

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1994-0062
See also: E/ICEF/1994/CRP.0057

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the opening of the
Third Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York
3 October 1994

	UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label
	Rcf00073S5
Item #	CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/2002-01268
ExR/Code:	CF/EXD/SP/1994-0062
Opening 1994 Third Regular Session of Executive Board. St:	
Date Label Printed 24-Sep-2002	

cover + 8pp + 0/b

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1994-0062

See also: E/ICEF/1994/CRP.0057

Distribution:
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1994/CRP.57
3 October 1994
ENGLISH ONLY

FOR INFORMATION

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

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the
Opening of the
Third Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York - 3 October 1994

Under the new Rules of Procedure the *Chairman* of the Executive Board has become our *President*, and it gives me great pleasure to congratulate President Anna Semamba Makinda and thank her for her inspiring statement. Dr. Makinda continues to be an active and dynamic leader of our Executive Board. I would also like to congratulate and thank our Vice-Presidents and all the members of the Bureau for the efficient and conscientious way they have fulfilled their duties and guided the Secretariat since the last Executive Board.

- We are meeting, for the first time, in the heady atmosphere of the General Debate of the UN General Assembly, and amidst intense preparations for the upcoming World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women -- in which UNICEF has been very active. Fruitful World Hearings on Development have been convened by the President of the General Assembly. ECOSOC has continued the vital work on United Nations reform. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed UNDP Administrator Gus Speth to advise him on coordinating the system's multi-faceted development efforts. Particularly following the success of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, one senses that major breakthroughs for sustainable human development are now possible.

cover + 8pp + 0b

New ideas and bold initiatives are on the table. Never in my nearly 50 years of development work have I seen broader agreement on priorities, goals and strategies. This is a hopeful time, a period of rising demands and expectations.

But in view of the gravity and magnitude of the many problems we face -- particularly in view of the fact that children cannot wait -- I must say that I wonder why there is not more of a collective sense of urgency, a sense of impatience and outrage over the gulf that so often exists between lofty rhetoric and concrete action, and over the unacceptable lag time that routinely extends between the formulation of even the best of plans and their implementation. This is something I feel more acutely as time goes on, and at this, the last Executive Board of my current appointment, I wanted to reiterate my deep concern. I know the members of this Executive Board feel the same way and are equally determined to do something about it.

We have a full agenda before us, and I look forward to three days of intense, businesslike and productive work. Most of the items have to do with important operational, managerial and administrative issues which our Deputy Executive Director for Operations, Karin Sham Poo, will introduce and detail in turn. However, I hope that in addressing these specifics vital to the smooth and efficient functioning of our organization, we do not lose sight of the larger context or of the existing momentum of progress on the ground to which our deliberations will most surely contribute.

For much of the time since our Annual Session in May, the world's attention has been riveted on events in Rwanda and Haiti.

I recently visited Rwanda. Above and beyond the magnitude of the human tragedy that occurred there, what struck me in Kigali, as well as in the refugee camps in Zaire, was international aid on a scale and of a nature that would have been unthinkable for complex emergencies only six years ago.

Thanks to truly extraordinary inter-agency and NGO cooperation, millions of refugees and internally displaced Rwandans are being fed, they are receiving some basic health care, and hundreds of thousands of children are even receiving some basic education with anti-trauma and peace education components. In addition to work on these fronts, UNICEF is photographing some 11,000 unaccompanied children in Goma, and we expect to expand the programme to other refugee camps and inside Rwanda, where many thousands more orphaned and lost children need to be identified and reunited with their families and communities. We have also helped demobilize children and young

teenagers from the ousted Rwandan army. We are working with UN and NGO partners to help the new Rwandan government restart the economy and lay the basis for furthering democratic reconciliation between the country's two major ethnic groups. With the help of the UNESCO-UNICEF school-in-a-box programme, primary schooling has already resumed in six provinces.

With respect to Haiti, we are all holding our breath and hoping that, at long last, a transition to democracy and the restoration of that country's elected government can be effected without more bloodshed. The Haitian people have suffered for far too long, and Haitian children have clearly suffered the most.

Throughout the prolonged crisis, amidst unbelievable constraints and difficulties, the international community has managed to provide assistance to millions of Haitians. In anticipation of U.S. and international military intervention, scores of organizations, including UNICEF, stockpiled supplies which are now being widely distributed. We have greatly expanded distribution of food, vitamins and water, and have last week sent in four additional persons with emergency expertise to support and speed up the response by our own UNICEF office. It is our hope that conditions will permit an early and full lifting the embargo, not so that there can be a return to *normalcy* -- Haiti's *normalcy* of hopelessness and terror must never return -- but so that with the help of the world community the Haitian people can build a brighter future.

What happened a few weeks ago at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was also something new and encouraging. Cairo's essential message is that only a holistic approach -- with a strong emphasis on empowerment of women -- can break the grip of high birth rates on so many families and, first, slow and then reverse population growth rates, while easing stress on the environment, sustaining democracy and human rights, and accelerating economic growth. It says that aiming population programmes at people's most basic needs, especially those of women and children, rather than directly at demographic targets will accelerate both population stabilization and a new and more balanced model of development. For the first time, the world community has come together behind a common understanding of the inter-relationships and synergisms between improved and expanded family planning information and services; primary health care and other efforts to reduce infant, child and maternal mortality; literacy and basic education; gender equality, starting with girls -- which are the main factors influencing the choices of individuals and couples regarding family size.

The ICPD brings the drive for population stabilization into harmony with solutions required for dealing with other major problems facing humankind on the threshold of the 21st century. Of particular interest to this Board is the fact that its 20-year Programme of Action explicitly embraces the goals and strategies adopted at the World Summit for Children; in fact, there is an almost total overlap between the Cairo action programme in 1994 and that of the World Summit for Child in 1990. This lends increased urgency to carrying forward UNICEF's central mission of supporting the successful implementation of the World Summit for Children Plan of Action. The Cairo Programme of Action also builds on the outcome of the Earth Summit in Rio and the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, and creates powerful momentum toward Copenhagen and Beijing.

Speaking of momentum, I am delighted to report that with the signatures of several heads of state and government here last week, the World Summit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action has now been signed by the heads of state and government of more countries -- 163 in all -- than any other international document in history. And as an indication of the seriousness of their commitment, national programmes of action are being implemented in 93 countries and are in draft form in 27 others, encompassing some 95% of the children of the developing world.

Significant progress is being made toward achievement of the set of 13 mid-decade goals flowing from the World Summit for Children. This past summer we completed with our field representatives an in-depth review of efforts underway in every developing country, and it now looks like a majority of these countries will achieve a majority of the mid-decade goals by the end of 1995.

In just one example of the progress being made, last week at the Pan American Health Organization we were able to announce that the Western Hemisphere has been certified as the first totally polio-free region in the world. And we have found that in 1993, 80 per cent of the developing countries which achieved the Universal Child Immunization (UCI) goal in 1990 had either maintained their UCI status of 80 per cent coverage of all infants, or raised coverage still higher. This allays our concerns about sustainability, while pointing to Africa -- where slippage from UCI levels has occurred -- as the region in need of intensified action and assistance. Overall, more children are now fully immunized than ever before.

Success in these efforts will not only save and improve millions of young lives, but also give the world leaders who will gather in Copenhagen next March greater confidence in committing

themselves and their governments to the historic action plan that is expected to emerge from the World Summit for Social Development. If in Copenhagen heads of state and government can proudly point to concrete achievements for their youngest citizens at mid-decade, I believe that achievement of the broader goals for the year 2000 will largely be assured.

Part and parcel of this momentum, of course, is the steady march of the Convention on the Rights of the Child toward universal ratification. Just since May, when we last met, seven more countries have ratified this "Bill of Rights" for the world's children -- bringing to 166 the number of States Parties. The list of countries that have not yet ratified has dwindled to only 24, and we continue to hope that each and every one of them will do so by the end of next year, the UN's 50th anniversary, as called for by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993.

Our focus must now begin to shift to conscientiously implementing the Convention's provisions. More than forty countries have already reported on their efforts to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which in turn is helping them to identify areas for improvement. This under-funded and under-staffed Committee of hard-working and dedicated experts needs all the support it can get, and UNICEF, together with its National Committees, is providing financial, technical, and staff assistance.

Recently, I am happy to note, there has been a reawakening of concern about a number of child protection issues. Governments, international agencies and NGOs are looking for new solutions to the critical problem of exploitative child labour. The important study of ways to better protect children caught in armed conflict that was mandated by the General Assembly last year, is now in full swing under the able leadership of Ms. Graca Machel. And for the first time ever, the General Assembly has added an item to its agenda on "Promotion and protection of the rights of children", and for which the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly on follow-up to the World Summit for Children (A/49/326) is most relevant. I sincerely hope that Board members will actively participate in the discussion of this item, which we trust will lead to more concerted action in support of children's rights. These are all most welcome developments, and go hand in hand with increasing global awareness of women's rights.

At the same time, there is growing recognition that the greater consensus that now exists on development goals and strategies, and even the accelerated activities we are seeing on

the ground, will fall short of the mark if sufficient resources are not quickly mobilized to fund concerted efforts. In Cairo, the world agreed to come up with significant specific additional funding of \$11.5 billion for family planning and reproductive health programmes -- from a current \$5.5 billion to \$17 billion by the year 2000, with two thirds of the increase from developing countries themselves. But the indispensable broader, holistic package -- including nutrition, primary health care and basic education for children and women -- faces an uncertain future with respect to funding. The Cairo Programme of Action calls for increased resources for these areas, but offers no guidance as to orders of magnitude for what is required. A holistic agenda requires holistic funding.

That is why the 20/20 Initiative on funding basic social services put forward by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF -- which the Cairo programme takes note of and commends to the attention of the World Social Summit preparatory process -- deserves urgent consideration. This proposal -- for a \$30 billion - \$40 billion annual increase, two thirds from the developing countries -- encompasses family planning and reproductive health as well as the broader holistic package. I am convinced that it provides a vital missing link that could make the difference between success and failure of the new global push for sustainable human development.

As for UNICEF's funding situation, I am glad to be able to share with you some encouragement -- good news that goes against the wider trend of declines in ODA. Preliminary estimates point to a 5 per cent increase in UNICEF total income for 1994 -- 5 per cent over last year's income. Increases are reflected in every major income category: General Resources, Supplementary Funding and emergencies. I must point out, however, that some of this increase is due to exchange rate fluctuation and the total is still short of our record high income in 1992, when contributions increased by 16 per cent in one year.

Nevertheless, the fact is that 17 of our 20 major governmental donors -- including our three top donors: the United States, Sweden and Norway -- maintained the level of their General Resources contributions this year, and Japan increased its contribution, in spite of the climate of ongoing fiscal constraint and overall reductions in ODA. At the same time, I must register our concern over the reductions in General Resources contributions on the part of Italy, the United Kingdom and, in particular, the German government.

Meanwhile, regular and emergency Supplementary Funding is running at 6 per cent over the Medium Term Plan, with Sweden

remaining by far the largest donor. We note substantial increases in supplementary funding from Canada, United States, Italy, Netherlands, Japan and Australia. We deeply appreciate the vote of confidence represented by this rise in income, and would like to hope it represents a return to an upward trend.

It is clear that in a continuing uncertain financial climate, UNICEF must redouble its efforts to streamline, economize, and get the biggest bang out of every buck it receives. We are widely recognized as an agency that gets significant results, and gets them at low cost -- but it is clear that we can do even better on the cost-effectiveness and efficiency side. It is in this context that many of the managerial and administrative matters on our agenda this week take on their larger significance.

We have an interim report on the Management Review of our organization which usefully and briefly flags strengths as well as detailing areas in need of improvement. This status report -- whose findings are still largely preliminary and tentative -- is essentially for your information. We look forward to an in-depth discussion of the final report at our next Executive Board Annual Session, after its recommendations have been reviewed by the Executive Director, the ACABQ and the Open-Ended Working Group. Also on the agenda are items on future levels of headquarters staff; recovery policy; self-financing supply operations; Greeting Card and related Operations (GCO); global funds, and on the feasibility of building conference facilities on UNICEF premises. All are important for our future work.

On the programme side, we look forward to an in-depth discussion and your endorsement of the UNICEF health strategy. You will note that we do not propose a bold new departure in this sector but a consolidation of the most effective approaches to reducing death, disease and disability among children, youth and women. Strengthening of primary health care systems through the Bamako Initiative and other community-based approaches is central to the proposed strategy.

We also seek continuation of modest funding from our administrative and programme support budget for our efforts to ease the transition for children in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States.

But our deliberations over the next three days will not only lead to a better and stronger UNICEF. They will also help build a better and stronger United Nations. UNICEF is an active participant in efforts to enhance cooperation and coordination among the development and emergency components of the UN system.

Improvements made here at UNICEF will surely have positive ripple-effects throughout the system. Without losing their individual identities or endangering hard-won constituency loyalties, the different funds and agencies are steadily moving in directions that will maximize cooperation, minimize duplication, and multiply impact on the ground, in the lives of the nations and peoples we serve. We continue to attach high priority to the full and effective implementation of the General Assembly's restructuring resolution 48/162 and seek ongoing support and guidance from the Board in this regard.

In closing, let me recall that on the occasion of the 3rd anniversary of the World Summit for Children, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that:

"Of all the subjects of development, none has the acceptance, or the power to mobilize, as does the cause of children. Our children are our future."

The special acceptance and mobilizing power of the cause of children, to which the Secretary-General referred, must become a privileged engine for world development. We -- Secretariat and Executive Board together -- must care for that engine, fuel it and run it at full throttle for the benefit of children and sustainable human development.