

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1990-0002

Remarks by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
on the occasion of the presentation of
the United Nations Children Survival Medal
to
Mrs. Semra Ozal

New York
22 January 1990



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Rcf0006HS2

Item # **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02170**

ExR/Code: **CF/EXD/SP/1990-0002**

United Nations Child Survival Medal to Mrs. Semra Ozal. R
Date Label Printed 20-Aug-2002

cover + 3 pp + 8b



United Nations Children's Fund Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia
Детский Фонд Организации Объединенных Наций 联合国儿童基金会 منظمة الأمم المتحدة للطفولة

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1990-0002

Remarks by Mr. James P. Grant

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

on the occasion of the presentation of the

United Nations Child Survival Medal

to

Mrs. Semra Ozal

New York - 22 January 1990

I am delighted to welcome Mrs. Semra Ozal, The First Lady of Turkey, to this ceremony called in her honour.

While I have been aware of Mrs. Ozal's exemplary efforts on behalf of children for several years, in May of 1989 in Ankara I had the opportunity to experience first hand her dedication and inspiring leadership on issues related to children at the Congress on the National Policy for Children in the 1990s, which she chaired. During this Congress, Mrs. Ozal herself chaired major sessions, and through her personal determination and keen interest, while allowing free discussions, helped to ensure that all of the final resolutions were in the best interests of children for the duration of the 1990s. I must say it was quite a tour de force, and the resolutions of that Congress have the potential to make a significant improvement on the lives of Turkish children for many years to come.

Of course, such accomplishments do not occur in isolation. Throughout her life Mrs. Ozal has been directly in tune with the very best of Turkey's advances for children and women. Among her country's many vanguard activities in which Mrs. Ozal has taken a lead, she was the driving force in instituting a mother and child care center for the Turkish Philanthropic Association. In 1979, when very few children were immunized against the main child-killing diseases, Mrs. Ozal made regular visits to the poorest neighborhoods in Ankara with a team of volunteers and health workers, giving advice to the mothers regarding child care and the vaccination of children against communicable diseases. In 1985, during Turkey's national immunization campaign, she took an active leadership role, and often spent days and nights in the least privileged areas of the country.

One of the important contributions of Mrs. Ozal is the establishment of The Foundation for the Advancement and Promotion of Turkish Women, which now has 72 branch offices throughout Turkey, as well as several offices outside Turkey in areas where there are large populations of Turkish migrant workers. The Foundation puts its force behind issues which are close to the heart of

Cover + 3pp + 0b

UNICEF's own priorities: maternal and child health clinics, female literacy classes, extending education facilities in regard to child health and nutrition, training courses for women in sanitation and environmental health, and mobilizing media to incorporated messages designed to meet basic learning needs, especially in the field of child health. In children's issues Mrs. Ozal herself has been a champion of the girl child - one of her country's most important issues.

Recently Mrs. Ozal has been visiting schools in villages and personally looking into conditions of oral hygiene, eyesight, nutrition and the growth and development of school children. This has given a major boost to school health.

We could, as you can imagine, continue listing Mrs. Ozal's involvement in Turkey's cutting edge activities on behalf of mothers and children throughout the afternoon and into this evening.

But perhaps more important than a list of accomplishments is this: that her achievements are symbolic of those of her country. For example, before the 1985 immunization campaign in which she was involved, and which was so vigorously supported by then-President Evren and then-Prime Minister Ozal, fewer than 20 per cent of Turkish children were immunized against the six main child-killing diseases. Today well more than 70 per cent are protected, and we have full faith that, with the leadership and dedication Turks have shown, the country will reach the United Nations goal of 80 per cent before the target date of the end of this year.

Turkey has gone forward from the original immunization campaign with a range of measures for child survival and development, including control of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. Reductions in child mortality rates during the 1980s saved the lives of over 75,000 Turkish children in 1989 alone, compared to the situation in 1980.

This first year of the new decade will be a very important one in Turkey in precisely the domains in which Mrs. Ozal has shown strong leadership. We dare hope that Turkey will be one of the first to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child largely as a result of the conviction and spirit which manifest at the Congress which she chaired in May.

Similarly, we anticipate that Turkey's participation in the World conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, which will be held in March in Jomtien, Thailand, will have a major impact on basic education. Turkey has achieved very high primary student enrollment, and we hope that the progress made in accelerating girls' enrollment will be sustained on parity with boys' enrollment - an issue on which Mrs. Ozal has been an early champion.

Mrs. Ozal's leadership and direct participation in child survival and development activities reflect the very best directions of developmental progress for children and women in Turkey.

* * * * *

And now Mrs. Ozal, for your leadership, commitment and contributions in promoting the survival, protection and development of children and mothers over some four decades, it gives me great pleasure to present you with the United Nations Child Survival Medal. On behalf of the children of Turkey, and of the world, our most profound gratitude to you. May your example be followed far and wide, and for generations to come.