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Special Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
to the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
on the occasion of
the 37th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference

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SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM MR. JAMES P. GRANT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

to the

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

on the occasion of

THE 37TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has been in the vanguard of a global movement to put children's issues in the forefront of governmental action, as was demonstrated by your support for the adoption and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at your 35th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Barbados in 1989.

We are counting on your continued support as you gather in New Delhi on the anniversary of the World Summit for Children. That historic gathering saw 71 heads of State and Government pledge their commitment to ensure the protection of normal physical and mental development of all the world's children. Already we are beginning to see positive results and it is most important we do not lose this momentum of good will and commitment.

As called for in the World Summit Plan of Action, governments are preparing - for submission by the end of 1991 - National Plans of Action for meeting the year 2000 goals. The world leaders who attended the Summit emphasized the importance of all sectors of society and all levels of government becoming active in the formulation and implementation of programmes for children. Here, we look to you as key players in these efforts, for your personal involvement and the weight of your office can help establish and advance the process leading to achievement of these goals.

As parliamentarians, you are in a unique position to advocate and monitor actions taken so that the Convention on the Rights of the Child becomes an effective legal instrument to protect children's rights in your countries and your communities. To date 141 countries have taken positive action, out of which 97 have ratified it. By supporting the ratification and implementation of the Convention, and by supporting the implementation of the World Summit Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, you are laying the foundation of a more just society which will not allow that millions of children continue to be exploited, abandoned or abused.

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You can defy acceptance of many of today's realities. You can help better the lives of 80 million children aged 10 to 14 who are subjected to exploitative child labour that interferes with their health and development. You can reduce the vulnerability of millions of women and children to the ravages of war. You can help the estimated 30 million children who live on city streets, who, often abandoned and orphaned, are deprived of health care and education.

UNICEF seeks your engagement and commitment to the grand alliance working to put an end to violence against women and children and to ensure their well-being in a healthy and supportive environment. As leaders elected by the people, working closely with the people, and continuously communicating with them, you can play a vital role in bringing about the necessary ethical, social and political climate to achieve our common goals.