

File Sub: CF/EXD/SP/1991-0045

Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly

New York
7 November 1991



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Ref006HUK

Item # **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/1998-02260**

EXR/Code: **CF/EXD/SP/1991-0045**

Second Committee to UN General Assembly . Statement by Mr
Date Label Printed 20-Aug-2002

cover + 6 pp + 0/6



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/1991-0045

**Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director
of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly**

New York - 7 November 1991

Mr. Chairman,

We meet at a time of contradictions. To a reasonable observer, there may well be serious grounds for pessimism along with serious grounds for optimism.

On the negative side, we are well into more than ten years of severe economic and human difficulties for far too many. Furthermore, the short term prospects for the world economy do not look promising, and in the long term there are many questions as to whether international commitment to development will be sustained and strengthened.

On the optimistic side, we have seen how effective multilateral action can be when an international coalition is mobilized around achievable consensus goals. We have a number of examples in the political sphere, but we have also seen some significant, although limited, examples in the development sphere. As the delegates know well, the successes being achieved for child survival and development are one positive set of examples. Thus, the universal child immunization effort is now saving the lives of more than three million children a year and should soon be saving more than four million children a year as it moves toward the global eradication of polio. It is the largest peace time collaborative effort in history and has seen the effective collaboration of WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank, UNDP, many bilateral aid programmes, including notably those of the U.S., Italy, Canada, Sweden, France, Japan, Norway and the U.K., and scores of national and international NGOs, including notably the Rockefeller Foundation and the Rotary International, which have raised some \$300 million. Most importantly it is led by the governments of more than 140 developing countries. In a similar vein, I believe the emerging consensus around human development holds much promise.

The challenge before us requires that we move decisively to apply the lessons of both the negative and positive experience. At the international level, one of the largest and most readily accessible tools available is the operational activities of the UN system. But the focus of these efforts must be moved from narrow and inflexible project goals to a catalyst in support of a mobilization that is far larger and more concerted. To achieve this we need a clear set of achievable common objectives.

cover + 6pp + 8b

Goals and Strategies for the 1990s

A number of consensus strategies have emerged to help meet the challenges before us. Last year, after much deliberation, this body approved the International Development Strategy for the Fourth Development Decade. Although it provides only broad guidelines, the Strategy and the effort to adapt it to country level efforts offer an important opportunity to mobilize international support to national development objectives. As many delegates are aware, a detailed agency-by-agency summary of efforts to operationalize the IDS was prepared by the ACC committee on operational activities (CCSQ/OPS), which was then chaired by UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director (Programmes), Dr. Richard Jolly.

In addition, there are a number of related international initiatives that can usefully be considered part of this effort. The Programme of Action of the Least Developed Countries Conference, the emerging international consensus around human development, the work being done by the World Bank to follow up on its 1990 report on poverty...all of these represent valuable elements of an emerging international consensus to restore priority to long term economic and human development objectives.

While we have had some success at defining common strategies and mobilizing support at the international level, we must now move this effort forward to the country level. Last month the Secretary-General, joined by the Director-General of WHO and myself, announced the achievement of Universal Child Immunization. I believe this illustrates how much can be achieved by focusing on country level action. Teams from the UN system, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, should be actively seeking to help support government efforts to develop and achieve national strategies for the 1990s. I would strongly urge that such efforts be a priority objective of the UN system, under the leadership of the Director-General, and drawing heavily on the Resident Coordinator system.

World Summit for Children

Mr. Chairman,

I have been urging that we forge an international consensus in support of an all-out mobilization by national governments at the country level. Much of this is drawn from our positive experience with child survival and development which is now moving to a new level of mobilization as a result of the commitments made during the World Summit for Children. It is easy to focus on some of the more spectacular elements of the Summit - with 71 Heads of State or Government, it was the largest such meeting in history, as well as the first ever North-South, East-West Summit. But I call your attention to the ambitious yet achievable Declaration and detailed Plan of Action which have now been signed by 126 Heads of State or Government.

Seven major goals to be achieved by the year 2000 were endorsed by the Summit:

- Reduction of under-five child mortality rates by one-third from 1990 levels or to a level of 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is the greater reduction.
- Reduction of maternal mortality rates to half of 1990 levels.
- Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-five children by one half of 1990 levels.
- The achievement of universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal.
- The achievement of universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 percent of primary school age children.
- Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy.
- Protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly in situations of armed conflicts.

These seven umbrella goals encompass a broader list of some 20 specific targets. Along with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, they represent a comprehensive programme for deep-seated change.

These commitments build upon a broad range of processes and earlier agreements. From within the UN system, 18 organizations made specific contributions. Most were developed in an intensive process of government, non-government and expert discussion at the regional level. All are drawn from a wide range of national policy and experience. In short, the Summit was a "bottom-up process" that drew content and strength from a multitude of sources and experience.

The process that helped lead to the ideas that emerged from the World Summit is critical for the implementation of the commitments made. The broad based nature of the preparatory process will make it possible to mobilize grass roots community groups, local level governments, national governments, non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and the entire range of the UN system and other international organizations.

Several critical elements of this process are already well underway. Most importantly, as we meet, the vast majority of the member states of the United Nations are drawing up detailed National Programmes of Action to implement their government's commitment to achieving these goals for children and development in the 1990s. Of course, most of these Programmes come from the developing countries, but a large number of developed countries have also indicated that they too are preparing such Programmes of Action as part of their Summit commitment. By the end of 1991 some 100 National Programmes of Action are

expected to be completed with more to be finished shortly thereafter.

Likewise, regional and sub-regional efforts are also underway. In June at the OAU Summit, a Resolution was passed on implementing the Decade of the African Child, including support for World Summit for Children processes. The OAU has also decided to convene an international donors' meeting for African children in 1992. Likewise, in July at the Ibero-American Summit, the 23 leaders also renewed their pledge to draft National Programmes of Action and at the recent Commonwealth Summit there was a strong commitment to the achievement of the goals. The World Summit follow-up will figure prominently on the agendas of Summits being held by the Central American Governments, and by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in the next four weeks.

I should also point out that in accordance with the Resolution passed by this Committee last year, the Secretary-General has personally written the Executive Heads of all relevant UN agencies so as to help continue the necessary broad base of involvement. Likewise, the Director-General has written the Resident Coordinators requesting their active support to governments. As called for in the Resolution, next year this Committee will review the progress made in the implementation of the Summit commitments, including the response of the UN system.

Needless to say, in the meantime, the members of this Committee must play an important leadership role. The nature of this involvement will vary. In some cases, it will be political support. In other cases, we must place emphasis on spreading knowledge and changed behaviour. In addition, increased resources will be required in the next several years from both domestic and external sources to achieve these ambitious yet "double" goals. These may rise to an additional \$20 billion annually by mid-decade. Possibly one-third of this amount will need to come from external assistance, channelled through both multilateral and bilateral assistance from increased ODA, in some combination of "additionality" or reallocations. As the Summit declared, "the financial resources required are modest in relation to the great achievements that beckon". Modest as the increased financial resource requirements may be, I should note, however, that they will require greater support from many donor governments than was shown at the pledging session for the voluntary funded organisations, where the 4 to 5% average increases barely kept up with inflation.

Mobilizing the UN system for the 1990s

Ambitious efforts to provide leadership in restoring priority to development efforts require similarly strong efforts to ensure an effective coherence to the UN system. Much of what I have discussed are concrete examples of how the UN system can give real meaning to the principles set forth in Resolution 44/211. However, we will need to move forward on a number of more internal questions if we are to have the necessary tools.

One such issue is effective system-wide reviews of the UN system by governments, in

their governing capacity. This is a topic currently under active discussion and I believe we have all been heartened by the efforts underway to strengthen the role of ECOSOC.

For a number of years, in my statements to this Committee and to ECOSOC, I have urged that we strengthen the coordinating and leadership role of ECOSOC in operational activities. Many of the priority issues before us, including those I have just discussed, require policy leadership across a broad range of UN organizations and Specialized Agencies.

If we are to achieve the kind of widespread mobilization that I believe is necessary, we must find new ways to ensure that effective system-wide guidance is provided by governments. Under the Charter, clearly ECOSOC and this Committee have key roles to play. I urge that as part of the various reviews you are now undertaking, you ensure that adequate provisions are made so that ECOSOC and the General Assembly are able to provide the kind of leadership and guidance for operational activities that we all agree the current international situation calls for.

Another critical issue, much emphasised by 44/211, is the "programme approach" - an issue intimately linked with the need to define common goals and objectives. To UNICEF, a programme approach means the provision of support not through a succession of separate externally supported projects, but through the support of long term country programmes whose focus is on a defined range of national goals and objectives. This approach shifts the focus to results. It also calls for a more flexible response to governments needs. And it requires a flexible blend of technical assistance, capital equipment, supplies and even recurrent costs. In my view, moving the UN system from a project to a programme basis will be a critical element of the improved flexibility and effectiveness that will be necessary to meet the goals of the 1990s.

Another vital issue is the strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system. I believe that the major overhaul undertaken over the last year by CCSQ/OPS is a significant step forward. We will need to continue to refine the training and policy development work that has now been established. Above all, we must ensure that the provisions for more effective substantive interaction among UN agencies at the country level are implemented. For example, we should move quickly to form the country level teams focused on specific themes, under the overall leadership of the Resident Coordinator and chaired by the organization or individual best suited to the task.

As UNICEF has repeatedly said to this body, to ECOSOC and to our Executive Board, I believe that these measures should be complemented by monitorable standards of common achievement for Resident Coordinators and other field staff. There must be regular (perhaps monthly) programme-oriented meetings, convened by the Resident Coordinators, where opportunities for substantive collaboration are collectively reviewed. The results and progress of these meetings should be reported regularly to Headquarters, in a simple spreadsheet-like manner, so that progress can be monitored on a country-by-country basis, by senior-level staff at Headquarters.

As the report of the Director-General points out, progress has also been made on a number of other issues such as collaboration in programme processes, the harmonization of programme cycles around the government's own planning cycle, efforts to make the UN system's procedures more "user-friendly", and the establishment of common premises. UNICEF has actively supported the progress being made and will most actively encourage continued and accelerated efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

In many ways the 1990s will be a "window of opportunity" for human progress and for strengthening the operational activities of the UN system. As I have discussed, there are many achievable proposals and processes before us which can help ensure that this opportunity is seized. Sadly, there are also negative trends which will overtake us if we do not seize these opportunities and strengthen action through the UN system. Never before has the work of this Committee and its discussions of operational activities been more critical. We look forward to your leadership and guidance in this key moment. For our part, you can count on UNICEF's wholehearted commitment to the implementation of your decisions.