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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Tenth International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
10-13 September 1994



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Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
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It is a pleasure to send greetings from UNICEF, along with fervent wishes for the success of your important Congress. Your topic -- child abuse and neglect -- could not be more relevant to many of the burning issues of the 1990s.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, now ratified by 165 countries, is at the cutting edge of human rights and of UNICEF efforts to guarantee child survival, development and protection. We must work for universal ratification and implementation of the Convention, and use it as a legal and ethical shield against all forms of child abuse and neglect, including economic exploitation and sexual exploitation. I believe that the Convention is opening the way for a new ethic of caring -- for children and for all people -- worldwide. Global efforts to combat and prevent all forms of violence against children are now fuelled by the near universal acceptance of the Convention. If we want to prevent the proliferation of Rwandas, Somalias and former Yugoslavias, we must make peace with our children and raise them to reject intolerance, hatred and violence.

The Tenth International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect in Kuala Lumpur can be a milestone in worldwide efforts to combat the exploitation and abuse of children. Prominent professionals and experts in this important field must help us find new and more effective strategies for prevention of child abuse and neglect, new and more effective forms of advocacy and public education to effect behaviour change in families, communities and nations worldwide.

Just as the 1990 World Summit for Children set measurable, time-bound goals for child survival and development, we must urge countries with serious problems of child abuse and exploitation to develop national plans and timelines for compliance with the protection provisions of the Convention. It is obvious that eliminating such social evils is a complex undertaking that cannot be accomplished overnight in any society; but at the same time, if States Parties do not start moving seriously on this front, they open themselves to criticism for failing to act. New and more effective partnerships must be forged between governments, non-governmental organizations and local communities to reach concrete goals.

UNICEF is proud to support and participate in this meeting which will promote the concept of a caring society for children and make a major contribution to prevention of child abuse and neglect. Through our programmes for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, and for Child Rights, UNICEF looks forward to continuing, and further developing, our partnership with the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and other organizations in the field to help bring to an end all violations of children's rights and guarantee child survival, development and protection.