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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
for the inaugural issue of
Global Child Health News

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The publication of Global Child Health News is the latest in a series of welcome indications that children's survival, development and protection is being given higher priority around the globe. At long last -- if unevenly -- the world is coming to view the mass death of children from largely preventable and treatable causes as an unacceptable throwback to more primitive times, and its persistence as a moral indictment of contemporary civilization. Innovative in concept and design, Global Child Health News is especially welcome because it will help bridge the communication gap and shorten the lag-time between health research and its application in order to save and improve children's lives.

We need publications such as this one to help health professionals and the concerned public keep tabs on efforts being made around the world toward reaching the year 2000 goals set at the September 1990 World Summit for Children. If these goals are met by the year 2000, the lives of some 50 million children will be saved, a similar number will be spared life-long disabilities, and many millions more will enjoy a substantially superior quality of life than what they experience today. Global Child Health News is also a good way of putting the world's leaders on notice that their progress (or lack of it) will be closely monitored and disseminated among the world's public health professionals, paediatricians and human development advocates -- in short, that they will be held accountable for the promises they made to the world's young two years ago.

The great challenge of our times is to make available to the world's over one billion poor the health technologies and knowledge we take for granted in the industrial countries -- advances that have already greatly extended life expectancy and lowered child mortality rates in much of the world. Our further challenge is to do this at low cost, in ways that empower people to help themselves and spur a participatory development process that is sustainable and in harmony with the environment.

The achievement of the 1990 goal of Universal Child Immunization (UCI) -- namely, the immunization of 80 per cent of the world's under-one-year-olds with vaccines to prevent the six major child-killer diseases -- serves as a model and inspiration

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for further progress. The four-fold increase in vaccine coverage we have obtained has already saved the lives of some 15 million children -- now three million per year. This was accomplished, essentially, by mobilizing and involving people in all walks of life and at all levels of society; by using every available channel of communication -- modern and traditional -- to carry the immunization message, and by mounting the largest global collaboration ever organized in peacetime.

As we strive to increase immunization coverage to 90 per cent by the year 2000 ... as we seek new and improved vaccines to meet the rigorous delivery requirements of the developing world and to vanquish additional diseases, we can and must use the UCI experience, structures and networks to strengthen the broader primary health care system, to deliver additional services and interventions that children and their mothers desperately need. I am convinced that we can make the goal of primary health care for all children by the year 2000 a reality.

We at UNICEF are pleased to greet this new publication as part of the Grand Alliance for Children and urge its readers to join us in helping to "keep the promise" to the world's children.