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Remarks by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
upon the occasion of the opening of the photo exhibit
"Families of the World"

by

Helene Tremblay

New York
9 October 1990



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



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Families of the World Photo Exhibit by Helene Tremblay. R
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"Families of the World"

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I am delighted to join in opening the second exhibition at the United Nations of Helene Tremblay's "Families of the World" photographs. Her works evoke on close range the spirit of love and caring that is so naturally an essence of the family.

In letting us see people as their families see them, Ms. Tremblay's photos help us to glimpse the way people care for each other and respond to being cared for - we see the face of loving and being loved - from a wide variety of cultures throughout the world. In this exhibit, of course we see people from East Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific.

An intimate look into the lives of people whose cultures have developed perhaps far from our own and under different circumstances helps us find the similiarties in the human experience. It helps us to find what is universal, and to enter into the caring from a very heart-felt place...even for people or whole cultures with whom we will never come in contact.

While the family has long been the principle unit of such caring, we are seeing today, I believe, a rapid expansion of our sense of who we care for. We are even seeing a rapid expansion of who we consider ourselves obliged to care for.

This expanding sense of responsibility - especially for the children of the world - is evident, for example, in the overwhelming response within the past year to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention went into force more rapidly than any human rights convention in history, with its landmark codification of the responsibility of whole societies to ensure that children are cared for. For there are, of course, children who do not have their own families, or whose families cannot or do not care for them. Thus, some of what we experience as "family" has now expanded beyond the ties of blood relation.

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Two weeks ago we saw, in the World Summit for Children, an affirmation that the primacy of responsibilities toward children extends beyond the obligation of parent to child, to be an obligation of all society - not only of the State, as evidenced in the Convention, but increasingly, of the world community of nations. An essential quality of our sense of family has extended to encompass the whole human family.

An expanded acceptance of adult responsibility to all children has been acknowledged at the highest political levels, as evidenced by the World Summit. On the most personal and individual level, however, I believe the shining caring faces of families such as those Helene Tremblay has captured in this exhibit help us understand why this is so...why as a human family, it is a highest priority to care for each other.