

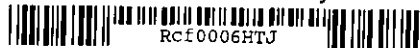
File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1991-0009
See also: E/ICEF/1991/CRP.0012

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the Opening of the 1991 session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York
22 April 1991



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Item # **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02223**

ExR/Code: **CF/EXD/SP/1991-0009**

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant, Executive Director of UN.

Date Label Printed 20-Aug-2002

cover + 11 pp + 06



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/1991-0009
see also E/ICEF/1991/CRP.0012

E/ICEF/1991/CRP.12
22 April 1991

ENGLISH ONLY

FOR INFORMATION

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1991 session

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
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New York - 22 April 1991

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends:

It is a great pleasure for me to join our Chairperson in extending greetings and a warm welcome to the members of the Executive Board and to the observers, the representatives of the National Committees for UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, and other friends and colleagues. The participants in these Board sessions -- whether as members, observers or friends -- are at the heart of UNICEF's contribution to the advancement of the well-being of children, and your Secretariat welcomes the invigorating exchange of experience, guidance, wisdom and vision which these sessions represent.

I particularly call the Board's attention to a group of distinguished individuals who have met intensively through this weekend to plan observances of the "Day of the African Child", which will take place on 16 June, and who join us today to observe this opening session of the Board.

Our Chairperson, of course, is already quite experienced in guiding the Board's proceedings, having presided over the September special session on the World Summit for Children and the Winter organizational session. Lisbet Palme continues the activist tradition of Board leadership, travelling widely and advocating passionately for ever more effective programmes for children.

A year of historic promise and achievement

Madam Chairperson, what an incredible year 1990 was for children!

We knew when this Board met last April that we were in the midst of an historic year for children. But could any of us have appreciated just how historic? how great the magnitude of the events that were unfolding? how enormous the leverage for children that was being created?

It was a year of promise, but also of real achievement. It was a year made possible, in large part, because of the steady guidance and ambitious determination of the members of this Executive Board, who laid the groundwork over many years for the remarkable achievements which came to fruition in 1990.

The year began with the opening for signature and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ... establishing for the first time a universal codification of the rights of children and society's obligations to the child. This Executive Board adopted resolutions in 1986, 1987 and 1989 instructing a sometimes sceptical Secretariat to help make the Convention a reality. Your vision has borne out. By September 1990, the Convention had entered into force, far faster than any other human rights instrument in history. Today, the Convention stands as the law of the land in 77 countries, and a majority of the remainder are formally moving toward ratification.

The world moved rapidly to translate the Convention into practice by devising (in March 1990) a common strategy for securing basic education for all by the year 2000, with a specific framework for rapid expansion of early child development, literacy, vocational training, and acquisition of knowledge, skills and values through formal and non-formal educational channels. It is more and more apparent that, indeed, the Jomtien Conference -- which this Board strongly encouraged -- was for education the kind of landmark convergence and beginning which Alma Ata was for primary health care. The Jomtien Conference particularly filled the great gap of strategies on education and basic learning for our programme planning for the 1990s.

Within the context of the Convention's standards, in April of last year this Executive Board completed its multi-year landmark exercise of identifying goals and strategies for children in the 1990s. The goals set through this process, while ambitious, are nevertheless realistic, and their widespread acceptance throughout the international community testifies to the preeminent leadership exercised by this Board. You have charted UNICEF action for the decade and beyond, and established a consensus base which was subsequently to be embraced, endorsed and detailed by the largest assembly of leaders of nations in history.

That assembly — the World Summit for Children — brought the needs and problems of children to the highest possible forum, and to the consciousness of people and institutions throughout the planet. The World Summit established the ultimate promise to children: the promise of a first call on society's resources for their essential needs, in good times and in bad, in war as well as in peace. Beyond its lofty principles, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and its accompanying Plan of Action affirm very specific goals, many with measurable targets and deadlines for their achievement, and detailed follow-up measures at national and international levels, summoning governments, international organizations, NGOs and other institutions of society to work together to achieve them.

Even as each of these great events was unfolding, the day-to-day work of improving the lives and health of children continued, giving meaning and reality to the promises of great gatherings. Foremost among this work was the enormous effort — surely the largest, most universal peacetime mobilization in human history — to protect all the world's children from preventable diseases. As WHO and UNICEF will soon be able to officially certify, that UCI effort reached eighty percent of the world's children by the end of 1990, thus achieving three great objectives: to save the lives of some 3 million children each year and protect the health of millions more; to establish an infrastructure capable of sustaining immunization and providing a base for other mass health advances; and to create confidence that ambitious goals, diligently, systematically and collaboratively pursued, can indeed be achieved.

1990 was a promising year on many other fronts, extending well beyond the immediate concerns for children. It was the year in which the passing of the Cold War was clearly confirmed, removing at last the imminent threat of nuclear destruction, reducing the arms race and the exploitation of civil wars and regional conflicts, and allowing major powers to take fresh and genuine approaches to resolving global issues.

It was a year in which leading forces in development planning turned decidedly toward the human dimension, as reflected in the UNDP's Human Development Report and the World Bank's World Development Report on poverty, and UNICEF's concerns for adjustment with a human face and protecting the essential needs of the most vulnerable gained new legitimacy and acceptance.

But 1990 was also a year of tragedy, as nations moved toward military confrontation in the Persian Gulf. We can only hope that this situation was an isolated aberration along a steady path away from confrontation — a hope reinforced by the post-Cold War capacity of the major powers to collaborate for collective security, as envisioned some 46 years ago in the United Nations Charter.

UNICEF's role in the 1990s

Madam Chairperson, the promise to children for the decade ahead is enormous. The realistic foundations of that promise are substantial and compelling. The key issue now is whether those who work for children will sustain the momentum of this movement through disciplined effort, strengthened methods, and confidence-encouraging progress.

The challenge for this organization, as the world's lead agency for children, is to ensure that we most effectively play our multi-faceted role as collaborator with governments, partner agencies and committees, organizations, communities and allies worldwide ... rooting our knowledge and understanding in day-to-day work in the field, and communicating that expertise in our advocacy and counsel as we seek to stimulate and guide others in doing the work of improving the lives of children.

We have much good work to draw upon, giving us a firm foundation and a strong confidence for the work ahead. I trust that members of the Executive Board will agree that the Executive Director's Report [Part II] is a good catalogue of UNICEF's cooperation — with countries and their communities, and regionally and internationally — in child and maternal health and safe motherhood, family spacing, nutrition, health care financing, water supply and sanitation, basic education, women's development, social mobilization, emergency operations and children in especially difficult circumstances, and a host of other fields of activity. It also catalogues our operational support activities, alliance-building efforts, provision of programme resources and tools, and resource mobilization.

UNICEF brings to the 1990s a considerable foundation of experience and expertise, partnerships and alliances, and a proven capacity to enlist many forces in collaborative work for children.

For UNICEF, the 1980s was a decade of continuing refinement, sharpening and strengthening of our field work, and drawing upon the lessons of that work to identify successful approaches and realistic priorities. The central issue for this organization is no longer to define what should be the paramount thrusts for children in the years immediately ahead, but how to help countries implement the goals and strategies which this Executive Board established in 1990. It is important to underline that the Secretariat seeks no new goals, no new programmes, no new areas of activity beyond those identified by the Board last year. Our agenda is quite full, and we are not seeking to broaden it.

The power of the Plan of Action

We should also appreciate the extraordinary tool which the World Summit's Plan of Action represents. It is an unprecedentedly detailed and explicit framework for follow-up action at all levels of authority and responsibility for children. As already noted, it sets forth lofty principles to guide all of us: a commitment to give children a high priority on national agendas... a first call on resources to meet their essential needs ... special protection, even in situations of war and conflict.

But more than this, the Plan of Action gives highest-level endorsement to quantifiable goals to be accomplished within a concrete timeframe. It is universal in its applicability, seeking to improve the lives of all children, wherever they may live — in poor countries or rich, in needy and affluent communities. And it calls upon all segments of society to participate in this effort: national governments and local governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, media and community associations, parliamentarians and religious leaders, the professions and

volunteers, leaders and common citizens in all walks of life. Each has a contribution to make in the great and noble effort to improve the condition and prospects for children.

But still more than this, the Plan of Action sets out a course for marking and reporting its implementation. Paragraphs 34(i) and 35 call for comprehensive national and organizational plans by the end of 1991. It establishes a global monitoring process, requesting the assistance of all relevant offices and agencies of the United Nations system. It requests UNICEF, in close collaboration with the relevant specialized agencies and other United Nations organs, to prepare a consolidated analysis of the plans and actions undertaken by individual countries and the international community in support of the child related development goals for the 1990s; and it asks the Secretary-General of the United Nations to arrange for a mid-decade review of the progress being made toward implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action also addresses the need for increased resource mobilization to support these efforts, calling upon each country to examine its national budget and its development assistance budget to ensure that programmes aimed at achieving the goals for child survival, protection and development are accorded adequate priority in the allocation of national resources everywhere.

Madam Chairperson, I hope that members of the Board will take the opportunity of the general debate to share an overview of actions being taken in their countries in response to Paragraph 34 of the Plan of Action.

Engagement of the United Nations system for children

I am heartened to report that the entire United Nations system has taken up the challenges of follow-up to the World Summit. Immediately following the World Summit for Children, the Secretary-General — continuing his active role in support of its objectives — wrote to the Head of State or Government of all 159 countries which participated in the World Summit, pledging the full support of the United Nations in assisting them in fulfilling the commitments of the Declaration, and indicating that he had asked UNICEF to communicate with them with specific recommendations on their priority actions.

The General Assembly, as members of the Board are aware, adopted Resolution 45/217 in December, welcoming the results of the World Summit and urging all relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the UN system to take into account the goals, strategies and recommendations of the Declaration and Plan of Action in carrying out their programmes. The Resolution also invites the relevant governing bodies to consider specific measures, within their competence, to address the special needs of children in the light of the Declaration and Plan of Action. Finally, the Resolution asks the Secretary-General to report to it in 1992, through ECOSOC, on the implementation of its resolution and of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action. The Secretary-General, consistent with Paragraph 35(v), has indicated that he will rely upon UNICEF to assist him in preparing this report.

Following the General Assembly resolution, the Secretary-General wrote to the executive heads of all relevant agencies to call their attention to the Assembly's expectations and requesting them to advise him of their organizational plans. The responses to date sketch a pattern of effective consideration of the Plan of Action to strengthen and extend organizational programmes affecting the condition of children. UNICEF's own programme of action for achieving the goals for the 1990s is presented in the document E/ICEF/1991/12.

Following consultations at last week's meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the Director-General for Development is writing to all Resident Coordinators of the UN system underscoring the role for virtually every UN agency represented at the field level, and asking the Resident Coordinator to take the initiative to ensure a creative exploration of how the programmes and technical expertise of the respective organizations can be used to reinforce the national strategy.

UNICEF has a unique dual responsibility within this framework for action. Our principal concern is to focus on the goals and strategies adopted by the Board in 1990, facilitating the work of others — primarily developing countries themselves — in interventions for the benefit of children. As the world's lead agency for children, we are also called upon to play a special role within the international community as lead advocate, facilitator and collaborator.

Your Secretariat looks forward to the Executive Board's guidance on how we can best fulfill these dual responsibilities.

Ensuring an adequate UNICEF

I suggest, Madam Chairperson, that in the work ahead, the area of concern most urgently requiring attention is how to strengthen our field offices in increasing UNICEF's contribution at the country level. To do this requires strengthening both our field offices and our support capacity at headquarters. Judging from the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, received just two weeks ago, the former is far better understood than the latter.

An agenda of priority concerns to more effectively support our field offices must include:

- increased capacity to rapidly recruit and replace staff;
- increased procurement and supply capacity;
- better staff training and development;
- increased capacity for the exchange of information and experience — through strengthened evaluation, monitoring and "TCDC" — among UNICEF staff and offices, and facilitated by UNICEF among government and other authorities in countries;

- more quality support materials for use in the field;
- improved cooperation with the National Committees for UNICEF;
- more extensive development of alliances, especially with leading NGOs (such as Rotary International), political and religious leaderships, and the media;
- strengthened external collaboration mechanisms, such as through the inter-agency Task Force on Child Survival and Development and with our sister agencies of the United Nations system;
- accelerating promising applied research to make our strategies more doable, such as a single-shot tetanus-toxoid vaccine, a measles vaccine useable at 4 months rather than 9 months, etc.;
- develop more explicit strategies in areas in which we have less effective experience, as illustrated by the Micro ("Super") Nutrients Consultation scheduled for 29-31 July in Montreal, the International Conference on Acute Respiratory Infections in Washington in mid-December, the Innocenti Consultation on Breastfeeding in July 1990, and the conference at UNICEF House in February 1991 which resulted in the establishment of the World Association of Breastfeeding Advocates (WABA);
- facilitate flexibility and speed of programme implementation through such mechanisms as the Inter-regional Fund for Programme Preparation, Promotion and Evaluation, the Infant Mortality Reserve, the Education fund, etc.

In this respect, the urgent need for strengthening UNICEF headquarters capacity was signalled by the Board of External Auditors in their report on UNICEF for the biennium ending 31 December 1989. The Auditors noted that:

"As a result of the increase in the work-load, the support required to ensure effective implementation of substantive policies and programmes was found to be inadequate. The problem of overload is even more severe in certain sections within the operational divisions.

"The present situation could be compounded if the envisaged strategies for the 1990s become operational. With the UNICEF system of decentralization and the resultant delegation of headquarters authority to the field offices, coupled with the flexibility associated with UNICEF operations, it is our belief that effective programme delivery will not be achieved without adequate monitoring and supervision from headquarters. In this regard, the need was felt to match the growth of UNICEF with adequate staff resources..." (E/ICEF/1990/3 paragraph 232)

These findings were consistent with our own assessment of the deteriorating capacity of a constrained headquarters to administer and support UNICEF's programme activities. To rectify this inadequacy, the Medium Term Plan which this Executive Board approved last year forecast:

"...some increases beyond mandatory adjustments and normal inflation...for the 1992-1993 biennium. These increases reflect new programme and operational priorities for the 1990s as well as the need to address the growing overload problem at headquarters, necessitating a strengthening of core capacity". (E/ICEF/1990/3 paragraph 232)

The Medium Term Plan shows that total programme expenditures had increased by 1990 by some 175 per cent over the levels of 1982, the first year of UNICEF biennium budgets. Discounting inflation, this is still about a doubling of real delivery in the field. The Medium Term Plan projects a further increase of programme expenditure of more than 25 per cent by 1993. During this same period, field posts have increased 61 per cent, from 2,511 in 1982 to 4,040 positions today, with a further 10 per cent increase projected by 1993. During this same period, support capacity at headquarters has grown at a far slower rate, by 23 per cent, from 615 to 755. See Attachment I.

A major theme of the ACABQ's advisory report is instead that UNICEF headquarters staff has been growing disproportionately in numbers and grade level to the growth of staff in the field. This conclusion however is not supported by the facts, and is inconsistent with the Board of Auditors' findings. Moreover, the ACABQ seems to suggest that growth at headquarters is at the expense of programme delivery in the field. Again, the Board of Auditors disagrees with this conclusion.

The Budget proposals for 1992-1993 reflect the need to -- modestly -- strengthen headquarters capacity, as forecast in the Medium Term Plan, and seek, again in the words of the Plan, "to balance programme and budgetary expenditure within a realistic income scenario to ensure adequate future liquidity provisions and an average annual growth rate for general resources programme expenditures that outpaces the growth of the administrative budget." (E/ICEF/1990/3 paragraph 234)

It is necessary, of course, to be concerned whether UNICEF's anticipated increase in income will materialize over the budget period through 1993. This is always an appropriate question for an organization solely dependent upon voluntary contributions, and in this we have to be guided in large part by past experience. The Medium Term Plan projects an average growth of total income of 5.2 per cent annually for the period 1991-94, well below the average for the past ten years. It is noteworthy that income in 1990 increased far more rapidly than projected, by US\$144 million, or 22 per cent in one year alone. Much of this increase was due to private sector fundraising, which is a strong indication of broad-based popular support for UNICEF activities. National Committees have earned in this respect a strong vote of appreciation. The general picture is a healthy one, and I believe that we can, in full responsibility, be confident that UNICEF projected income in the coming budgetary period will indeed materialize. It is for these reasons that your careful review of the budget proposals will be a main issue of this Board and your conclusion of crucial importance for the capacity of UNICEF in the 1990s.

Other issues requiring guidance

Madam Chairperson, in Part I of the Executive Director's Report I have called the attention of the Executive Board to several general issues affecting children which stand out from all those presently facing the world community as we seek to follow up on the goals and strategies for the 1990s. It would be most helpful if, in its general debate, the Board would provide comments and guidance on these issues. With a view to facilitating the debate, I will just briefly identify them.

1. How best to sustain and build on the success of universal child immunization. The achievement of UCI is not only a demonstration of what can be done when the world focusses on an achievable target, but it also provides a strategic framework for the tasks that lie ahead.
2. The need for restructuring national budgets and development assistance to assure the some US\$20 billion in additional resources that will be needed annually by mid-decade to achieve the goals for the 1990s, two-thirds of which will need to come from the developing countries themselves, and a third from external sources.
3. The need for a very special priority for Africa, which is not only the least developed of all regions, but is faced with staggering economic challenges from low commodity prices and an unresolved debt burden, with civil war, with drought, with AIDS. Special attention is called in this respect to the Bamako Initiative, which can provide an effective tool to sustainable primary health care, and to the devastating problem of AIDS.
4. The need for a breakthrough on the continuing burden of debt, particularly in Africa but also for much of Latin America.

We look forward to Board members' comments, advice and guidance on these issues.

I also wish to draw special attention to the issue of emergencies. With the current tragedy in Iraq very much before us, responding to emergency situations remains a major responsibility, with UNICEF working particularly closely in the field with the World Food Programme, which is responsible for bulk food deliveries, and the UNHCR, which is responsible once displaced persons cross borders and become classified as refugees, and with UNDRO for purposes of coordination. UNICEF's focus is on helping displaced children and families within countries and on providing non-food assistance.

There are two notable recent developments which would particularly benefit from the Board's consideration. First, there is increasing demand on UNICEF, which is indicated by the fact that income for emergency appeals totalled US\$57 million in 1989 and again in 1990, and that outstanding appeals for funds for 1991 already total US\$125 million for emergencies in Africa and \$39 million for emergencies in Iraq and adjoining border areas. This increase is particularly due to the welcome growing acceptance, as affirmed by the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action, that assistance should reach vulnerable groups trapped in conflict areas such as southern Sudan, the interior of Angola, northeastern Ethiopia, and now in Iraq. It is in this increasingly accepted concept that all parties now agree in principle to providing

assistance to those seeking to flee Iraq who are trapped in the mountains: The challenge is to reach agreement on just how to do it, and on delivering supplies to these exceedingly remote and difficult mountainous areas. UNICEF is now playing an active supporting role inside Iraq and in the border areas, working closely with Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan following his leadership designation by the Secretary-General in mid-April.

The Gulf crisis has very much obscured the fact that significant parts of Africa are now facing disaster on a scale comparable to that of 1984-1985, notably in the Horn of Africa and in the Sudan, in Angola and Mozambique, and in Liberia and adjoining border areas. Here, too, we particularly seek the advice and guidance of the Executive Board.

Castles in the sky

Madam Chairperson, never before in history has the programme of a social movement been so clearly and definitively enumerated as is the agenda for children for the decade of the 1990s. Never before has a movement been as well positioned as is this movement for children -- rooted firmly in a universal codification of expectations ... with detailed strategies and proven methods developed by scores of international and national organizations and institutions ... and enjoying the public commitment and engagement of leaders at the highest levels of virtually all nations. And never before in modern history has the world's political climate been so conducive to constructive, cooperative action for social benefit.

Some sceptics may say that the actions of this Executive Board over recent years -- in launching the UCI effort ... in promoting the Convention ... in developing ambitious goals and strategies for children for the 1990s ... in endorsing and making possible the World Summit for Children -- have created unrealizable expectations for children. Again, I do not believe that the facts support this conclusion. The 3.5 million children who didn't die last year alone because of progress in UCI and ORT is a solid accomplishment indeed. It is an accomplishment born of ambitious presumptions and nurtured by steadfast progress and measurable successes.

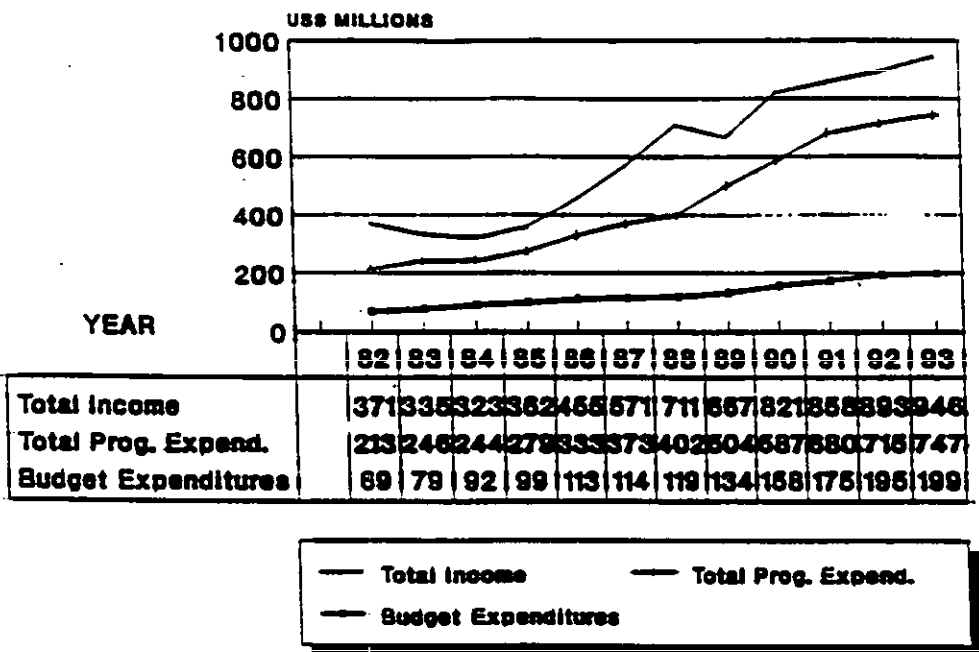
If that progress and solid accomplishment feeds demand for still more effort, still more determination ... then the promises the world has made to children are indeed not beyond reach. Great progress begins with high expectations. Fulfilling them requires, of course, sustained effort, for promises are not kept by ambition alone. Planning that effort -- and ensuring that this organization has the resources, the skills and the tools to carry it forward -- is the business of this Board session.

Henry David Thoreau knew what we were about when he offered this advice:

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

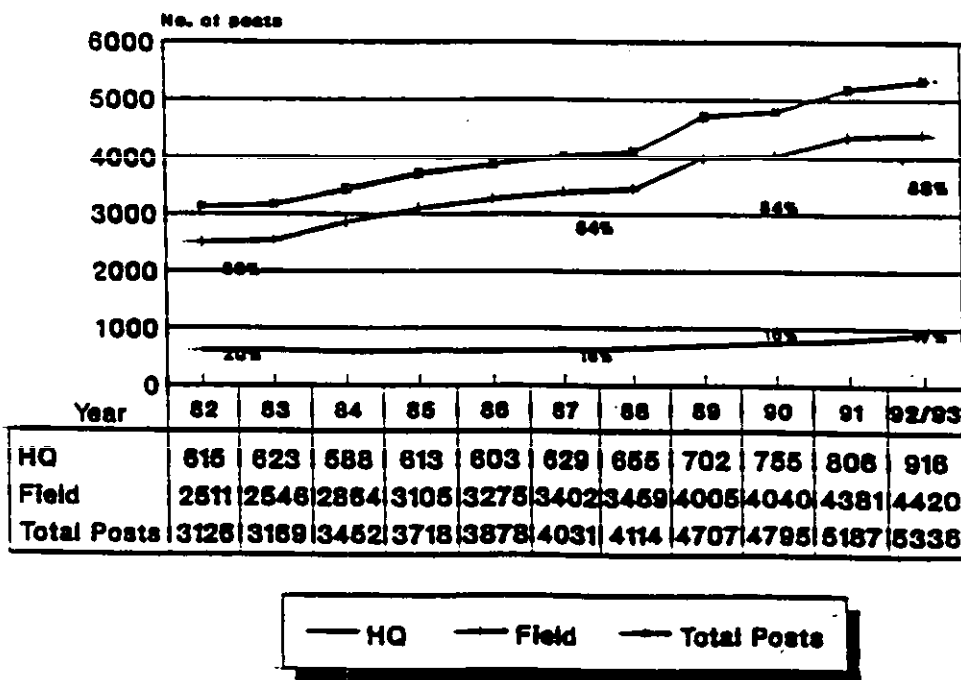
Putting solid foundations under the great castles which our organization helped create in 1990 is the challenge before this Executive Board, and the Secretariat pledges every assistance in the days ahead.

**TREND ANALYSIS
INCOME & EXPENDITURE**



82-90 Actual/91-93 Estimated for Inc/Exp

**TREND ANALYSIS
TOTAL POSTS HQ VS FIELD**



1982-90 actual/1991-93 proposed