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Address by Dr. Richard Jolly  
Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
at the  
Commemoration  
of the  
40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the German Committee for UNICEF

Bonn, Germany  
22 June 1993



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I am honoured and delighted to have the opportunity to celebrate with you, dear German friends, the 40th anniversary of the German Committee for UNICEF. I am here in a double capacity -- as Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, of UNICEF, and as Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, speaking on behalf of our beloved Jim Grant, who is currently working as hard at recuperating from major surgery as he normally works for the world's children. Even though he is returning to full steam, I am sure you will understand that he has had to severely curtail his travel.

Mr. Grant asked me to convey to you his deep personal regrets at not being able to be here for this important occasion; he also sends his warmest personal congratulations. Working at his side as Deputy Executive Director for Programmes these past dozen years, I can attest to the high esteem in which he holds UNICEF's German family, as well as to the deep gratitude he feels for the major contributions your National Committee has made. Needless to say, love and admiration for the wonderful achievements of the German National Committee are fully shared by all of us at UNICEF.

We celebrate a long and close relationship here today, one that goes back to the earliest days of UNICEF's existence. When UNICEF was created to help children in post-war Europe, German children were among the first to be assisted. From 1948 to 1951, some 2 million German children benefitted from UNICEF's assistance in the form of medicines, clothing, powdered milk and the famous cod liver oil whose taste is certainly still in the memories of many German adults today!

The reconstruction of Germany following the Second World War went together with its building of democracy, the introduction of values of a free society and its functioning as a federal state. The preamble of the preliminary constitution of the Federal Republic indicated the obligation of the German people to seek reunification by peaceful means -- a dream that came true 45 years after the Second World War.

Equally, UNICEF -- as reflected in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children -- has high ambitions for children during the remainder of this century, and envisions a radical improvement in their situation around the world by the year 2000. We are beginning to see the transformation of this dream into reality. The international community has now embraced a package of goals to be reached by the end of 1995, achievement of which can save an additional 2 million child lives a year. We know that the German Committee for UNICEF and the German people will provide absolutely crucial support for this historic effort.

Clearly, the German people have never forgotten the large-scale assistance UNICEF provided to so many children in the difficult years immediately following the war. Eloquent and enduring expression of this gratitude was the establishment of the German Committee for UNICEF in 1953. Founded by Countess Waldersee who brought together several independent volunteer groups functioning in Kiel -- her hometown -- as well as in Karlsruhe and Konigswinter, the German Committee for UNICEF was given immediate and creative backing by the German Women's Organization. Thanks to meticulous German record-keeping, we know that the Committee sold exactly 7,070 UNICEF greeting cards that very first year -- the beginning of an effort that has seen the German Committee become the number one fundraiser today among UNICEF's growing network of National Committees!

One of the characteristics of the German Committee from its inception has been the involvement of the whole society in a democratic, pluralistic and volunteer-driven association. By 1955, 17 volunteer groups were already functioning, selling more than 100,000 greeting cards. Last year, sales had risen to 17.5 million cards and the number of volunteer groups has grown to 118, with 2,300 permanent volunteers and more than 8,000 occasional collaborators. The German Committee can be especially proud of the successful creation of new working groups in the new laender of Eastern Germany, tapping the energy and enthusiasm of many young and motivated volunteers.

Through this vast network of volunteers and outreach, the German Committee has not only tremendously increased greeting card sales, but it has raised the awareness of German society regarding the interdependent global village in which all humankind lives today, and in particular, how the plight of Third World children and women impacts upon the lives of all of us in the industrialized world. The German National Committee has not only responded, consistently and generously, to what we at UNICEF call the "loud emergencies" of war and famine, earthquake and flood -- best exemplified by your current assistance to relief programmes in Somalia and former Yugoslavia, and your help to children during the difficult transition underway in Central and Eastern Europe -- but you have properly focused your information and education work, as well as your fundraising drives, on the "silent emergency" of

13,000,000 child deaths, year in and year out, due to largely preventable causes associated with gross underdevelopment and abject poverty. You draw vital attention to the fact that this tragedy is no longer "inevitable", but can be prevented through the massive application of low-cost/high-impact technologies and know-how to save and nurture young lives all over the world.

The German Committee has been fortunate to have, among its volunteers and supporters, such illustrious personalities as the First Lady of the country -- a tradition begun in 1963 when Frau Wilhelmina Lubke, wife of the President of the Federal Republic, became the Committee's patron, and continuing today in the person of Mrs. von Weisacker -- as well as President von Weisacker himself, who participated in the 1990 World Summit for Children and joined our Executive Director and Goodwill Ambassador Peter Ustinov to launch the 1991 State of the World's Children Report in Berlin in December 1991. Professional leaders, outstanding intellectuals and artists figure prominently in your ranks.

Major achievements have been reached these past years under the strong leadership of Mrs. Elisabeth Klee, President of the Committee, who we understand is soon retiring, and of the Committee's efficient Executive Director Dietrich Garlich. There has been a remarkable increase in funds raised for UNICEF programmes in recent years -- the 1992 figure totalled a formidable DM103 million! -- while the share of administrative costs of the Committee has been reduced each year! Today, the German Committee's contribution accounts for about 4 per cent of UNICEF's total budget, which means that the German public gives much more to UNICEF than the German government itself.

In the present situation, we fully understand that the tasks of reconstruction in the Eastern provinces of Germany are enormous. It will take extraordinary efforts to rebuild and integrate this part of Germany. At the same time, the world acknowledges the important role that Germany is playing in Central and Eastern Europe's difficult but crucial transformation. We hope that the international community and especially Germany -- as one of the leading partners in the industrialized world -- will continue to help us support the developing countries meet the goals for children in the 1990s. We are confident that the German government will soon be able to greatly increase its assistance to UNICEF programmes.

We have been deeply impressed by the many creative partnerships established and the countless initiatives undertaken by the German Committee for UNICEF in recent years, in particular the productive work you have carried out, successively, with the mayors of Wiesbaden, Kiel and Hamburg over the past three years.

We also salute the outstanding efforts of the Committee to publicize the historic Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the German government ratified and made the law of the land in November 1991. You, like UNICEF, support the Convention's vision of the whole child, a vision our delegation put forward energetically yesterday in Vienna, a vision of girls equal to boys, poor every bit as deserving as rich -- not just hungry mouths, but hungry minds; not just recipients of assistance and protection but participants in society, community and family with rights and voices that need to be heard. The Convention clearly proscribes discrimination on the basis of the "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" of the child or his or her parents. Such a vision is needed not only to meet the challenges of the 21st century, but in order to confront the dangers of the present as well. That is why we were so glad to learn of the German Committee's involvement in the event that was held in Hamburg earlier this year, remembering the Nazis' rise to power in 1933 and repudiating the recent resurgence of their legacy of intolerance, hatred and racism in Germany as well as in many other countries of the West.

May I take this chance to praise the German contribution in ideas and by example to development more generally. From the ashes of the Second World War, Germany -- together with Japan -- provides a shining example of what can be achieved in technology and creativity if military expenditure is kept to one per cent of GNP and 99 per cent of resources are channelled to other forms of progress and development. Germany also stands as a pioneer in the development of environmentally friendly technology that not only benefits people and nature, but brings benefits to the industries that employ it. Lastly, permit me to applaud the great honesty and courage shown by a majority of Germans in resisting the forces of the night that seek to incite hatred against foreigners. All these are in response to problems which all industrial countries face at the moment. We thank you for your efforts in showing what can be done to tackle them.

Looking to the next 40 years -- the next 4 years, too -- I'd say we have four main priorities:

- 1) advocating for the principle of "first call for children" not only because it is morally right and ethically comforting, but because children can be the cutting edge for major advances in economic development, for strengthening democracy, improving the status of women, slowing population growth and preserving the environment -- the burning issues of our era!

- 2) reminding the world that children's essential needs have finally been recognized as rights through the Convention on the Rights of the Child -- and that means

civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. We must see that the precepts and principles of the Convention are translated into the laws and lives of nations, communities and families. And shouldn't we all work for universal ratification of the Convention by the year 1995? There are now only 50 countries in the world that have not ratified; the rest, 139, are already on board.

3) working to create a genuine movement for children, a movement every bit as strong and diverse and outspoken as the movements for human rights, for the environment, for women's equality. Only such a movement, supportive and linked to those others, will enable us to reach our ambitious goals.

4) educating people and governments -- including ourselves -- about the interdependence of life in the global village and the responsibilities which fall to each one of us as neighbours and citizens of that village. A new kind of global citizenship is needed, and it starts with treating all children as if they were our own.

In closing, permit me to quote Goethe's immortal words of September 1792, amidst the revolutionary upheavals of his day: "From today and from this place there begins a new epoch in the history of the world". We at UNICEF are convinced that a new epoch has begun in the history of the world and that, with the ongoing support of the German Committee and other stalwarts of the Grand Alliance for Children, we can make quantum leaps of social progress over the remaining years of the decade -- despite the formidable obstacles we face -- for the children, our future.