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Message from Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
to  
Child Health 2000 – 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress and Exposition  
“A Critical Decade in the Global Crusade for Children”

Vancouver, Canada  
30 May – 3 June 1995

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

Child Health 2000 - 2nd World Congress and Exposition  
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May 30 - June 3, 1995

A Critical Decade in the Global Crusade for Children

As Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) over the past 14 years, I have observed, in nation after nation, a growing awareness of the importance of policies and programmes that are specifically aimed at improving the lives of children and women. More and more, government leaders and grassroots movements understand that the future prosperity of nations, communities and families depends on investments made today in the health, nutrition and education of children, especially girls.

And in the past four years, since the historic World Summit for Children in 1990, this effort has increasingly taken on the zeal of a crusade. A global movement is developing -- a Grand Alliance for Children -- in which governments and civil society, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, are forming creative and dynamic partnerships for children and sustainable human development.

In this connection, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the dedicated individuals of the **Global Child Health Society**, who are furthering this global partnership in collaboration with UNICEF, WHO and many other agencies.

The **Global Child Health Society** is bringing together child health professionals and child advocates the world over to share their diverse and valuable experiences. Through publications, networking and gatherings such as Child Health 2000, the Society is playing an important role in improving the lives of the world's children.

As the countdown to the 21st century begins, I am pleased to be able to report that many of the promises and commitments made at the World Summit for Children are being realized. Among the achievements to date: over 160 countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child; more than 120 countries have either issued or drafted national programmes of action to implement the goals for children and women; universal child immunization has by and large been sustained; the Western

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Hemisphere has been declared polio-free and several other regions are soon expected to follow suit; the use of oral rehydration therapy has been trebled; breastfeeding is gaining renewed acceptability; and there has been good progress made toward ending iodine deficiencies through universal salt iodization.

During 1992 and 1993, national leaders, senior government representatives and international agencies gathered on a regional basis to examine the progress being made toward achieving the year 2000 goals. At these meetings, mid-decade goals to be achieved by 1995 were formulated, and I am happy to report that a majority of the developing countries appear likely to achieve a majority of the mid-decade goals.

Child Health 2000 - 2nd World Congress and Exposition presents an excellent opportunity to assess progress toward achieving the mid-decade and year 2000 goals, and to strategize on how to overcome obstacles in our way. It should be an action-oriented gathering where words like "commitment", "determination", "collaboration", and "cooperation" will be frequently heard.

Child Health 2000 will help show that a "critical mass" is being reached in the great and noble mission of serving children. This "town meeting" of the global village's child health professionals, public health workers, clinicians, international health agency representatives, scientists and communicators will provide new hope that we can enter the 21st century having overcome some of the worst manifestations of poverty in the lives of children.

We are convinced that in the remaining years of this decade infant, child and maternal mortality can be drastically reduced; major childhood diseases can be controlled and some eradicated; malnutrition can be cut in half, and children can be better shielded from violence and abuse. Humankind's new capacity to satisfy the basic needs of all must be matched by a new ethic that rejects the notion that poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and discrimination are inevitable.

This is a time for mobilization, boldness and vision. There is much that can be achieved at an international meeting of dedicated caregivers and health planners who share common objectives. Judging by the successful first Congress in 1992, we are certain that the 2nd Congress will provide participants with a forum to make a real difference.

May the five days of Child Health 2000 be rewarding ones for all who have come to Vancouver for this Congress. I am sure the world's children, especially those in regions of strife and extreme hardship, will be grateful that you have journeyed here for this important event.

