

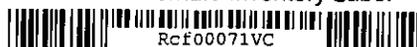
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Statement by Dr. Richard Jolly
Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the
Closing of the 1993 Session of the UNICEF Executive Board

New York
7 May 1993



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FOR INFORMATION

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1993 session

Statement by Dr. Richard Jolly
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Mr. Chairman,
good friends:

In a few minutes this 1992 session of the Executive Board will come to a close. It has been productive and businesslike, at times passionate, always serious, often creative, but continuously characterized by the vision and strong sense of common purpose which our Executive Director, Jim Grant, set for us in his opening statement. We can all, I trust, be pleased that the Board has continued its tradition of producing a firm and promising direction for our organization, so now the preoccupation can be with getting on with the job.

You have approved 24 Country Programmes -- the heart and soul of UNICEF's work.

You have reviewed the world's follow-up to the historic World Summit for Children, and given guidance for further implementation of its commitments.

You have considered a series of reports on matters essential to our programme, and given policy guidance to the secretariat on: emergencies and humanitarian operations; environment and children; UNICEF's response to the urban poor; family planning and AIDS; and strengthening evaluation. You have reaffirmed UNICEF's priority for Africa -- which in no way diminishes our attention to needs and initiatives in other regions: the eight new programmes for Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States, the strengthening of SAFLAC, as well as other efforts in the Middle East and the major programmes in Asia.

All these are major decisions of practical importance and policy concern, not only to this Board to most of the countries in which UNICEF operates. Your clarification of programme policy has given us guidelines for UNICEF's action in these areas -- but, more, it has given all of us who have participated -- governments, national committees and NGOs -- perspectives and specifics on which to build in our different ways.

Administratively, you have revised our budget for the remainder of this year, and you have established UNICEF's budget for the coming biennium. You have approved our recommendations on global funds programme budget, but have asked for further improvement both on the substance and format, but more importantly, on the strategic rationale for these funds. And you have given the secretariat a clear mandate to explore further and negotiate a clear proposal by July to resolve UNICEF's needs for headquarters accommodation.

You have also determined an important programme of future work for attention by the Board and the secretariat in the year ahead, including a management study and further policy papers. (Clearly, we have much to report to Mr. Grant when he returns!)

Two large questions remain, which can only be determined in other fora -- although involving many of you in this room, in your other capacities. What form will this Board take and what type of meetings will be held next year and beyond? How often should it meet? Will it retain its dedicated policy leadership, intellectual expertise and operational concentration for an organization which specializes in the particular and unique interests of children? Will it find ways to preserve the creative diversity of a broad array of experience and perspectives -- governmental and non-governmental, professional and volunteer -- which have so often helped shape UNICEF's policies and programmes and to synthesize lessons?

Some numbers can illustrate this concern: I counted 450 people present at the opening meeting of this Board; 250 were present at the opening of the Programme Committee, with 180 attending one of the late-night Programme meetings; and some 195 people were here at the beginning of the Committee on Administration and Finance. And look around you today. And recall the 800 who were with us last Friday evening at that most impressive tribute to UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador, Audrey Hepburn.

Jim Grant so often talks of the mystique which is UNICEF. How can we preserve this and use this for strengthening the United Nations as a whole -- and how can we ensure that this network of creativity and commitment is maintained in future meetings of the Board.

Your secretariat, as do all participants in this Board session, anxiously await resolution of the structural questions in ECOSOC and the General Assembly. These decisions can have momentous impact on UNICEF's long-term leadership, efficiency and effectiveness. Permit me to hope that ways will be found to preserve the best of UNICEF's unique breadth of participation and input which are so vital to the character of the Children's Fund and so vital to the commitment to UNICEF which National Committees and NGOs so consistently demonstrate and on which Elizabeth Rehn, chairperson of UNICEF's National Committees, spoke so fervently during the general debate.

These questions can be approached positively -- asking how these strengths of UNICEF throughout the world can be drawn upon to strengthen the work and credibility of the United Nations as a whole. As our debate on restructuring and revitalization of the UN has shown, UNICEF is clearly committed to fuller collaboration with other parts of the system, in the field and headquarters, in our common efforts to respond to the human challenges before us.

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Mr. Chairman, with your permission I would now like to invite my colleague, Karin Sham Poo, to speak about our staff: those whom we have lost in the service of UNICEF, the United Nations, and the children of the world; those who have retired or will be shortly; and those whose exceptional performance and commitment deserve our special recognition.

{{{ Statement by the Deputy Executive Director (Operations) }}}}

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Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to announce that on Tuesday, while we met here, the Convention on the Rights of the Child became the "most nearly universal" international law in history. With Micronesia's accession, the Convention achieved 135 States Parties, more than any other international human rights instrument. Let us resolve to continue our advocacy so that the Rights of the Child might fully attain universal status by the time of the 50th Anniversary of the world's promise "...to save succeeding generations...".

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As we leave, let us take heart from this Board session and from our renewal of commitments and concerns. Now is the time to turn our promises into action, our dreams into reality.

We have the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with its standards and guidelines.

Scores of countries have produced National Programmes of Action or are completing them now. We have stated as a secretariat and as governments that we will work with others for children within broader alliances for sustainable human development. We have only 350 weeks -- now just 348 -- to meet our target. As Jim Grant has reminded us:

"The key test between now and the next Executive Board session will be whether a clear shift toward increasing allocations for priority human needs begins to take place. If this shift doesn't take place, then the promises of the 1990s will be hollow indeed."

Let us all respond to this challenge positively -- nationally within our governments and internationally in the actions we support. The world has shown a new readiness to respond to the loud emergencies. We, who know the less visible challenge of the silent emergencies, and the many opportunities for action now available, must work to ensure that these greater commitments get the resources needed to deliver the goals.

The promises must be kept...and they can be. The promises will be kept -- if each of us commits ourselves to make them happen, in our work, our governments, our alliances, and in our individual actions and passions.

Franklin Roosevelt, in turning his back on recession in the 1930s, said "we have nothing to fear but fear itself". For us, in turning our eyes and our actions to the future, let us realize that there is nothing which can defeat us other than a wavering hesitation that we may not succeed. But we can! Not in every case ... not probably in every country before the year 2000. Not every country achieved universal immunization in 1990 -- but 73 countries did ... 80 per cent of the world's children were immunized ... child deaths were reduced by three to four million. And we saw dramatic progress in water and nutrition -- and, in many countries, in education, in women's advance and in much more.

The next 348 weeks are the weeks for making it happen over the range of the goals and commitments which this Board has set. I ask us all to join in: developing country governments and donors, National Committees and non-governmental organizations.

Nothing would be more tragic than to allow the experience which was gained through the 1980s ... the proven means and approaches ... the unprecedented global commitments of the World Summit for Children ... the historic standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ... and the available strength of millions of committed activists, community organizers and parents -- to be wasted for lack of the significant but not impossible resources required to deliver on the promises. Can the world allow such a waste?

In this regard, my boss would never forgive me if I didn't take this moment to commend to your attention the just-issued "sales book" -- Proposals for Supplementary Funding -- cataloguing the many positive opportunities which governmental and non-governmental donors alike have to "re-prioritize" their assistance resources.

As I thank all of you, on behalf of my colleagues of UNICEF's staff and our recovering Executive Director, for your guidance, your good counsel, even your useful criticisms, I say: "Now, together, let us make it happen".