham Poo, to speak about our staff: those whom we have lost in the service of UNICEF since the last Annual Session; those who have retired or will shortly; and those whose exceptional performance and commitment deserve our special recognition.

{{{ Statement by Deputy Executive Director (Operations) }}}.

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In closing, permit me to recall George Bernard Shaw's famous words:

"You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?' "

Our UNICEF dreams those dreams -- the Child Survival and Development Revolution... the Convention on the Rights of the Child... the World Summit for Children... the mid-decade and year 2000 goals... the end of poverty's tyranny over the children of the earth... days and corridors of tranquillity for children and their families trapped in civil conflict -- our UNICEF dreams these dreams and insists: "Why not?"