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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
on the occasion of
the Observation of United Nations Day in Mauritius

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The end of the cold war, the resolution of several prolonged regional and civil conflicts, and the upsurge of democracy in much of the world have combined to transform international life and turn the 1990s into a rare "window of opportunity" for making accelerated progress on a wide range of social, economic and political fronts. At the same time, the world is experiencing a proliferation of civil conflicts and natural disasters that threaten to shut this "window" that opens on a better future for all. The United Nations, which has seen its membership expand and has been greatly strengthened as a result of the changes of recent years, is today in a better position than ever to fulfill the noble and constructive roles envisaged for it in the Charter. True global cooperation is not only becoming possible -- it is becoming **imperative** as humankind faces unprecedented political, economic, social and environmental challenges on the threshold of the 21st century and the third millennium.

The decade of the 1990s is a "window of opportunity" for the world's children. The entry into force, in 1990, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was a major step toward giving children everywhere a "first call" on society's resources, in good times and bad times, in war or peacetime. For the first time, the international community has agreed that children's essential needs are, in fact, **rights** and the Convention codifies the adult world's responsibilities for meeting them. The Republic of Mauritius was among the first African nations to become, through accession, a State Party to the Convention, indicating the seriousness with which the Government regards the needs of its children.

Also in 1990, the historic World Summit for Children took place -- the first global gathering of leaders from East and West, North and South -- placing children higher than ever before on the political agenda. We all must now respond to the challenge contained in the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action, calling for concerted national action and international cooperation to achieve a series of ambitious, yet realistic goals for the survival, protection and development of children. As a signatory to those two documents, the Government of Mauritius made a commitment to prepare a National Programme of Action (NPA) adapting the global goals to national circumstances. We are encouraged that the NPA preparation process is underway in Mauritius and, together with the rest of the U.N. system, we pledge our full cooperation in

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this endeavour and the critical implementation process. At the critically-important International Conference for Assistance to African Children, to be held in Dakar in November under OAU sponsorship, the world community will have an opportunity to help Africa continue helping itself in the struggle for human development.

Mauritius has made rapid economic and social progress in recent years, never forgetting that children are its most precious resource. By building on past successes and mobilizing all sectors of society, Mauritius can realistically hope to achieve all the major goals adopted at the World Summit for Children. UNICEF is pleased to be part of this movement together with all our sister United Nations agencies and the many allies who are actively participating in efforts for a brighter future for all Mauritian children.