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UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY FUND  
EXECUTIVE BOARD

International Children's Centre in Paris - Proposal by the representative of France on the UNICEF Executive Board.

The following correspondence and attachment relates to a proposal by the representative of France on the Executive Board for the creation in Paris of an International Children's Centre.

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UNITED NATIONS  
LAKE SUCCESS, NEW YORK  
Executive Office of the Secretary-General

March 7, 1949

Dear Dr. Rajchman,

The attached letter dated March 5 from the Delegation of the French Republic to the United Nations has been received by the Secretary-General today. Since the Executive Board of the International Children's Emergency Fund is meeting on March 9 he has asked me to transmit this letter to you urgently without waiting until a full examination of its contents had been made. No doubt the Executive Board will wish in due course to consult with the Secretary-General on certain aspects of the important proposal put forward by the French Government and he will be glad to participate for this purpose in the Board's deliberations in whatever manner it may consider appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd)

Martin Hill

Deputy Executive Assistant  
to the Secretary-General

Dr. Ludwik Rajchman  
Chairman of the Executive Board of the  
International Children's Emergency Fund  
United Nations - Manhattan Office  
405 East 42nd Street  
New York 17, New York

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(8pp)

5 March 1949

No. 53

Mr. Trygve Lie  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
Lake Success, N.Y.

Sir,

As you know, the French representative on the Executive Board of the ICEF submitted to that body in 1947 a proposal for the establishment in Paris of an international children's centre. The main purpose of this centre was to provide doctors and their assistants with special training, to undertake scientific research and investigations concerning child problems, to make known the work carried out in this field by the various participating countries and to provide the widest possible public information on hygiene and preventive medicine in regard to children.

Following this proposal, the Executive Board of the Fund decided to consider the facilities offered by the French Government and to use them for the organization in Paris in 1948, and again in 1949, of an international course in pediatrics.

This course, like the pilot centre for BCG vaccination at present functioning in Paris, is only one branch of the organization originally envisaged by the French Government which would, if established, ensure continuation of the beneficial work which this body has initiated and which it continues to promote. In the view of the French Government, such an institution whose activities would extend beyond health problems and educational matters, would come within the field of action of the United Nations, particularly the ICEF, and should work under its auspices in close collaboration with the United Nations Department of Social Affairs and with the United Nations organs and specialized agencies more particularly concerned with child problems. This collaboration could be ensured by arranging for the representation of the ICEF and various other bodies on the Executive Board of the International Children's Centre, whose Board of Directors would also include, in addition to the Director-General and the Director of Studies, a group of experts from the participating countries.

I have the honour to inform you that the French Government has requested me, after discussion of the matter by the Council of Ministers, to submit this project to you officially and to ask you to inform the Executive Board of the ICEF.

/The Executive Board

The Executive Board of the ICEF having already in 1948, and in its budget for the first half of 1949, assured the financing of the international course on pediatrics and the pilot centre for the study of BCG in Paris by means of the French contribution to the ICEF, the French Government is of the opinion that the same direct method could be used to ensure the functioning of the International Children's Centre.

I am also authorized to inform you of the Government's decision to provide suitable premises for the International Children's Centre, where the different services, council rooms, lecture rooms, exhibition halls and research laboratories could be arranged.

I have the honour to be etc.

(signed) Georges Boris

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Note from the French delegation to the Executive Board of the ICEF concerning the proposal for the establishment of an International Children's Centre in Paris.

Reverting to the proposals previously made by its representatives to the Programme Committee and the Executive Board of the ICEF (17 June 1947, letter from the Chairman of the Executive Board of the ICEF to the Secretary-General of the United Nations of 30 June 1947, Programme Committee, August session, 1947, Executive Board of the ICEF, October session, 1947, and the statement of the French delegate to the Third Committee of the Paris General Assembly on 2 December 1948), the French Government, after discussion by the Council of Ministers on 16 February 1949, offers the ICEF special facilities for the establishment and operation of an International Children's Centre in Paris.

The five essential tasks to be carried out by the International Children's Centre are:

1. teaching;
2. investigations;
3. public information;
4. scientific research;
5. comparison of the work done by various institutions for maternity and child welfare in the participating countries.

1. Teaching.

The teaching envisaged is of a new and progressive type. It is intended for an international public, consisting of all the men and women interested in childhood problems. It must facilitate an exchange of ideas, methods and results in all matters concerning children. This teaching, which is essentially different from the traditional teaching of faculties, institutes of political and social studies, and the various schools for training experts in child welfare, is directed towards practical and immediate application. The experience gained in the courses given in 1948, supplemented by that of the courses arranged for 1949, should contribute to ensure its efficiency and value.

This teaching is international. It is anticipated that the teaching staff will continue to be recruited from well-known specialists in the different countries invited to participate who are either visiting Paris or will be invited there specially. Trips, including short stays in different countries will be arranged for the students following the course, as was done in 1948 and 1949. These trips will provide not only visits and contacts, but also specialist training, which is included in the general

syllabus of the course.

The students will be drawn from the various participating nations. Arrangements will be made for them to work and live together in order to cultivate a spirit of international co-operation and mutual understanding and to encourage the exchange of ideas. It is permissible to hope that a modest but effective contribution will thus be made to creating a new outlook in all who have charge of children. The meeting together of children's specialists from all parts of the world, over a period of several months, is something quite different from congresses, brief conversations and individual missions, and will bring about a new type of international co-operation and solidarity in child welfare.

Another new element in the teaching to be given at the centre is the qualifications of the students. While the majority of the students will be doctors, surgeons and obstetricians specializing in the treatment and prevention of physical diseases and psychic disorders in children, the teaching is also intended for welfare workers; architects who are to build and adapt hospitals, sanatoria and clinics for children; health officers in charge of establishments and work for healthy, sick, crippled or deserted children or those in the care of the juvenile courts; teachers and educators of all kinds; and social workers dealing with child problems, particularly among the children who have suffered so much during the last few years in most countries of the world.

The teaching must bear directly on present-day problems. These are innumerable, very varied and continually present to all: problems of nutrition for expectant mothers, nursing mothers and children, pathology of pregnancy and birth, the protection of children against contagious diseases, mental hygiene in home and school, the readjustment of perverted and delinquent children, the organization of group leisure activities for children, the care of children whose mothers are at work etc. These questions, which are at the base of world social problems, must be the subject of teaching and demonstration in the various stages of the courses organized by the International Children's Centre. The students will thus be made the pioneers of an international movement on behalf of children, and will be provided with a basic training adequate to inspire fruitful action on a world-wide scale. The social character will be accentuated by comparison between the various solutions applied to child problems by countries with differing economic and social structure, and by comparison of conceptions, achievements and results.

## 2. Investigations.

The International Children's Centre must be equipped to undertake, at the suggestion of the participating States, medical and social investigations on child problems, and to compare results. It must also be a reference centre for maternity and child welfare institutes in the different countries. It will place at their disposal an international collection of documents on present-day problems and give them the benefit of world experience. The need for such a technical information service has for long been apparent, and its establishment should increase the efficiency of individual efforts.

The international investigations of the Centre, co-ordinated with those carried out by the social services of the United Nations, WHO, UNESCO and FAO, will supplement and assist the work of these various bodies in the highly specialized field of child welfare. It is hardly necessary to give examples. The problems of juvenile delinquency, juvenile courts, children's reformatories, the medical and educational problems raised by children suffering from sensory and motor defects (e.g., deaf, blind and paralytic children), the problems of nutrition, a pure milk policy, school meals, school hygiene as a whole, pregnant women workers and the medical and educational supervision of orphanages, are only listed here to show the value of such research and the results which may be expected from an international centre designed to encourage and co-ordinate the efforts of the investigators.

## 3. Public information.

Research on infantile mortality and stillbirth has shown the importance of psychological factors and the need for an effort to educate the public in general, and mothers in particular, in child welfare.

This public information is above all national; the problems arising and the psychological methods of public instruction vary from country to country, but they have nevertheless a common basis and useful ideas can be passed from one country to another.

Public education is indispensable on ante-natal care, over-strain of the mother during pregnancy, the need for qualified assistance at confinement, the special care needed by new-born children, the high death rate amongst whom is largely due to the ignorance of the people around them, the means of counteracting undesirable features of artificial feeding, prevention of infectious diseases, advantages of medical supervision of feeding, and the damage done by rule-of-thumb methods and various superstitions. A special effort would be made in this field by

the International Children's Centre, which might make comparative studies of the results obtained in the different countries, compare methods etc., and the effect of different types of propaganda used: leaflets, posters, press articles, teaching in schools. The results of this study would make it easier for each country to choose a suitable policy. It would be desirable to maintain close collaboration with the social services of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

#### 4. Scientific research.

In research, which is closely linked to investigation, the role of the International Children's Centre would be limited to a certain number of problems of obvious international bearing and immediate practical interest. There is no question of the International Children's Centre intervening in the scientific researches undertaken by national institutions, which have suitable means available and in which research is carried out by eminent experts.

However, the International Centre might do useful work:

(a) in tackling certain problems which could better be solved on the international plane - for example, the unification and standardization of certain processes of child vaccination, a comparative study on nutritional problems and growth, and the influence of certain geographical and climatic factors on a group of countries. From this point of view the Centre's activity would embrace the same type of work as the pilot station for the study of BCG vaccination established by the ICEF in Paris.

The Centre could appeal for permanent or temporary assistance from the leading specialists in the subjects under consideration. It would also be a useful technical training centre for young research workers from various countries. It is not necessary to insist on the valuable results which might be obtained from the active collaboration of specialists working together with all their energy on a given problem.

(b) To assist certain countries where the facilities for specialized research are not sufficient for the study and solution of particular problems lying essentially within the sphere of applied science, the International Children's Centre would collaborate with the specialized agencies, which might promote necessary research, and also with national institutions and bodies.

#### 5. Comparison of the work done by various institutions for maternity and child welfare in the countries participating.

The Centre would be a link between the various specialized agencies dealing with problems of childhood in the participating countries. The

/directors of

directors of these institutions would undoubtedly find it beneficial to meet together periodically for joint discussion on the problems in their field, or to apply to their collaborators there for useful information.

#### ORGANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

The Centre would be under the direction of an Executive Board, acting under the supervision of the ICEF Executive Board and the United Nations Department of Social Affairs.

The Executive Board would consist, apart from the delegates of the ICEF Executive Board, of: a representative from the United Nations Department of Social Affairs, a representative of WHO, a representative of UNESCO, a representative of FAO and representatives of the participating States.

The work would be organized by a Director-General, assisted by a Section Officer for each of the branches of work suggested: teaching, education, investigation, research. The staff would be recruited in the various countries participating.

#### FINANCING AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR STARTING WORK

For the establishment of the International Children's Centre, the French Government offers to place at the disposal of the ICEF the Château of Longchamps, and until the Château is made fit for use, suitable premises are offered in the Place du Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

Since the Executive Board of the ICEF has already, in 1948 and in the budget approved for the first half of 1949, assumed the financing of the international course on social pediatrics and the pilot station for BCG vaccination in Paris out of the French contribution to the ICEF, the French Government is of the opinion that the same direct method could be used to ensure the functioning of the International Children's Centre.

As has been done in the past, the Centre would use all the theoretical and practical means of teaching made available to the organizers of the course in 1948-49, and also the modern installations now being developed in France thanks to ICEF aid.