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Statement by Ms. Karin Sham Poo
Deputy Executive Director (Operations) of UNICEF
in tribute to UNICEF staff
at the close of the 1993 Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York
7 May 1993



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Mr. Chairman,
good friends and colleagues:

Much has been said during this Executive Board session of the tragic loss of UNICEF staff members who have given their lives in the past year in the service of children, especially when they have willingly put themselves "in harm's way". They should have names. We cannot name the thousands of children who die needlessly each day, though we know that they do not die by the thousands; they die one by one. But we ought to at least give names to those few who die to save the many.

I record in this roll of honour:

Sean Devereux of the United Kingdom, killed in Somalia.

Mr. Mohammed of Somalia, killed in Somalia.

Mvint-Maung of Myanmar, killed in the Sudan.

Francis Nguire of Kenya, killed in the Sudan.

Mohammed Ker Dahir of Kenya, who died in Kenya.

Roko Konyen Biron of Sudan, missing and presumed dead in the Sudan.

Their names join those of dozens of other UN humanitarian workers, peacekeepers, NGO volunteers and journalists who died in the emergencies of the past year.

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I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those colleagues who, after many years of devoted service, have retired from UNICEF during the past year, or will be retiring shortly:

Helen Argyriades, Maria Diamanti, J. Peter Greaves, Neville Griffith, Thomas Lauwers, Juan Antonio Lopez-Penela, Jacob Matthai, Ahmad Musanna, Mukalay Mwilanbwe, Samuel Ofosu-Amaah, Mary Racelis, Awad Salem Oahoush and Sally Wen,

and, particularly on behalf of all of us who have served here on the podium, and all his colleagues in the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, I offer special tribute to our friend and calming manager, John Williams, who is retiring at the end of this month.

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Finally, Mr. Chairman, it has become traditional to take the occasion of the Executive Board session for us to honour staff members who have performed with exceptional distinction and dedication. It is my pleasure to announce the 1993 UNICEF Staff Awards.

Afghanistan Office under the leadership of Mr. Ekrem Bizerdinc

Over the past five years, UNICEF Afghanistan staff have performed their duties with high standards in meeting the needs of Afghan women and children. They worked under very difficult circumstances, but always kept the spirit of solidarity with women and children and shared their pain and tragedy with humility. In crisis situations, often of great personal risk, they were always first to reach and assist those who needed them and always the last ones to leave when the situation was untenable.

All along these years they made sure that the standard of UNICEF assistance was always maintained at its highest level. This led the way for others to adopt appropriate strategies and methods that assured the maintenance of UN and UNICEF presence at the community level and kept the concern for Afghan children and women on the agenda of the international community.

Liberia Office under the leadership of Mr. Carl Tinstman:

Under the leadership of the UNICEF Representative, Mr. Carl Tinstman, the UNICEF Liberia staff underwent a most difficult year in 1992, given the emergency situation facing Liberia. The acute emergency that faced the citizenry of Monrovia after October 1992 could not have been met without the diligence of all the UNICEF staff. The staff worked non-stop to ensure the provision of water and health services were kept ongoing including emergency vaccination campaigns to save the lives of children.

Staff of the Buenos Aires sub-office

The nomination is based on the outstanding work, the valuable results and the widespread recognition received for their achievements in the pivotal and dynamic field of communication and social mobilization. Using the slogan "Children First", UNICEF Argentina was able to mobilize social and political will and public and private financial resources in favour of children, overcoming an often pervasive sense of skepticism and hopelessness among the population.

Programme Communications and Information Section (PCIS), Dhaka

PCIS, in the context of its communication activities, has made major contributions in promoting participatory training and decision-making methodology both in Bangladesh and globally. Also, it has made significant impact on Girl Child Education through the MEENA animated film series in South Asia.

Mr. Stewart McNab

Last year's award was given to the entire Iraq team. This year's award recognizes the new leader of the team in Northern Iraq. Mr. McNab has done an excellent job in developing and implementing the UNICEF winter emergency programme in the three northern governorates of Iraq. Mr. McNab has shown imagination, courage and considerable leadership qualities in what is often an insecure and dangerous situation. He is characterized by his desire to work for vulnerable women and children in the most practical ways possible. To paraphrase his own expression, he is a UNICEF staff member always ready to get "mud on his boots".

Mr. Mark Stirling

While last year's staff award was given to the entire staff in Somalia, this year Mr. Mark Stirling is being recognized for the excellent work he has done in Somalia. The remarkable leadership and guidance he has provided under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions has allowed the UNICEF team to continue to provide services to women and children in Somalia to alleviate their suffering.

Ms. Rosalyn Oming

Rosalyn Oming, a secretary from the Kenya office, presently on assignment to the Somalia office, is recognized for her dedicated service to the Somalia Emergency Operation.

To all of these staff members, who have set examples and raised standards to which all UNICEF and international cooperation staff can aspire, I offer our most respectful salute and hearty congratulations.