

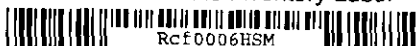
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Speaking Points for Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
10th Anniversary Conference of Results International

Washington, D.C.
18 June 1990



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I. Greetings

I am delighted to join you to celebrate the milestone 10th anniversary of Results. Your name and record show that by naming and identifying oneself with what one truly aspires toward, one can attain it. We would all agree that this group gets results. It is an admirable priority to put up front, given that your stated purpose is "generating political will to end hunger".

This organization has been associated with some extremely important - and successful - actions in its short history. In the United States, you participated, with the Child Survival Working Group, in the creation of the Child Survival Fund. You initiated the Global Poverty Reduction Act, and you have been instrumental in establishing micro enterprise credit.

Results volunteers in Australia, Canada, the U.K., the U.S. and West Germany have played a key role in unexpected increases in child survival and UNICEF funding over the last decade. Results Japan is now working to do the same.

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II. Time of change

Your decade anniversary begs a soul-searching, as all significant anniversaries do, and perhaps even a reassessment of your priorities and direction. It occurs at a crucial moment for the children of the world. The beginning of the last decade of the 20th century is not only a great symbolic moment, inviting a dramatic last chance to crystalize the legacy of our century to the next. It is in reality a time of phenomenal change and opportunity. In any century, only twice or thrice does the possibility of fundamental and essential improvement in our global situation lie close at hand. Now is such a time. Whereas often great opportunities must be painfully won from the anguish of war or drastic economic depression (such as the New Deal, the establishment of the UN or Bretton Woods Institution), the dynamism of this moment in history is born against a background of relative peace.

- warming - almost evaporation - of the cold war and easing of East/West tensions
- sweeping changes in Eastern Europe - avalanche toward democratic processes
- progress on disarmament with its promise of a significant peace dividend ... affects whole world, not just the superpowers
- joyous birth of a new nation, Namibia, achieved at a time of considerable experience with independence by other African nations
- visible progress toward dismantling of apartheid
- easing of regional tensions - S. Africa, Western Sahara, Iran-Iraq, Central America, Horn of Africa, Indo China, Afghanistan
- new concern with the future of our global environment

(((((How best to take advantage of this window for change to overcome old and new problems rather than, as after World War I, to settle back into a false and misleading complacency?))))

III. Finding the opportunities for children

How to seize the opportunity for children? And how to use children as an entry point for other changes too?

It is still sadly true that, on the one hand, some 40,000 young children still die each day, the majority of them from causes for which we have long-since discovered low-cost cures and preventions. These tragic and unnecessary deaths are but one indication of the disproportionate burden of suffering borne by the most vulnerable among us, especially children and women.

On the other hand, it is equally true that many of the broader problems visible on the horizon can not be solved without more progress on the well-being of children. This is especially evident in:

- linkages with environment;
- linkage with economic growth;
- linkage with the morality of our civilization.

Synergism

Fortunately, this open moment in history holds the potential of ushering in the most important breakthroughs for children ever experienced.

Momentum has gathered at a rapidly increasing pace in recent years on a number of child-related issues. (Results has been involved in many of them.) Today, a critical juncture has been reached. A dynamic synergism is accelerating progress on child-related issues at a rate

It started, perhaps, in the early 1980s with the articulation of the child survival and development revolution (CSDR), of which I know you are all quite well aware, followed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the articulation of broad goals for the year 2000 and now the Summit. We are at a point now where key initiatives are becoming mutually reinforcing - they are accelerating each other.

CSD/UCI

Thus, for example, progress in CSD activities, and especially the massive effort and success toward achieving universal child immunization (UCI) against the six main child-killing diseases by the end of 1990, has brought many new participants into involvement in child-related issues, from Heads of State and Government to religious leaders, non-governmental organizations such as yourselves, the media, school teachers and more.

-- coverage at the end of 1989 reached 71 per cent globally - a major achievement in itself, considering that only some 20 per cent of the world's children were immunized at the beginning of the decade, before acceleration efforts began. If we can maintain the current momentum (and take full advantage of the forthcoming World Summit for Children), immunization coverage will reach 80 per cent globally by the end of 1990 - an achievement which will prevent more than 3 million infant and child deaths annually.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The vast new alliance of participants in the UCI effort, once familiar with an all-out effort on behalf of children, became predisposed to take very seriously the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I must say that I myself, in 1979, did not think that the Convention would come into being during my lifetime. And while success in CSD and UCI gave us increasing confidence in the mid to late 1980s that the seemingly overwhelming task of bringing the Convention into force could actually be accomplished, and helped involve Heads of State and Government in promoting the Convention - e.g., the SAARC Bangalor Summit in 1986; OAU Summit in 1988 - new attention to children's rights stirred by activities in support of the Convention in turn raised people's awareness that providing health services for children was not just a nice thing to do: it is the obligation of adult society.

-- There is every hope and expectation that, with efforts on many fronts, the Convention will be ratified by the 20 countries necessary to bring it into force before the World Summit for Children on 29 and 30 September. This could only be accomplished with the kind of direct and effective mobilizing that Results has become known for.

Each of these issues - CSD and the Convention - was accelerated by the momentum of the other.

Education for All

On another front, the experience and credibility gained through CSD and UCI successes have given the confidence to move ahead on the basic education front. I think we are all aware of a quantum leap that has been made in commitment to basic education as a result of the World Conference on Education for All, which was held in Jomtien, Thailand in March - attended, it is worth noting, by 155 governments and 140 NGOs. Especially significant at Jomtien was the strong and widespread commitment to universal primary education by the year 2000 - to achieving a minimum level of learning for the great majority of children in literacy, numeracy and basic life skills - with the clear understanding that levels of achievement, rather than enrollment figures, must be used as assessment criteria. I might note that the new level of global commitment to basic education for all is vividly reflected in greatly increased allocation proposed for education in the coming years and a new partnership by the four principal sponsors: the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

It is noteworthy that the lessons learned in the health field through using UCI as a cutting edge of primary health care inspired the commitment to universal primary education for all by 2000 as the cutting edge of basic education for all. In this mounting synergistic interaction, progress in education can be counted on for a profound sustainable contribution to children's health, the assurance that their rights are met, and maintaining their rightful place, high on the world's political agendas.

Goals for children and development in the 1990s

On another front, credibility and experience gained through CSD and UCI, movement in the education field, in water, and new awareness of our obligations to ensure that children's rights are met have all contributed the impetus and the confidence required for experts and policy makers to come to consensus on a challenging yet feasible set of "goals for children and development in the 1990s". The goals are the result of an extraordinarily extensive consultative process at country, regional and international levels.

The main goals prioritized among what is do-able for children between now and the year 2000, as a result of this unique process, are:

- 1) reduction of infant and under-5 mortality rates in all countries by one-third or to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births respectively, whichever is less;
- 2) reduction of maternal mortality rates by half;
- 3) reduction of malnutrition among under-5s by half;
- 4) universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal;
- 5) universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school age children;
- 6) reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age group to be determined in each country) to at least half its 1990 level with emphasis on female literacy; and
- 7) improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances.

More details on these goals are available on the sheet that is available for distribution here.

In the U.S., a set of health objectives for the decade has been prepared under the Department of Health and Human Services, and will be released in September. Early drafts of that report indicate that an exemplary groundwork has been laid in this country for coordinating action around common goals, and we look forward to the report as a major contribution to effective action in public health - especially for children and women. Much of the data will be applicable to other countries, and the format of presenting objectives for children and women could well serve as a model for other nations to follow.

World Summit for Children

Last but hardly least among these key areas is progress toward the World Summit for Children. A new status for issues related to children and an increasing awareness of how very much is possible on behalf of children for so little cost, both of which have grown out of all of these efforts on UCI and primary health care, the Convention, and primary education, have contributed greatly toward progress on the Summit. How truly remarkable that the first-ever global summit of leaders from North, South, East and West should devote their full agenda to child-related issues. It indicates a major shift in the wind.

The Summit in turn is now having an accelerating effect on both the ratification and implementation of the Convention and on CSD activities, especially UCI, as world leaders focus on their countries' accomplishments in these arenas in preparation for their own participation at the historic gathering.

As preparations for the Summit and its follow-up progress, it is becoming clear that it is the boost which the Summit will give to action on behalf of children which now brings within human reach the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s (which gained their initial momentum from CSD activities). While each of the goals is, in itself, feasible during this decade, it will take a significant restructuring of societal behaviour to accomplish them all - a restructuring of the magnitude that could perhaps only be triggered by an immediate global coalition such as that signaled by the Summit. The import of this synergistic interaction of efforts is reflected in the projection that, if the goals are realized, the lives of 50 million children will be saved during this decade.

For all of us who are committed to the survival, protection and development of the children of the world, the big challenge at this unique moment in history is how to make the most of the Summit and its follow-up. How does each of us use it to take a quantum leap in the direction that we believe to be most important for children? How do the various groups and organizations concerned with the well-being of children accelerate each other's agendas to take the fullest advantage of the Grand Alliance for Children?

I must say that Results has taken an exemplary leadership stance in preparation for the Summit by organizing the candlelight vigils that are increasing in number so rapidly. The vigils represent a brilliant means to draw attention to the Summit, its child-first issues, and the kinds of possibilities to move on those issues that will come out of the Summit. They will give people - hopefully, vast new legions of people - a chance to declare themselves committed to the concerns of children. By organizing the vigils, Results has shown one of the most creative popular responses to the Summit that have yet appeared. By distinguishing yourselves as a leader in this way, should you now be ready for the question: how can you take this effective mobilizing on behalf of children a major step forward, find the opportunities that present themselves from this interaction, and act on them? We wish you success in the goal of doubling the popular base of Results membership as a consequence of the vigils.

Immediately following the Summit, governments will be committed to a new plan of action. How do we bolster their commitment, influence their prioritizing, and develop a powerful common front in each country? Public opinion should be far more supportive than usual, and it should, for example, be easier than usual to raise money for child-related issues. It should be easier to mobilize. Are we ready to find and seize the opportunities in this historic moment of change?

Results is ideally situated to make a major impact in this follow-up phase. Opportunities will open to leverage advocacy and lobbying efforts by deciding on common goals with like-minded partners in the Grand Alliance for Children.

The challenge

To all of us who are committed to improving the conditions of children in the world - and Results has surely devoted a major portion of its considerable talents to children's issues - I would say this is our moment. When I began speaking to you tonight I noted that historical moments of societal change such as we are now experiencing may occur only twice or thrice in a century. An opportunity for major breakthrough in our area of interest - children - which is being presented to us with the Summit surely occurs only once in a lifetime.

This one arrives at such a hopeful moment for the children of the world - whole nations have rallied and wars have paused for the immunization of children; the Convention has been adopted and is moving toward ratification and implementation, including new attention to children in especially difficult circumstances; a new urgency is felt for quality education for all. It is the optimum moment for societies throughout the world - industrial and developing alike - to shift their priorities in favor of children, and the future. We may truly be on the brink of becoming a civilization that gives first call on its resources to children.

We are at the threshold, but we have not yet crossed into the new world. It is we, we of this generation who have declared ourselves committed to children's issues - declared ourselves by the child-related issues we choose and champion - we who hold the key to the door that stands beyond that threshold. It is as if the lock of that door were secured by secret

combination, and each of us held one part of the formula. The crucial steps through that door can only be taken with the full leadership of all of us gathered here - each in his or her respective domain.

We are faced in this moment with the challenge and the responsibility of unprecedented opportunities on behalf of children. Can we make the breakthrough? For the children - and the future - of our world, working together, I think we can.