

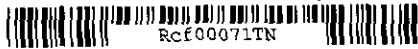
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Message from Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
on the occasion of the
Launch of the 1994 *State of the World's Children Report*

Sarajevo, Yugoslavia
21 December 1993



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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
Launch of the 1994 State of the World's Children Report**

Sarajevo -- 21 December 1993

Today, in several cities around the globe, UNICEF is launching the 1994 State of the World's Children Report. We thought Sarajevo should be one of those cities because of the urgent need to keep the world's attention focussed on the plight of your children, and of all children caught in the terrible conflicts of our time. The selection of Sarajevo as one of the launch sites symbolizes the strong commitment of UNICEF and the international community to provide a humanitarian lifeline to children and women in war. Although I personally am not able to be with you on this occasion, I can assure you that the suffering I saw on two visits to former Yugoslavia since the war began will be very much in my thoughts and in what I say today at the launch in Washington.

In this year's State of the World's Children Report we have an optimistic message for the world: the major enemies of children -- malnutrition, disease, disability, illiteracy -- are now massively on the run for the first time in human history. The report says that if we accelerate our efforts now, we can meet the most basic human needs of children for health, nutrition, and education by the end of the century and at an affordable cost. This, in turn, would go a long way toward overcoming the burning, long-term problems of poverty, overpopulation and environmental deterioration that are so interlinked with children's lives.

But the historic opportunity for accelerating human progress described in the report will slip through our fingers if we do not put a halt to the proliferation of armed conflicts that has taken place since the end of the Cold War. Children, the most vulnerable among us, are the hardest hit by strife and chaos. We estimate that some 1.5 million children have been killed in armed conflicts over the past decade -- 15,000 just in former Yugoslavia in only two years.

Children have suffered terribly in this war, as all of you know too well. Among those who survive, many will carry scars, both physical and mental, for life. What has happened to children here should anger all of us. It is an indictment of the adult world that this should be happening on the threshold of the

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21st century. It is a crime that it should be happening so soon after the world's leaders agreed, at the 1990 World Summit for Children, to strengthen protections for children in armed conflicts. It is unconscionable that children should be targeted by sniper and mortar fire as the world moves rapidly toward universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I use this opportunity to call once more on the military and political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina -- and all of former Yugoslavia -- to find a way for peace for their children. Not next month or next year, but peace that children need today if there is to be a better tomorrow. We in UNICEF hope that people everywhere will never accept the slaughter of children as the routine consequence of war, and that they will pressure their political leaders to act in support of peaceful solutions to today's terrible conflicts.

This year's State of the World's Children Report says that a new ethic for children is emerging, amidst great difficulties, in the waning years of the 20th century. This new ethic means that we must put children's essential needs first -- not only in good times but also in bad times, not only in peace but in war time. We have seen this new ethic in the efforts of the international community to reach and protect the most vulnerable caught up in armed conflicts. We see it, too, in the worldwide media attention and public outrage in response to atrocities committed against children. And I would add that there are signs of this new ethic everywhere in Sarajevo, where communities, parents and children themselves are working so hard to protect children from the worst effects of the war and to maintain a measure of normalcy in their young lives. But let us not overstate the case for this new ethic: as you well know, it is still incipient and fragile, and far more needs to be done to provide children with the protection and nurturing they need and to which they are entitled.

We hope that it is some small comfort to you to know, amidst the cold of winter, that UNICEF will continue to provide vaccines, medicines, food and vitamins, safe water, school materials, blankets, warm clothing and other supplies so desperately needed by children. We will continue to train school teachers, school psychologists, social workers and others to deal with the trauma of war among children. Children -- all children -- have a right to live in peace. But the healing cannot wait for when peace comes -- it must start today.