

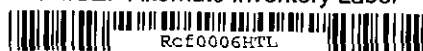
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at the  
Close of the 1991 Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York  
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FOR INFORMATION

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board  
1991 session

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

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New York - 3 May 1991

Madam Chairperson,  
distinguished Members of the Board,  
and colleagues:

In a few minutes, Madam Chairperson, you will declare adjourned this first "post-Summit" session of UNICEF's Executive Board. For this Board, this has been the session at which "the real work begins", to draw upon Prime Minister Mulroney's challenging words at the World Summit. This was the session at which we had to ensure that UNICEF had the operational direction and the capacity to take full advantage of the leverage for children created by the World Summit and the other momentous developments for children of the past year. This was the session at which we had to build firm foundations beneath the great castles we had created in the sky.

But, if I may say so, we also created a new castle during these two weeks. Under the good leadership of our Chairperson — and her gentle insistence — we set what must surely be a new precedent for the United Nations: that meetings can begin on time! UNICEF has always been a pioneer, but not even I would have ever been so optimistic as to think we could establish this new practice...and, in so doing, have "created" at least an additional full day — and probably as much as two — for the Board's work. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Your Secretariat came to you, distinguished delegates, with proposals on how we should fulfill the responsibility of carrying forward the Summit goals and commitments. We came to you with issues and questions for which we needed policy guidance or clarification. We came to you with plans and strategies for which we needed your endorsement and support. We came to you with programme commitments for which we needed your approval. And we came to you with budget and staffing proposals, for which we needed your authorization.

Together, these proposals would create our foundations beneath the castles for the several years ahead.

#### Sharpening efficiency

Distinguished delegates, you have given us guidance on policy; you have given your endorsement on plans and your approval on commitments. And you gave us your authorization on most of the Budget request.

It would not be honest for me to say that the issues which emerged on the Budget and staffing were insignificant ... that the disagreements which we encountered were not important. We would not have made the proposals we made if we did not think that they were necessary to our full effectiveness in carrying forward the work which you have assigned us for the decade ahead. I believe our proposals were the product of serious and hard consideration; that they reflected a genuine commitment to maximum management and operational efficiency and prudent budgeting; and that they represented important elements in the quality of our capacity for the 1990s.

On certain specific and important issues, members of the Board disagreed. You did not see them as essential. You did not see them as the right direction at this time. You did not approve them.

That is not just your prerogative; it is your responsibility. If you do not agree that an expenditure is absolutely necessary to the effectiveness of this Organization and the delivery of our programme, then you ought not to approve it. Although I regret that we of the Secretariat were not more effective in presenting the proposals to you ... in explaining our reasoning and their necessity ... and in convincing you of their correctness, the decisions have been taken, and we will carry them forward. We will do the jobs you have tasked us to do together for children to the very best of our ability.

While I am concerned that certain dimensions of the tone of this Board session — and particularly certain specific items which you have addressed and instructed us upon — cross the line from policy and management guidance to what I consider micro-management, surely as in mandating redeployment to fill one additional post in Geneva, we take the reluctance and reservations on the Budget and staffing proposals which you expressed and legislated as a challenge for us to innovate, to streamline, to do more with less. The reviews you have asked us to undertake are opportunities to find ways of doing our work more efficiently.

Let me add one specific comment at this point. During the break before starting this evening session, two delegates strongly urged me to respond to the comments of the Chairman of the ACABQ and his suggestion to the Administration and Finance Committee that somehow UNICEF had acted improperly in lobbying the Governments of the ACABQ staff members in relation to UNICEF's budget proposals. I was naturally disturbed by any suggestion of lack of good faith of UNICEF's secretariat. I discussed it with the Chairman of ACABQ that afternoon. He confirmed that he had no evidence of any impropriety of UNICEF staff lobbying governments before the ACABQ acted on the biennium budget proposals before the Executive Board. He did however express concern about reports of lobbying in 1990 with respect to the Summit budget proposals. On a different basis he did express his unhappiness about UNICEF actions in doing a detailed internal written analysis of the comments and recommendations of the ACABQ report after it was issued and in explaining to Board delegations before the start of the Executive Board, UNICEF responses to various comments and recommendations of the ACABQ Report. I consider both of these latter actions to be legitimate, and will be discussing UNICEF-ACABQ concerns further with the Chairman. We obviously need to be in a position of mutual respect.

#### Substantive guidance

During this session of the Executive Board you have passed a record number of resolutions -- some 18 in the programme area and a half-dozen in administration and finance. These resolutions provide very useful guidance to your Secretariat. They will help us to focus our work in certain areas, intensify it in others, and respond better to needs in still others.

In the case of Africa, you have asked us to support the efforts of the African countries to examine their long-term resource requirements for implementing the goals and strategies for the 1990s, and you have asked us to intensify our support to the Bamako Initiative.

In Latin America, among other things, you have asked us to respond, together with WHO, to the terrible cholera epidemic that is sweeping across the continent.

In the Middle East, you have asked us to accelerate programme implementation to meet the special needs of children and families most affected by the Gulf crisis.

With regard to Central and Eastern Europe, the Board has provided helpful guidance to the Secretariat in responding in a modest but meaningful way, to the difficult situation of children in that part of the world. We have also had a useful resolution on Children in Chernobyl.

Asia, where the greatest number of the world's poor live today, will receive our continuing attention. In this connection, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that UNICEF is already responding -- on the ground -- to the catastrophe in Bangladesh. Our field staff are working in close coordination with other United Nations Agencies based in Bangladesh and under the overall coordination of the Government of Bangladesh. In response to the urgent appeals we have received for immediate action to save the lives

of many tens of thousands of people in the affected areas, I released, last night, US\$1 million from the Executive Director's Emergency Reserve -- which I am hoping will be replenished through special contributions over the next days and weeks. Also last night I launched an appeal for US\$5 million for the victims of the cyclone. We are in touch with UNDR0. As our Chairperson reminded us in her opening statement, children cannot wait. The victims in Bangladesh -- especially the children -- cannot wait, and so we took immediate action to save and restore lives. In subsequent stages of relief and rehabilitation we will closely coordinate with our sister agencies in the humanitarian relief system.

It is especially tragic that in this era of such great promise and opportunity for children, the world is experiencing greater and more widespread human suffering than at perhaps any time since World War II. Perhaps 100,000 or more have died in Bangladesh ... tens of thousands of Kurds have died in their displacement, and millions of people throughout the Middle East and elsewhere have suffered from the destruction and disruption of the Gulf crisis ... over a 1,000 people have died from cholera in Latin America in an epidemic that further undermines vulnerable economies ... and millions are in immediate peril from famine -- of natural and man-made origins -- in Africa. We are challenged with even greater urgency and magnitude than normally. Happily, there are also positive developments, even in the midst of calamity. In Angola, in South Africa, in Central America, the receding of political conflict is enabling cooperative attention to the suffering of the innocent and vulnerable. This is a trend that we are determined to help extend. We will do our best to live up to the challenge and the new opportunities, working in close collaboration with concerned international, national and non-governmental agencies.

The resolution you adopted on the Convention on the Rights of the Child enables us all to intensify our efforts on behalf of children in circumstances of greatest risk and to discharge our global responsibilities under this historic "magna carta" for children.

In line with the resolution you approved on breastfeeding, we can intensify our efforts, in collaboration with WHO, to promote and support breastfeeding and the goals and strategies outlined in the Innocenti Declaration.

The guidance you have given us in your resolution on the Children's Vaccine Initiative constitutes a most relevant and appropriate follow-up to the success of Universal Child Immunization. The support which you have authorized will help UNICEF in its collaboration with WHO and others, which we hope will lead to major breakthroughs in the development of new and improved types of vaccines. Just in today's newspapers we learned of such a prospective breakthrough in combating malaria which takes the lives of more than one million children annually.

I am also particularly gratified to report that UNICEF and the Government of Italy have just this afternoon signed the agreement to extend for another three years our cooperation for the work of the Innocenti Child Development Center in Florence as agreed by the Executive Board.

Most of the resolutions approved during this session have implications for the members of this Board, as well as for the Secretariat. They also include appeals to donor countries to provide increased support for achieving the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s which you approved last year and which were later endorsed by the World Summit for Children. Providing such support was one of the key commitments agreed to at the World Summit.

Governments, National Committees and NGOs will, of course, want to look carefully at the Proposals for Supplementary Funding contained in our annual "sales book", which is now available. These are the many projects which we ought to do, and which would benefit many tens of million children and women, but which we cannot do without extra support. I commend them to your consideration.

Resolutions are also directed to the developing countries themselves, who are called upon to re-examine their national policies, budget allocations and priorities, as part of their commitments flowing from the Summit Plan of Action.

Madam Chairperson, all of us have a vital part to play in follow-up to the strategies set forth last year by this Executive Board and endorsed and magnified by the world's first global summit. I appeal to all of us as we return to our capitals and our homes to play our part, whether as developing countries, donors or international agencies.

Taken together, these resolutions give us all our marching orders -- donors, developing nations and the Secretariat in collaboration with the entire United Nations system. I am grateful to this Board for providing us with guidance and encouragement.

With appreciation and affection

Madam Chairperson, since this has been our first regular meeting since the coming into force of The Convention and the World Summit for Children, I want to take this opportunity to warmly thank members of the Executive Board for providing critical guidance and support, from the very outset, leading to the Convention and the Summit's success.

Distinguished delegates, I would like to pay special tribute to UNICEF's staff at large -- to each and every staff member in each and every office and posting the Organization has around the globe. I used the word "team" before to describe the close partnership that brought off the World Summit for Children, but in the case of UNICEF staff I think the word "family" is more appropriate. Without for a minute abandoning or neglecting their normal, substantial workloads, the members of this remarkable international family -- at Headquarters or in the field, directly or indirectly -- helped bring about the World Conference on Education for All, the early ratifications of the Convention, the Breastfeeding Consultation at Innocenti, achievement of Universal Child Immunization and the World Summit along with its formidable in-country preparatory process and the impressive social mobilization that accompanied it in almost every country. In so doing, they displayed in 1990 the kind of devotion, mutual support and spirit of sacrifice normally

associated with families, but rarely found in far-flung bureaucracies. I am convinced that this is because working for UNICEF is more like fighting for a cause than just holding a job or pursuing a career.

While it is impossible to recognize all of our "family members" individually, I would like to briefly single out the contribution of several staff members who have retired since we last met in regular session or who are about to retire. They, and others whose names and special achievements time does not permit me to mention here today, deserve our heartfelt gratitude.

Salomon Arazi of France has retired from our Greeting Card Operation in Geneva. Mr. Arazi started with UNICEF in 1958 -- 33 years ago!

Last October saw the retirement of Marcello Bevacqua, who had served as UNICEF's Special Representative in Cambodia since 1987. A national of Sweden, he joined the organization in 1976.

Erich Buenger, a national of the Federal Republic of Germany, joined UNICEF in 1960 as Assistant Auditor in the Office of Internal Audit. Following several promotions, he was designated Director of that office in 1974. In 1977, he became Associate Director, Organization and Management in the Office of the Executive Director and in 1981, Executive Secretary. He then served, successively, as Director, Organization and Management, and Director for Operational Planning, and in 1983 became Director, Division of Management, Organization and Administration. In 1984 he again assumed the position of Director, Office of Internal Audit, until December of last year, when he was appointed Director, Special Assignments, a post he will continue to occupy until retiring later this year...a 30-year veteran!

Also retiring soon is Bertram Collins, a national of Guyana who joined the UN system in 1969 and began his UNICEF career on inter-agency transfer as Representative in Hanoi. He became Director of the Personnel Division at Headquarters in 1980. Three years later, he became Regional Director for West and Central Africa, serving in Abidjan until 1988. After returning to New York, Mr. Collins became Special Assistant to the Director of the Programme Division assigned to the United Nations Programme for African Economic Recovery and Development, in which capacity he continues to serve.

Another distinguished 1990 retiree was Gilbert Grunitsky, a national of Togo who joined UNICEF as Programme Officer in Abidjan in 1975.

Arthur Porter, an American, who ably served the organization beginning in 1974, specializing in the critical area of supplies.

Another water supply expert, Stevan Radojicic, retired last November. A Yugoslav national, he came on board in 1974.

Padamjit Singh of India retired from GCO in September. Mr. Singh joined the UN system in 1958 and came to UNICEF in 1977.

...and friends departed

We mourn the death in January of this year of Daniel Carini, another GCO stalwart. Mr. Carini, a Swiss national, started with GCO, Geneva, as Production Assistant in 1973. After several promotions he became, in 1980, Production Planning Manager, serving in that capacity until he fell ill last winter.

We also lost our colleague Simon Spivac, who died last August after a prolonged illness, having served UNICEF with devotion since 1970. He started as an editorial assistant in the Paris office and served, successively, as Programme Officer in Vietnam, Zaire, Congo, Thailand, Cambodia and Headquarters. He was appointed Development Education Officer in Geneva in 1988 and, a year later, Project Officer for emergencies, in which capacity he served until his death.

We also miss our friend Mr. Akio Yamashita, Executive Director of the Japanese Committee for UNICEF, who passed away a month ago in Tokyo. He joined the Japanese Committee for UNICEF in 1984 and was appointed Secretary-General in 1988 and Executive Director in 1991. Mr. Yamashita used to say that, being childless, he wanted to dedicate his life to UNICEF and the cause of children - and he did.

Outstanding performances

Madam Chairperson and members of the Board, last year we started a new "tradition" in this closing statement. I announced the first recipient of the new UNICEF Staff Awards. Today I would like to announce the recipients of the 1991 honours, as nominated by their colleagues and peers and selected by a process involving management and staff.

The 1991 Staff Award honourees are:

Mr. Bernard Gilbert, Senior Project Officer for Water and Sanitation in Hanoi, for his outstanding performance in increasing substantially the coverage of the water and sanitation programme in Viet Nam.

Mr. Martin Murama, Logistics Officer in our Dakar, Senegal office, who has been the driving force behind the EPI acceleration in Senegal and is largely responsible for the present remarkable coverage.

Mr. Kidar Nath, Gardener in our New Delhi office, for his total dedication, commitment and pride in his work.

Mr. Rudolph Hoffmann, Deputy Director of the Geneva Office. For his total dedication and competence which effectively contributed to improving the overall management of the office. He has always been a reliable friend and counsellor to all his colleagues.



Ms. Asdghik Andonian, Administrative and Finance Assistant in our Baghdad Office, for her bravery, leadership, stamina and infectious high morale displayed under extreme and prolonged hardship conditions during the Gulf crisis. She kept the flag of UNICEF -- and, indeed, the United Nations flag -- flying in Baghdad. Following the evacuation of the Representative, she held the national staff together, organized food distribution, and nurtured relations with government counterparts. Ms. Andonian has been a true hero in the finest tradition of UNICEF staff in emergency situations.

All the staff of Bogra Zone Office in Bangladesh, for their outstanding work in achieving UCI by 1990 in Rajshahi division with its population of more than 25 million people. Starting with 2 percent coverage in 1985, 85 percent of Rajshahi's children are now protected with DPT2, 97 percent with BCG, and 82 percent with measles vaccination. Most importantly, PHC services are highly integrated into the EPI programme.

And lastly, Mr. Michael Shower, Counsellor to the Executive Director. For his dedication and commitment to UNICEF goals and his creativity and outstanding achievements through the years - most recently for his stalwart efforts and many sleepless nights leading up to the historic World Summit for Children for which he was the Executive Secretary. The Personal Representatives of the Heads of State/Government of many countries, including the six initiators, have conveyed to me their warm appreciation for Michael's tireless efforts. His lifelong dedication to the United Nations and world betterment is indicated by the story of 30 years ago in his hometown of St. Louis when his thoughtful correspondence on the importance of the United Nations led the Mayor to appointing him as Chairman for U.N. Day - only to later discover that Michael Shower was just 12 years old!

I ask the members of the Board to join me and my colleagues in saluting the great efforts and dedication of these outstanding members of an outstanding family of international civil servants.

#### Raising the foundations up

Madam Chairperson, I return again to this imagery of great castles built high in the sky ... of noble ideals set forth in the vision of our human community to work for the benefit of children. I reminded us, as this Board began, of Henry David Thoreau's advice that the task now is to build foundations under them. Madam Chairperson, I am heartened by the work of this Board in these two weeks. The Board had a choice in creating proper foundations: whether to pull the castles down to earth, or to raise the ground up to meet them. On the essential work -- on the policy guidance, on our programme commitments, and on our Budget as a whole -- you have wisely built the foundations up to the sky.