
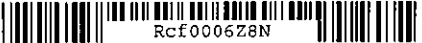


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Statement by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the
United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities

New York
4 November 1992

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Mr. President, may I compliment you for the skillful way in which you have conducted this Pledging Conference, and give my thanks to the Bureau for its effective assistance. I would like to thank all those governments which have commented favorably on UN operational activities and UNICEF's work. We trust that we can live up to your high expectations -- we need your unwavering support.

The 62 pledges made to UNICEF at this Conference total US\$ 151 million. So far, this is an encouraging 15 per cent increase over last year's income from the same donors, although UNICEF's largest General Resources donor -- the United States, with an 18 per cent increase of US\$ 15 million -- accounts for the bulk of the increase. These pledges for 1993 come in the year of UNICEF's highest-ever total income. We are grateful for these pledges, in particular for the increases announced by Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Chile, China, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Djibouti, Fiji, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Panama, Romania, Tunisia and Vietnam, in addition to the United States. We are particularly grateful for pledges made by Mali, Mongolia, Namibia and Nepal, which had not been in a position to contribute last year. Indeed, on the basis of what has been pledged, one might be tempted to project another record year in 1993.

However, we must recognize that rough sailing may lie ahead. In the current adverse economic climate facing the industrial world, aid budgets are under sever pressure. The Secretary-General alerted us to this in his opening remarks and pointed out that "the share of all ODA channeled through the UN system now stands at 7 per cent as compared to 9 per cent in 1984. These levels fall far short of established needs".

We are, therefore, most concerned that only half of the largest donors to UNICEF announced their 1993 pledges to date, a significantly smaller proportion than last year. This makes it difficult for us to accurately predict our General Resource level for 1993.

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What is particularly troubling is the fact that a number of the major contributors to human development and to UNICEF, which are confronted by severe economic circumstances, are cutting their budgets by a greater proportion than the decline in their GNP. One of UNICEF's largest contributors has indicated that it will be reducing the percentage of GNP devoted to ODA from a high of 0.7 per cent to the DAC average of 0.4 per cent -- an unprecedented 43 per cent decline from such a high level. Coupled to a sharp decline in the level of national income, it represents a further reduction in the value of ODA. If legal commitments to the international financial institutions and specialized agencies are honoured in the traditional form, they could consume a large proportion of budgeted ODA, leaving the UN voluntary funded agencies such as UNICEF with disproportionately large reductions. Such a result would be the antithesis of the "adjustment with a human face" advocated by so many in the international community. Indeed, if this drastic reduction by one of UNICEF's leading contributors occurs, it would more than cancel out all the increases pledged for 1993 to date. I therefore deeply appreciate the assurances that I have received from the government of this country that they are re-examining the situation, and as to the temporary nature of this cut-back, and of its intentions to later restore its contribution to former high levels to UNICEF and human development.

As you all know, all countries -- industrial as well as developing -- made a commitment at the 1990 World Summit for Children to ensure that programmes aimed at achieving the year 2000 goals for children and development will have a priority when resources are allocated. The World Summit Plan of Action states very clearly that "every effort should be made to ensure that such programmes are protected in times of economic austerity and structural adjustment". We must therefore ensure that in these hard times, not only that we do not move away from the principles of "first call for children" and "adjustment with a human face", but should act to more effectively implement these principles.

In this regard, I would encourage you to review your ODA budgets to ensure that the human dimension of development is given the priority that your governments agreed to at the World Summit for Children and, more recently, at the Earth Summit. According to the UNDP's Human Development Report, there is a potential for a considerable improvement in this regard. For example, in 1988-1989, the top 15 donors devoted less than 10 per cent of their bilateral aid to meeting priority human needs. In fact, two of the three largest donors have not yet reached 3 per cent of their ODA for meeting priority human needs.

I am pleased to report that UNICEF is working closely with governments in the formulation of National Programmes of Action (NPAs) to implement the year 2000 goals for children and development. To date, 134 countries have drafted or are preparing NPAs -- an extraordinary and unprecedented global exercise in medium- and long-term planning for human development. Many of these countries, which also face severe economic constraints, are, as the Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly (A/47/264) on World Summit follow-up indicates, "making serious efforts at reallocating resources primarily toward basic education and primary health care". However, despite

their serious efforts to mobilize domestic resources for children, African and other developing country governments clearly cannot achieve the goals alone. They urgently need support and assistance from the international community.

We estimate, for example, that Africa will require an additional US\$ 12.7 billion dollars annually from domestic and international sources to achieve the goals by the year 2000. Of that amount, US\$ 8.8 billion is for key sectoral programmes. Despite the generally bleak prospects for economic growth in Africa, most of its governments are making efforts to increase funding for National Programmes of Action, and we trust that they will mobilize half of the resources needed for the key sectoral programmes. But without the other half from the international community -- US\$ 4.4 billion -- the goals will not be achieved in many countries.

The OAU International Conference on Assistance to African Children in Dakar, 25-27 November, provides a unique opportunity for the international community -- governments, bilateral agencies, multilateral organizations and NGOs -- to show their support for these efforts by African governments.

Mr. President, in the last six weeks, I visited Somalia, the former Yugoslavia twice, and Iraq, where I witnessed the devastating effect armed conflict has on children and women. UNICEF is working hard, together with its sister UN agencies and NGOs, to provide assistance to the innocent victims of these and other man-made and natural emergencies.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the donor community for its swift and generous response to our urgent requests for emergency contributions. They have been substantial, indeed. Thanks largely to the newly created Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the United Nations has been able to improve coordination of humanitarian relief operations in a short period of time. It is my hope, however, that the generosity you are showing in response to emergencies will not lead to reduced support for sustainable human development programmes which, by their very nature, help to prevent conflicts and emergencies from arising.

I can assure you, moreover, that the funds we will receive will be used in ways that are closely collaborative and supportive of our partners, especially our partners within the UN system. I know you will agree that such collaboration must be carried out in ways that protect the managerial accountability that I have to all of you for the proper use of those funds.

Mr. President, in the 1990s, the world has the opportunity to build a shield of basic protection around its children. And since disease, malnutrition and illiteracy are causes as well as symptoms of poverty and civil unrest, reaching the goals we have set for children will help loosen the grip of self-perpetuating poverty and contribute to economic growth. It is clear that we simply cannot afford to allow another year to go by in which 13 million children die... or for that matter, allow another day to pass whose toll is 35,000 children lost due to largely preventable causes. On the threshold of the 21st century, of the third millennium, we can accomplish so much -- together. With your sustained support, we are accomplishing much, but we can accomplish so much more. I thank all of you.