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Message from Mr. James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
for the  
Children's Rights Exhibit  
Sponsored by  
The Soka Gakkai Women's Peace Committee

July 1991



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This excellent exhibit sponsored by the Women's Peace Committee of Soka Gakkai could not be more opportune and relevant. The Convention on the Rights of the Child codifies, for the first time, the broad range of rights to which children are entitled -- civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights -- and details society's responsibilities to ensure the survival, protection and development of the young. The Convention's holistic view of children underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to tackling the problems affecting children -- addressing not only their direct but their underlying causes.

The Convention broke all speed records when it entered into force as international law, on 2 September 1990, only eight months after approval by the U.N. General Assembly. More than 90 countries from all corners of the world have become States Parties to the Convention, and close to 60 others are actively considering ratification. Now the legal and ethical precepts of the Convention must "enter into force" in the daily practice of nations, communities, families and individuals. It will take a great deal of public education, advocacy, social mobilization and re-structuring of priorities -- and initiatives along the lines of this exhibit -- to make this happen.

The first major step -- a global step -- toward implementing the Convention was the World Summit for Children, held at UN Headquarters on 30 September 1990. Leaders from 159 countries -- 71 of them heads of state or government, including Japan's Prime Minister Kaifu -- representing 99 per cent of the world's population, took part. They embraced and gave action-oriented substance to the Convention's central principle: that society should give "first call" to children's essential needs in good and bad times alike.

Exhibits such as this one will help keep the promise of the World Summit for Children -- that children's right to have their needs taken care of first will be honoured by the adults of this world. Soka Gakkai and its members in Japan and over 100 countries are making a vital connection between their central focus -- peace -- and the well-being of children: there can be no real peace if children's needs are not met and those needs cannot be met without peace.

UNICEF congratulates and thanks Soka Gakkai and all those who worked so hard to organize this splendid, eye-opening exhibit.

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