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Message from Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
to  
UNICEF Staff on New Year's 1995

New York  
19 December 1994

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United Nations Children's Fund

Headquarters

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE

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19 December 1994

New Year's 1995

Dear Colleagues:

In wishing all members of the UNICEF family happy holidays and a healthy and prosperous new year, I must say first that I am thrilled to have been given the opportunity to continue working alongside you in 1995. As I recover from surgery, I am thankful for the two extensions I've been given -- one by the Secretary-General and the other by my doctor. Let me take this opportunity to thank so many of you for the get-well messages that have filled my house and my heart in recent weeks.

As all of you know, 1995 is the year for achieving the 13 mid-decade goals, which in turn will pave the way for reaching the year 2000 goals agreed to at the World Summit for Children. The final countdown has begun -- only 52 weeks to go! My number one new year's resolution this year is to go all out, to give my best energies, for achievement of the goals. I sincerely hope that this will be at the top of your action agenda, too. All of us can and must make the extra effort that so often makes a big difference for the outcome of our efforts. We owe it to the 2.5 million additional children whose lives will be saved if the goals are reached.

The region-by-region, country-by-country assessment we conducted in mid-1994 indicated that a majority of the developing countries will achieve a majority of the mid-decade goals by end 1995. We have now reported this to the world in our 1995 State of the World's Children Report. By now most of you are familiar with the color-coded maps and charts that we are using to track our progress, and it has been encouraging to see so many reds changing to blue and blues to green! But I know that none of us will be satisfied until we paint the whole developing world green, signifying overwhelming achievement of the goals.

In view of the magnitude of the challenge before us and the lateness of the hour, I urge you to concentrate on the areas where progress is lagging, and to take every reasonable measure, in cooperation with every possible partner, to gain the momentum necessary to reach our targets. Africa, in particular, will require an heroic effort. This is the time to "call in the chips" of goodwill that UNICEF has generated with top leaders inside and outside government over the years. I want to emphasize the need for headquarters staff to go the extra mile to support the front-line efforts of our field office colleagues, who are

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under extraordinary pressure and are giving 110 per cent, in most cases, already.

Although it brings joy to our hearts to know what all of this will mean for children -- children who will not be blind because they were given vitamin A... children who will be able to perform up to their intellectual potential because their salt was iodized... children whose rights have a chance of being respected because the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified and began to be implemented -- as important as all of this is to children, there is another important reason why the mid-decade goals need to be achieved.

The reason is that in 1995 -- at the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and at celebrations of the United Nations 50th anniversary -- humankind will have a rare opportunity to move decisively, and move together, to overcome abject poverty and gross underdevelopment. And reaching the goals for children would create powerful momentum in that direction by proving that it is possible to eliminate some of poverty's worst manifestations and causes -- now, not later; and at low rather than high cost. Children could be the fulcrum of the larger undertaking.

Most of you know that I am an incorrigible optimist, and that where many others see only darkness, I see humankind heading -- or at least zig-zagging -- toward a brighter future. And I am confident that many of our countries will achieve most of the goals -- and all countries will achieve some of them. But I am also a realist and know that the forces of darkness -- of selfishness and hate -- are extremely powerful. Frankly, I am afraid that if we allow the opportunities of 1995 to slip through our fingers, many years will have to pass before the world will be able to focus again on finding solutions to the life-and-death problems now confronting the entire planet -- and then it may be too late. We are in a race against time, a race we must win.

We must see to it that UNICEF rises to the occasion. But I write these lines amidst news of further impending cut-backs in funds for development cooperation. That means we will have to be better at what we do best. That means we will have to do more with less. That means we will have to find alternative sources of income, especially from the private sector and general public in both industrialized and developing countries.

The final results of the Management Study of UNICEF are not yet available. I will receive the consultants' report soon, review it and share with you its -- and my own -- recommendations. But even without seeing the final report I can say with assurance that this year will require a great deal of management challenge and change -- change for the better -- from all of us in strengthening UNICEF.

\* First, we will have to manage our beloved, talented and hard-working human resources much better. Staff morale isn't what it should be, and a number of key improvements can and must be made in the short- to medium-term.

\* Second, we need to improve our internal cooperation mechanisms. Coordination between field and HQs could be much better -- for one thing, we should return to the system of having all communication to and from the field go through the geographical desks so that we have one central point of "audit". Coordination between and within HQ divisions also stands in need of improvement, and I expect that divisional workplans for 1995 (to be ready by end of January) will specify, where possible, the ways different parts of the house will work together to achieve UNICEF's goals. And efficiency requires more implementation issues to be resolved at Deputies' level.

\* Third, the proliferation of emergencies we have seen over the past four or five years has stretched and strained us enormously, and we must be better prepared to deal with them. We must gear ourselves up for the long haul, so that we can respond to emergencies quickly and efficiently -- without disrupting our normal development activities.

\* Fourth, 1995 is the year of the biennium budget. We will have to ensure that the business side of UNICEF is run more like a business -- a business with a "human face", of course, but a business nevertheless. As the world's lead agency for children, we are entrusted with nothing less than humanity's future, and it is for this reason that we must get the most out of every dollar we receive and be totally transparent and accountable in all our procedures, processes and reports. We must close the gaps between our lofty vision and our daily practice.

But *how* we make these and other changes is just as important as the changes themselves. It must be a participatory process, not a top-down bureaucratic shake-up inspiring fear and an "each man/woman for him/herself" attitude. The great challenge we face is to make the changes that are needed in an atmosphere of common purpose and trust, and without becoming distracted from our urgent mission.

On the programmatic side, in addition to pulling out all the stops in order to reach the mid-decade goals, 1995 should see a continuation of our recently-revitalized efforts against all forms of child abuse and exploitation. We must keep working to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child the world's first universal law by the end of 1995, and its implementation must constitute the umbrella for our entire programme. In this International Year of Tolerance, I see broad scope for advancing

child and youth rights and participation. And as we approach the critically-important Beijing conference, let us strengthen our focus on women and girls, with special emphasis on gender equity, reproductive health, and safe motherhood.

In their interim assessment last October, the consultants conducting the Management Study noted the remarkable degree of pride in UNICEF expressed by our staff around the world. Although it was gratifying to hear this, it frankly came as no surprise to me. For UNICEF is the kind of organization that attracts people with high ideals and the nerve to demand real results from their efforts. So my own pride in UNICEF is inextricably linked to pride in each one of you. Thank you for what you do -- and who you are.

In closing let me recall something very wise that Albert Camus once said: "Real generosity towards the future lies in giving all to the present."

Again, happy and healthy holidays and new year to you and your loved ones.

Yours sincerely,



James P. Grant