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Speaking Points for Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
for panel discussion
Strengthening the United Nations for the 1990s

North South Roundtable – New York
28 March 1991



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Executive Director of UNICEF

Speaking points for
Strengthening the United Nations for the 1990s, panel discussion,
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Thank you very much Rafi Ahmed, Mr. Chairman

It is a pleasure to be here to participate in this seminar discussion and I'm sorry I will have to duck out for half hour and I hope to rejoin you.

I thought that possibly my contribution to this discussion might best be made by drawing on the fact that I am probaly the senior citizen here. And got involved with UNRA in 1945, December 1945. And have one way or the other been involved with economic collaboration business ever since. And I tend to see the where we have been through a series of eras.

Clearly, the first era once one left the relief UNRA period behind was the economic collaboration for security reasons era. That ran from the late 1940s to the late 1950s. It was characterized by the Marshall Plan, by very substantial security flows that went to such countries such a as Korea, Taiwan, Pakistan but all primarily in a global Cold War context. And development got started seriously in places such as Korea and Taiwan toward the end of that period. Even though the money was going under a security label.

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The second era really can be called the start of the development era began in the late 1950s. When the World Bank began to make significant volume of hard loans to developing countries. The United States recognizing it needed to find ways to provide resources to India, countries such as India and Brazil came up with the Development Loan Fund. I might say that back in the first era there did emerge the Point Four Programme. In the late 1940s which had the concept of transferring technology. But it was basically on a very small resource base. That is, technical cooperation was originally based. But by the late 1950s there was the recognition of the possibilities of development. There was the imperative of it as countries such as India emerged on the scene in a major way. And wanted to get on with development but there was no security link. And the old hands will remember the emergence of SUNFED the creation of a major fund here. And the counter move by industrial countries to SUNFED was the establishment of IDA the soft loan window to the World Bank. And a mechanism that was more susceptible to the control of the donors.

We had the advent of the development decade one. President Kennedy came into power with the concept of development as a major dimension of world cooperation. The point seven percent of GNP emerged. The major European countries as they got back on their feet and began to open up significant aid windows. So really the 1960s saw really this emergence of development in its present form as we know it in a major way.

The third era - some call it the golden era came in the late 1960s. When it became clear that even though growth was taking place all over the world.

That growth without that growth would trickle down was not enough. And I can remember 1970, 1971, 1972 the major demonstrations against the World Bank, lead often by church groups. They were harassing Robert MacNamara because the funds from the Bank were making the rich richer and the poor poorer in their image. And out of this came the concept of redistribution with growth, meeting basic human needs, a more holistic approach to development. Growth accelerated, there was the OPEC, there was the price crisis that occurred in the early 1970s but it was met through large scale lending to the developing countries as the shift for this.

Then came the fourth era. The 1980s which frankly have been much an era of disarray on development. There was the debt crisis for which there was not really a solution. There was the crisis on commodities prices. For which no ready solution was or has yet been found. There was the whole process of adjustment and the early period. There was the whole process without a human face. We learned that again in crises vulnerable groups; women and children, the poor tend to get shoved to the bottom. And development thinking as quite rudderless through much of this period as a coherent body. There were a few people who spoke out but I think one can say that the 1980s was a period of characterized by a period of retrenchment, adjustment to new realities.

Now that brings us to the fifth era. Which is today. That we are looking forward to and it is clearly a new era. There are three, several major new factors confronting us with this new era.

First, of course is the whole end of the Cold War. Which brings with it many positive factors. It ends the east west deadlock that meant that forum after forum when you tried to get truly global action you could not get global action. You could not get global action because of the deadlock. And one saw it continuing in such, as seen in the past, in the fact that the Socialist Bloc was not a part of the World Bank or the IMF. And when it is very difficult to talk about truly global approaches but now with the end of the Cold War that is possible.

Second it is also bringing with it the prospects of a major peace dividend. And there is really something wrong with all of us collectively in this world if we can not over the next four or five years see to it that there is a reduction of a quarter to a half in the proportion in the GNPs of the world devoted to military purposes. The real question is going to be the peace dividend will there how will it be used? Will it be used such for consumer goods or will it be shared also for social purposes globally and within countries.

Third we see at the start of this decade some new compulsions that are making themselves felt. Environment is clearly one of them. And the world is feeling this compulsion. There will be some reaction to it. The population issue, figures as part of this process as well.

A second major compulsion, of course, is on the trade side. Particularly with respect to the resource flows side. Now we still have a multi billion

dollar reverse flow from the developing countries to the industrial countries. This must and will somehow change during the 1990s.

Third and an acute form of this, of course, is the African hemorrhage. The countries in South Sahara for a combination of reasons many are still caught literally in a kind of economic hemorrhage that until means are found to restore a balance here. Through resource flow, debt management, trade policies. It is very difficult to see the kind of dynamism that is required for Africa to proceed ahead.

Fourth there are a series of new norms that are being pushed on us. New emphasis on as we have just heard from Dr. Nafis Sadik progress for women both as a justice issue and as an imperative, if you are going to deal with such issues as population and children. A new attention to children is clearly another manifestation. The World Summit for Children that took place on September 30th was a manifestation of this.

Fifth there are new problems that have to be dealt with. Drugs comes to mind, AIDS clearly comes to mind, there are others.

Sixth there will have to be more the sixth compulsion, attention to equality again in the 1990s. One reason for the very wide spread sympathy that one saw throughout the entire Islamic World, even in places like Latin America, where I traveled. There was very strong sympathy for Iraq in this conflict that was tied in very significant part to feelings about the equality issue.

Now those are the new compulsions. We clearly have some new opportunities for the 1990s. One of these, and I would say, we have new opportunities for the 1990s to do actions that bring demonstratable results. We have seen this in the field of children. There are a series of actions that can be done on behalf of children for which the costs are relatively low. But the results can be very dramatic. We see it this year with the completion of in December 1990 of the first phase of International Child Immunization effort. It got its big kickoff, as many of you may remember, here in the United Nations, October 1985 at the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations. The kickoff to achieve by five years later by the forty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations a 80% level of immunization in the Third World. As many of you may know it now looks as if this result is being achieved. It is of mammoth dimensions. In country after country today the immunizations system systematically reaches more hamlets and villages than does the postal system. Whether you are in Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia this is a factor from the Andes to the Amazon, to the Congo, to the high Himalayas, the jungles of Sumatra. A system has been created and by many forms of measurement is is the biggest collective effort the world has ever undertaken. Involving more man years than the pyramids or building the Suez Canal or Panama Canal, it is a major accomplishment that has been achieved in the last few years. Demonstrating what can be done on the doable front.

Second we have more efficient means of doing the things that we are doing now. We saw this very clearly with respect to emergencies at the time of the African crisis in 1984 and 1985. When with the establishment of OEDA we were

able to produce very significant results at a time of very great crisis in Africa. And clearly one of our challenges as we look forward over the next several years is to identify what are those things that we have learned over the last several years of how to do efficiently with the means that we presently have at our disposal. I think we all agree there will have to be some ultimately some major structural changes. And that when one looks at how was it we accomplished - we collectively did in with the Africa crisis in the mid 1980s. And with the Universal Child Immunization effort of the last five years.

What we are seeing there is that wherever a very clear goal has been established by the United Nations system. And there is a consensus on that goal and a willingness to put some effort behind it. If that goal is established it is then possible to build collaborative action because the goal is clear. And you can organize the multiple entities of the United Nations, whether it is the specialization agency. If you take a look at Universal Child Immunization, WHO, the World Bank, UNDP you can make the rounds virtually every major agency got behind this effort and all the bilaterals participated in it.

So we have demonstrated in the last five or six years means by which very dramatic results can be achieved even with the present machinery. If we are prepared to:

- a. establish a clear goal and

- b. establish a mechanism for collaboration

And in the context of children, of course, there has been a dramatic illustration of it with the World Summit for Children which has set clear goals for the 1990s, for the next ten years. And has suggested patterns for collaboration toward the achievement of these goals. And as one looks ahead to the nineties, I think one can see some very real prospects, hopeful progress as long as we keep up our determination. And do address some of these new problems that are with us. Which I must say the compulsion of dealing of finding a way of dealing with resource flows is the key.

Thank you