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Commentary by the Prime Minister of BARBADOS, His Excellency The Rt. Hon. L. Erskine Sandiford

Mr. Chairman and Excellencies, we are all committed as leaders of our countries to the attainment of economic and social development for our people. The human-resource factor will be a crucial element. Our human resources should therefore be most carefully nurtured from gestation to adolescence, resulting in mature, well-adjusted adults' taking their rightful place in society.

But the reality is far different. By the end of this day's meeting another 40,000 children will have died. By the end of this year, half a million more women in developing countries will have died during pregnancy or childbirth.

In our countries too many infants die during the first month of life, and even those who survive may be destined to a childhood of disease and suffering if their mothers are malnourished or in poor health. Despite the advances of modern medicine, children are dying from diseases which could be prevented at relatively low cost.

It is now well established that pregnancies occurring to women under the age of 18 or over 35 tend to lead to unsafe motherhood. Other child-bearing patterns, such as too many births or too-closely spaced births, are also risk factors.

The goal of reducing the maternal mortality rate by half for this decade is attainable. Through outreach programmes we must disseminate more information to women and their partners about the availability of effective family-planning services and about the timing and spacing of births. Women should have a greater sense of control over their bodies and greater knowledge about factors affecting their fertility. Mothers so educated are more likely to have fewer children and provide better care for them.

We in the Caribbean have long realized that infant mortality and health are inextricably linked with maternal health. This nexus has led us to combine child-survival strategies and effective family-planning programmes as the most effective means of preserving the health of both mother and child.

A major concern to us in Latin America and the Caribbean is the high incidence of teenage pregnancies. Ideally, these teenagers should be reached before their sexual curiosity leads to this sorry situation. Family-life education programmes should assist in that regard.

An integrated approach can significantly improve maternal and child health in the region and beyond. Such an approach should be set within a framework of self-esteem and self-dignity.

It should also be based on a clear sense of moral values and a realization that the stable two-parent family is the best environment for the survival and growth of children.

I am happy to announce that the Cabinet of Barbados has given approval for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The instrument will be deposited with the Secretary-General shortly. In the spirit of the Convention we the leaders must place the survival, development and protection of our children as a prime policy objective.

Let us therefore pledge to mobilize all appropriate resources to ensure that children throughout the world survive the hazards of childbirth and childhood so that they may live to make the world a happier, more peaceful, just and equitable place in which to live.

**Commentary by the President of CHILE,
His Excellency Mr. Patricio Aylwin Azocar**

(interpretation from Spanish)

To speak of the survival of the child at this time is to tackle one of most tragic problems confronting humanity. The degree of infant mortality is without any doubt a scandal of our day that must be confronted very seriously. I believe that with appropriate technology and international solidarity that is possible.

Child mortality is a problem that essentially affects the poor countries. The majority of children of the world are poor, and most of them who die are poor. The problem can be tackled with a fairly low level of resources, if the political will is there and if effective health and social services are in place. Experience in our country has shown that there is a high degree of national consensus regarding the health and survival of children. In the 1920s, Chile had 200 child deaths per 1,000 births. That was reduced to 165 in the 1940s and to 95 by the 1960s. In the 1980s it was reduced to 19.5, thanks to the sustained efforts by Governments of different trends.

What is necessary for the purpose is an appropriate definition of the problems, intelligent programme design, training of personnel, and intensive participation by the community. We know what needs to be done: pre-natal care, education of mothers, health care for children, appropriate nutrition, spacing of births, immunization, and a sound environment.

But, above and beyond everything, we need the care and love of parents and the stability of the family. Love is the major, the indispensable, the irreplaceable food. Our love for our children and our awareness of the fragility of their lives should be on our mind 24 hours a day. That is our constant commitment.

On behalf of the Government of Chile, I express our support for the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, which we have ratified. I publicly reiterate our resolute commitment to struggling with all our strength to solve the problem of ensuring the survival of the children of our world.

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Commentary by the Vice-President of NIGERIA, His Excellency Admiral Augustus Aikhomu

Mr. President, Your Excellencies: We consider the provision of safe drinking water and improved sanitation very vital to our child-survival efforts. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently established that 80 per cent of all sickness and disease in some developing countries can be attributed to lack of safe water or inappropriate means of excreta disposal.

Most countries in Africa are committed to the improvement of the lot of rural dwellers, especially in the areas of sanitation and safe-water supply. For example, Nigeria has courageously shifted resources to the rural areas and urban shanty towns. The Better Life Programme emphasizes self-development, particularly for rural women, as regards education, business, sanitation, work and productivity. The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures opens up the rural areas by constructing access roads, provides bore-holes for safe water supply, and builds ventilated improved pit latrines in thousands of Nigerian villages.

In spite of all our efforts, and close to the end of the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade in 1990, less than 50 per cent of the urban population of African countries will have access to a safe-water supply by the closing of the Decade. Sanitation coverage may also even be at about 20 per cent.

One of the most distressing water-borne diseases contracted from drinking unsafe water is Guinea worm. It affects 5 million to 15 million people annually, with a population of 120 million people at risk in Africa. Out of 21 countries with Guinea worm in the world, 19 are in Africa.

Guinea worm disease affects the health and economic well-being of the people. Mothers are unable to provide fully for their families' welfare because they cannot trade or do household work. Infected mothers often fail to take their infants for care or immunization. They may be forced to wean their infants prematurely, increasing the risk of disease in the baby, which has implications for family planning. Poor school attendance and permanent drop-outs have also been associated with the Guinea worm disease. In agricultural countries, affected farmers experience a substantial reduction in productivity and loss of income.

Many endemic countries in Africa are vigorously implementing programmes to eradicate Guinea worm by 1995. In Nigeria, we have intensified efforts on health education, provision of safe drinking water, and treatment of affected persons. People are taught to boil and filter water before drinking. Simple water pumps, fabricated locally, are fitted to bore-holes where pipe-borne water is not available. I must commend donor agencies such as Global 2000, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WHO, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their role in working towards the eradication of Guinea worm, especially in Africa.

The eradication of Guinea worm by the year 1995 is not beyond the capability of the international community, which eradicated smallpox in the 1970s. We in Nigeria have the political will, a firm commitment and the resolve to do so. We also count on the support of the international community to support our efforts and those of the endemic countries to eradicate the disease.

Lastly, a global conference attended by about 600 participants from 115 countries—a conference in which Nigeria played a very prominent part—was organized by UNDP and the Government of India in September 1990 to mark the end of Water Decade 1980-1990. At that Conference, a brief Statement on Water and Sanitation on Behalf of Children was adopted as a framework for the development of water and sanitation programmes during the 1990s. I hereby deliver the Statement, which forms part of my delegation's contribution to the Summit.

**Statement by the President
of the FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,
His Excellency Dr. Richard von Weizsäcker**

Children need all our care and love. For years, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been drawing attention to that fact, meeting with a positive response in the hearts of my fellow countrymen. They want to contribute actively, as indeed does my wife, who is patron of the German UNICEF Committee. Children throughout the world need us badly, and all other problems should stand back. I should like to thank UNICEF for making us aware of that by organizing this gathering.

I speak for a country where children know very little of the dreadful poverty that the vast majority of the children of the world must suffer. We in Germany are privileged and are called upon not only to love our own children but to prove solidarity with children in other countries.

The wealthy industrialized States are urged to do far more than they have done to date, by introducing such concrete measures as vaccination programmes, which are perfectly affordable and achieve a great deal. Far too little is being done to ensure good drinking water supply as a prophylactic health care measure. Other problems, such as inadequate child nutrition, mortality in childbirth and illiteracy, also require our full attention and commitment. However, child survival can be guaranteed only by means of determined and appropriate development policy in general, and it is among the tasks of this Summit to underline that general task. One of the main causes of poverty and also one of its consequences is an excessively high birth rate. It is often the result of a poor economic situation and the lack of adequate social systems in many countries.

A central question confronting religious and ethical leaders and social authorities in both the North and the South is how the dignity of children as human beings can be safeguarded through family planning. Over-population leads to poverty inconsistent with human dignity. In many places, stemming the tide of population growth is literally a question of life and death for children. Too many children are born certain to die of starvation. Children can neither be fed nor clothed with an ethic which makes no call for, or contribution to, improved family planning. This responsibility lies with all of us. Economic aid is in vain if we fail to make progress in our common perception of the moral essence of the problem. Let us spare no effort to leave to the next generation a world which offers them not only the necessary room to live, but also an environment which allows life and makes it worth living.

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**Statement by the President of ARGENTINA,
His Excellency Dr. Carlos Saúl Menem**

(interpretation from Spanish)

We have become accustomed to discussions on development, to statements of need, statements of the aspirations of our people, statistics on the slow progress made in achieving our objectives and the clear fact that our means are inadequate. It is not that we have become insensitive to these problems, but we have become accustomed to a constant struggle. But now we are dealing with a problem which gives a sense of humanity to statistics, giving the face of a child to need, seeing the future reflected on innocent faces. The declaration that we are going to sign this afternoon bears witness to our consensus on the diagnosis of the situation. The Plan of Action which we will be adopting reflects the measures that we solemnly pledge to adopt. But what we are being asked today is not whether we are in agreement, not whether we have been able to grasp the importance of the matter here, as we meet in the largest Summit in history. What we are being asked is whether we are going to have the perseverance to fulfil the commitments that we undertake in the weeks, months and years to come. What children expect of us is that we fulfil those commitments and that we have the civic commitment to fulfil them in time.

Resolving the problems of hunger, malnutrition, health and education will not be the result of a formal ceremony or a heroic action of unanimous decision-making. Rather, it will be the painstaking work done consistently over a generation which can become efficient policy.

The development of children is a real possibility. It depends on our specific conduct in respect of situations that affect the lives of countries, relations among nations, and the fate of the entire international community. How can a country, which is forced by circumstances imposed upon it, take the steps that can ensure the survival and development of children if, at the same time, it needs to make savings in order to pay its debt burden? How can Heads of State and Government, we, gathered here today, talking about other matters, in practice, educate and provide health for our children in the future? We run the risk of disappointing those innocent eyes that look to us with the same faith that we place in them when it is their time to assume responsibility for society. This is a great battle for the integral health and development of children.

I propose that there be another Summit in a year, so that we can report to all the children of the world on what we have done on their behalf during that period.

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**Statement by the President
of the REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE,
His Excellency Major-General Dr. Joseph S. Momoh**

It is an undeniable fact that, in any society, children are the most vital resource for future growth and development. It therefore behoves us all to accord our children's interests and welfare the top-most priority, which it richly deserves. As our children cannot, unfortunately, speak for themselves, it is but fair that we leaders and opinion-makers alike do all the talking for them. And that we must do with all the seriousness and urgency with which such an important matter should be addressed. Our attention has been drawn to the startling and awesome statistics showing that in every passing year, 14 million children die all over the world. Is it not a paradox that this should happen right in the midst of all the modern resources and scientific knowledge available to mankind? The tragedy of it all is that most of these deaths occur in the developing countries of the world, where life expectancy is already very low, especially in Africa south of the Sahara, which is among the most vulnerable, if not the worst affected, region. The miserable plight of the African child deserves special attention. We, as leaders and opinion-makers in Africa, are today totally committed to waging a relentless war on infant mortality. But our resolve is considerably constrained by the lack of the wherewithal. And this is where I call on the rest of humanity for a more positive identification with our cause.

In conclusion, let me invite all of you to share with me the contents of the following declarations, which were recently adopted at the national summit held in my country. The declarations are: first, that we collaborate with and mobilize all channels of communication, both at the mass media and interpersonal levels in order to promote and disseminate child survival and development messages to the public; secondly, that we involve community leadership fully in the planning and implementation of basic services in their localities; thirdly, that we accord high priority at Government, community and personal budget levels to the improvement of basic education, particularly for girls; fourthly, that we take every precaution to keep our environment clean and protect it against all activities that would precipitate degradation; fifthly, that we consider full security a primary objective, at national, community and family levels, to ensure that the most vulnerable groups—especially children under five, pregnant women and nursing mothers—are adequately provided for; and, sixthly, that we accept the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basic standard against which our actions will be judged. My country has already ratified that Convention.

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**Statement by the President of the REPUBLIC OF SURINAME,
His Excellency Dr. Ramsewak Shankar**

Most of the problems affecting children have not been solved for decades. The economic and social constraints in the developing countries have hindered efforts of many of our Governments to promote the social well-being and the development of both children and women, which can be considered as society's most vulnerable groups.

One of the major elements in primary health care in my country is mother and child health, because mothers and children, who comprise a substantial proportion of our population, are considered to be high-risk groups in every community.

In order to assure this, health programmes are implemented by the Government such as:

- National child programmes emphasizing medical examinations and immunization;
- Clinics specialized in general health care for infants till 5;
- Programmes for day-care centres, pregnant women and young mothers, family planning and for dental care.

High priority is attached to early childhood development, including for disabled children in order to guarantee their right to fully and actively participate in society and to ensure a well-balanced and harmonious growth towards social independence and integration in society. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 12, preparing them to develop common skills, physical health and cultural awareness.

My Government acknowledges that much remains to be done in both Suriname and the world in the field of child survival, but reiterates that the global economic problems need to be solved *first* in order to fully implement the lofty goals of this World Summit.

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**Statement by the Prime Minister
of the COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA,
Her Excellency The Hon. Ms. Mary Eugenia Charles**

Health is important. Many small, third-world island States have succeeded in eradicating malnutrition. With a planned health service, Dominica has succeeded in improving its health care and its infant-mortality rate. However, intolerable housing conditions are a scourge that we have not yet conquered. We all agree that enhancement of the family unit, with a clear understanding of the family's responsibility for the survival of children, is necessary to the achievement of our goal. But with our present housing conditions, this is almost impossible. My hope is that this Summit will pay attention to the state of housing, which, for the third world, is a particular curse.

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**Statement by the Prime Minister of PERU,
His Excellency Ing. Juan Carlos Hurtado Miller**

(interpretation from Spanish)

Distinguished Co-Presidents, distinguished Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, representatives: I should like, first, to extend my warmest congratulations to the six countries that took the commendable initiative of convening this Summit for Children. In the present circumstances, in which changes on the international scene are a source of hope and concern, of expectations and a considerable number of well-founded fears, it is highly encouraging that the leaders of developed and of developing countries are reaching agreement on what constitutes the hope of the world—children. In this context, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, and the Plan of Action for Implementing the Declaration in the 1990s represent a solid support base for the economic programme that is being implemented in Peru. One of the basic pillars of the economic, stabilization and social-emergency plan now being developed and implemented is the draft on food and health assistance. Under this social-emergency plan daily care is given to about 7.5 million persons. Most of them are children, for whom we have broad programmes for the provision of milk and school-feeding.

For the Peruvian Government, the task of modernizing society should in no circumstances undermine the rights and needs of children. Therefore, my statement on the theme of ensuring child survival is not a casual affair; its contents are closely related to one of the country's basic social priorities. If we meet the goals that have been set for immunization, oral rehydration, nutrition and basic services, we shall have begun to eradicate one of the many factors explaining the structural violence that affects the societies of Latin America.

Peru is fully aware that responsibility is shared. None the less, the need to meet immediately those requirements that are basic to the survival and development of third-world children involves, in the short term, co-operation from the developed countries at higher-than-traditional qualitative and quantitative levels.

The new international scene, in which the world consensus on children has begun to promote greater harmony between peoples, is not unrelated to the commendable work that has been done by the United Nations under the intelligent guidance of its Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.

We must now keep alive our concern for children and be consistent in our efforts. This is a task which transcends national borders, and to which all mankind must be morally committed.

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Discussion Session II:

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

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**Introductory Statement by the President
of the REPUBLIC OF UGANDA,
His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**

The children of Africa are among the most vulnerable in the world. Of the 30 countries with the highest under-five mortality rate—over 170 per 1,000—21 are in Africa. In the poorest 21 African countries, only 56 per cent of children of primary-school age attend school; only 36 per cent have access to safe drinking water; and for only 42 per cent are health units within one hour's walk.

Let me state the problems that constitute the major underlying causes of so many child deaths in Africa.

First, there is the authoritarian, top-down style of Government, which has failed to involve the people. The business of Government is sometimes conducted in writing, even though the majority of the people are illiterate. Africa is the only region in the world where Government business is conducted in languages that are foreign to the majority of the population.

Any serious effort to solve Africa's problems must begin by addressing the issue of liberating and empowering the bulk of the people through a systematic programme of education and participation.

Ugandans have been motivated into immunizing their children on an unprecedented scale. This year, we were able, by mobilizing the people, to attain the following levels of immunization: BCG, 92 per cent; DPT, 60 per cent; polio, 60 per cent; measles, 60 per cent; tetanus—a miserable level—20 per cent.

That is the first major problem.

The second one is the suppression of man by man, when man oppresses another man. In sub-South Africa we account for almost a third, or almost 4 million, of the world's officially recognized refugees and 12 million displaced persons. As you know, the phenomenon of refugees is due to oppression of man by man of one type or another.

The second phenomenon of oppression of man by man which affects Africa is the system of *apartheid* in South Africa, which has had a devastating effect on the survival and development of the black children in South Africa. In the 1980s the infant mortality rate in South Africa was 12 per 1,000 live births among the white children, compared to 124 per 1,000 for the black children. That happens in the same country. This shows the effect of oppression of man by man on children, the subject about which we are talking. That is the second major factor, as far as I am concerned.

The third major factor is the economic and technological underdevelopment. Twenty-eight of the 43 least developed countries are in Africa. The continent lacks sufficient capital and technology to initiate, promote and sustain its own form of development to become self-sufficient in all fields, including the very field about which we are talking. Due to declining commodity prices, many African countries resorted to heavy external borrowing. By 1989 the region's crippling debt was almost equal to its GNP and 3.5 times its export earnings.

Those are the major problems, but, as far as the specific question of protecting children is concerned, they can be tackled very easily with the external assistance, even if there are no indigenous capacities to solve them.

Our own experience has shown that if you immunize children, you ensure hygiene and protection, and you can bring down the infant mortality rate. We were able to bring the infant mortality rate down from 120 four years ago to about 70 now—that is, 70 children die out of every 1,000 born alive. So it is possible, with a modest input, to bring down the mortality rate of children.

The political documents which are before us underscore the need to protect children from the scourge of war by taking measures to prevent further armed conflict and to protect the essential needs of children even in times of war, through the observance of periods of tranquillity and special relief corridors for the benefit of children and the promotion of the values of peace, understanding and dialogue in the education of children.

There are children in especially difficult circumstances, and this covers children and victims of *apartheid*, foreign oppression and annexation; refugee children; children in natural disasters; children exploited through child labour; victims of the drug problem; and socially disadvantaged children.

The documents call for special attention to protection and assistance for children in this category in the context of national efforts and international co-operation, and I commend them for your adoption.

Thank you very much.

**Introductory Statement by the President
of the CZECH AND SLOVAK FEDERAL REPUBLIC,
His Excellency Mr. Václav Havel**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: A thousand times over the last decades I have seen in my country many bent backs, bent allegedly in the interests of children. A thousand times I have heard people defend their servitude to a hated régime by the argument that they were doing it only for their children—to be able to feed them, to make it possible for them to study, to be able to afford vacations at the seaside. A thousand times various acquaintances as well as strangers confided to me that they were in their mind and soul totally on our side—that is, on the side of so-called dissidents—and that they signed various petition campaigns aimed against us and organized by the totalitarian Government for the sole reason that they had children and thus could not afford the luxury of resistance. Immorality was thus committed in the name of children, and evil was served for their alleged good.

But I have seen even greater perversities, if only in the movies or on TV. I saw Hitler waving in a friendly way to fanaticized little girls of the Hitlerjugend; I saw the mass murderer Stalin kissing a child with the Red Communist Youth Organization scarf, a child whose parents ended up, like so many others, in Gulag camps; I saw Gottwald, the Stalin of Czechoslovakia, smilingly joking with young miners, the builders of socialism and soon to be cripples; I saw the Iraqi President Hussein patting the children of his hostages, whom, as he now says, he is ready to have shot.

I know and have experienced how in Czechoslovakia thousands of people suffered in Communist concentration camps, how hundreds of them were executed and tortured to death, and all this for the fake happiness of generations yet unborn in some fake paradise.

How much evil has already been committed in the name of children!

But I have also experienced something very different. I have even experienced it as recently as several months ago, a year ago, two years ago. I have experienced a beautiful revolt of children against the lie that their parents had served, allegedly, in the interest of those very children. Our anti-totalitarian revolution was—at least in its beginnings—a children's revolution. High school students and apprentices, young people, marched in the streets. They marched, and their parents were afraid. They were afraid for their children and for themselves. They locked the children at home; they drove them outside the cities on weekends. Then they started marching in the streets with them—first out of fear for their children, and later because they became infected by their enthusiasm. The children evoked in their parents their better selves. They convicted them of lying and forced them to take a stand on the side of truth.

And what about the children of dissidents? Although they could not study and had to endure the arrests and persecutions of their parents, they did not blame them but, on the contrary, respected them. They were more interested in the moral example than in the advantages stemming from a bent back.

Children in our country have proved false the ideology of sacrificing truth for an alleged interest of children. They revolted against their parents, who advocated this ideology. They joined the few who had been convinced from the very beginning that they served their children best if they did not look for excuses and did not lie but, rather, lived in truth and thus gave an example to their children.

The international community has achieved something unprecedented. Most of the countries of the world had within months joined an exceptionally good, precise and comprehensive international agreement for the protection of children. I rejoice, as we all do, in this achievement and am proud that I had the honour to sign the agreement on behalf of my country this morning. However, at the same time I believe that this agreement, or any other conceivable international document, cannot protect children from pseudo-protection; it cannot prevent their parents from committing more evil in the name and in the interest of children, whether in good faith, in self-delusion, or by deliberately lying, and from actually hurting themselves more than they can hurt their children.

As with any law, even this law can only acquire its real meaning and significance if it is accompanied by real moral self-awareness. In this case I am talking about the self-awareness of parents. That cannot be put into law. However, if it were possible, I would add another paragraph to the agreement I signed this morning. That paragraph would say that it is forbidden for parents and adults in general to lie, serve dictatorships, inform on others, bend one's back, be scared of dictators, and betray one's friends and ideals in the name and for the alleged interest of children, and that it is forbidden for all murderers and dictators to pat children on the head. Thank you for your attention.

Commentary by the Prime Minister of FRANCE, His Excellency Mr. Michel Rocard

(interpretation from French)

Distinguished Co-Presidents, Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Executive Director of UNICEF, ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to be able to speak on this topic after President Museveni, current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, that is to say, from the continent where children are of great value but have also suffered tragically. I am happy also to have heard President Václav Havel's very moving statement.

When one knows that one can avoid the suffering of a child when that derives from ill-treatment, that deserves—demands—all our attention and all our energy. That has been perfectly understood by world leaders. They are demonstrating this today. Under the chairmanship of President Traoré and Prime Minister Mulroney, UNICEF has taken the initiative. The United Nations has given its support. Non-governmental organizations have made an unprecedented contribution.

That it took less than a year from the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to its entry into force shows more eloquently than any speech how great the interest of the international community is.

My country, France, adopted and ratified it without the slightest hesitation, and the presence of all of us here bears witness to our common will to apply it fully.

Yet the meaning of our Summit, along with France's solemn commitment, is that we must go further and strengthen still further international co-operation in favour of children.

Children, all children, our own as well as those of others, have rights with respect to us all that we must constantly affirm and defend: first, the right to eat and to be protected against disease, abuse and exploitation. For whatever the forms and manifestations, the madness of men and the misfortunes of the world always come down first and foremost on those who have the least defence, on the weakest.

Among many examples, I am thinking of those orphans in Europe whose appalling condition the world recently discovered, at a time when one had thought that that continent was more secure than others.

The rights of the mother should be recognized, as when the mother is destitute the child suffers. And children are entitled to our protection to compensate them for their weakness. The extent to which we protect their dignity is the measure of our own.

Hence, is it not deplorable that this protection so often gives way to a certain disorder that, by convention, we call economic order?

That children should still die of measles and whooping cough—as has already been said—when there are vaccines, and not very costly ones at that, to my mind is intolerable and unworthy of mankind. Of course my country, faithful to its tradition,

will actively continue its policy of research and development of new vaccines. Yet they must also be able to gain widespread use.

The comprehensive plan of assistance to the developing world, referred to last Monday in the General Assembly of the United Nations by the President of the French Republic, would make it possible to fight more effectively against these shameful inequalities, these injustices which, to use his own words,

“in themselves constitute unbearable violence and that violence gives rise to still further injustices.” (A/45/PV.4, p. 46)

To be sure, poverty is not the sole cause of misfortune. Every one of us has had occasion to read the love, the tenderness, sometimes even the sparkle in the eyes of the most deprived children, while we can see the distress of some segments of the youth of rich countries. The number of adolescent suicides, the increase in drug addiction, even the spread of AIDS keep us from reducing children's problems to that of poverty.

Emotional abandonment is a cause of mental retardation and despair for many children. The world project proposed in our Programme of Action will mobilize young people and bring them hope again.

Let us go even a step further. The claims children have on us go beyond protection. What kind of world are we going to leave behind for them: a world of violence and arbitrariness, or a world where they can live in peace thanks to the rule of law; a world given over to the anarchy of the law of the strongest, or a world that is organized and at peace thanks to the wisdom and authority of the United Nations, such as we have dreamed of it and as we see it at work in the present crisis; a world in which the wealth of some increases while the poverty of others deepens, or a world open, at last, to justice and sharing; a world that is befouled, irresponsible and ravaged, or a world with a healthy environment where nature is safeguarded?

These, too, must be reckoned among their rights, for the Earth is one and belongs to all. We are accountable to them for all this today, just as they will be accountable tomorrow to those who come after them. Such is the chain of life, and such must be the understanding of mankind as it marches forward.

When a child weeps, when a child dies, all mankind loses some of its dignity and hope. Often, preventing it simply depends on us. We undertake this commitment. Everything will reside in its implementation.

Commentary by the President of VENEZUELA, His Excellency Dr. Carlos Andrés Pérez

(interpretation from Spanish)

This historic Summit is an unprecedented opportunity for action for the survival, protection and development of the children of the world through political support at the highest level. The children whose basic needs we fail to meet today will not have a second chance.

Among the rights of the child, that of protection is among the vital, since it refers to those children which are facing especially difficult situations.

This applies to the case of street children. While there are no figures that enable us to know precisely how many children, because of abandonment and poverty, have invaded the streets of our principal Latin American cities, it is clear that this is a problem that is growing steadily. Among those children, the category of those living and working on the street is certainly greater than that of children who do not have family ties. None the less, the size of this contingent is already such that our Governments have increasingly been obliged to take special measures to tackle the problem.

These measures must be intensified in order to offer assistance alternatives to those who are completely unprotected and live in a world in which physical mistreatment and sexual abuse are frequent. The child who takes the path of delinquency is already a grim reality affecting our nations and clouding our future.

The case of child workers is also of great concern. They are usually school drop-outs and are often victims of exploitation. They work long days and find themselves in a world in which they must defend themselves against the aggression and violence of adults, with whom they compete to protect their place in the labour market.

These situations, new in their magnitude and diversity in Latin American countries, reflect the terrible social deterioration that the region has been experiencing in recent years under the influence of the economic crisis worsened by debt. It is necessary, once and for all, for the international financial community to become aware of the intolerable consequences that the onerous terms of the debt repayment imposed upon us have for our countries. In order to reverse these consequences, it is essential that an increasing portion of our income be allocated to economic growth and to the implementation of programmes that can produce an immediate improvement in the standard of living of peoples. Only in this way will we be able to deal with the ultimate causes of social disintegration which these problems reveal.

The most crucial needs of children can be met if in our development strategies we give highest priority to the child. For this purpose it is necessary that the Governments of the industrialized and developing countries take concrete measures. To allocate 10 per cent of what the world might save through reduced arms production and reduced military expenditures by all countries towards meeting the needs of children might be a course of action commensurate with the commitment we are undertaking today.

May I propose that it be agreed at this Summit that the countries that sign the Convention hold next year a national conference on the child with the participation of the public and private sectors in order to assess the situation of children in each country and the measures to be adopted to fulfil the terms and provisions of the Convention. Venezuela has already taken the decision to convene such a conference on 29 August 1991, on the first anniversary of the enactment of the law on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gave the Convention force of law in Venezuela.

Let us make this decade the Decade of the Child, the last decade of a century of turmoil and contradiction, in which the downward trend in the well-being of children of our world can be reversed for the sake of a more just world with a more human face.

**Commentary by the President of NICARAGUA,
Her Excellency Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro**

(interpretation from Spanish)

What I have heard this morning reaffirms the feelings of solidarity of Nicaraguan and Central American children as well as those feelings of children and young people the world over.

The tragedy of children in Central America reflects the tragedy of children the world over. War in some of our countries has affected our children crucially; children have seen that they are extremely vulnerable.

But it is not only the violence of war that affects children. Malnutrition, poverty, lack of education are all tragedies of children. Peace is not just the absence of war. War begins in the minds of individuals, and this is also where the smiles of happiness of children arise. For this reason we need to educate people, to promote values, to promote tolerance, to have dialogue—for the sake of children. These values must be promoted from the very earliest time of our children's lives. Had that been the case, we would be living in a different world today.

More than 160,000 people died in Central America because of war. The economic crisis in Central America also takes its toll of victims, first and foremost among children. At the present time 12 million Central Americans, 40 per cent of our total population, live in conditions of extreme poverty. Approximately 1.7 million of these are children.

According to a study in Nicaragua by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at the present time 578,000 Nicaraguan children under 15 years of age live in particularly difficult conditions, 215,000 children have been affected directly by war, 3,000 died, 1,600 were wounded or amputees, 16,000 were made orphans and 165,000 were displaced from their homes.

As President of my country I foster national and international reconciliation, and I am committed to strengthening peace, democracy and development in the region, aware that for development the promotion of the right to adequate education for Nicaraguan children is of great importance. I have issued a decree, which is now in force, creating a National Commission for the Protection of Nicaraguan Children. That Commission will begin a series of programmes to organize and provide for greater care for the children of Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan people are determined to strengthen peace so that our children will be able to take their rightful place in the future.

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**Commentary by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers
of the UKRAINIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC,
His Excellency Mr. Vitaly A. Masol**

It is very hard to look a trustful child in the eye knowing that the mistakes committed by adults are being paid for by innocent children. How can we give hope to those who make their first steps in this life when the world's ever worsening economic ills are accompanied by the global crisis of the environment, when the media are full of reports about natural calamities and tragic technological accidents? And while the elements of nature may be well beyond our control, the idea that deliberate human activity is fraught with fatal consequences defies logic.

It was not droughts, floods and desertification, but unbridled industrialization that brought about environmental disaster in the Ukraine. By its long-term consequences, the Chernobyl accident has no equal among the disasters of the industrial age. Its adverse impact on the environment, the way of life and the health of millions of people in the Ukraine has become nation-wide. In the first days after the accident and for three weeks thereafter I directly participated in the elimination of its consequences. First and foremost we had to prevent an even more awesome tragedy: we had to evacuate more than 100,000 local inhabitants, and protect Kiev, with a multi-million population, from radioactive contamination. At the same time, prompt measures were taken to protect the Dnieper river, whose water resources are used by more than 35 million people in the Ukraine.

Chernobyl has affected everyone, but youngsters were those who suffered most. About 60,000 children who were irradiated during the first days after the accident have their thyroid glands affected by higher than acceptable doses of radiation.

We are deeply grateful to various international organizations, Governments and people of many countries for the help they gave us. The Government of the Republic is mobilizing funds amounting to many billion rubles and the entire scientific and technological potential of the Ukraine for the realization of programmes aimed at eliminating the consequences of the accident. We hope that the international community will take part in these efforts.

But do we have to wait for a nuclear accident in Chernobyl or a chemical one in Bhopal in order to demonstrate the best human qualities—compassion, sympathy, readiness to help those who are weaker or in distress?

It is vitally important today to disseminate as widely as possible the information on modern technologies in the production of baby foods to ensure large-scale realization of the achievements of medical science. Internationalization of scientific achievements will guarantee against a threat posed by industrial activity to present and future generations.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, we could start with an exchange of technologies and production methods accessible to all and safe for nature and man. It is possible that such exchanges will pave the way for improvements in the quality of industrial activity.

Can mankind meet the challenge it is now facing? Our children will live in a world which will be shaped by us. I hope that working together we will build a world worthy of human beings, a world which will be an inspiration for poets and artists in the second millennium and beyond, a world where children will always be happy and smiling.

And it is for the sake of this that we are today signing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation.

**Statement by the Prime Minister of DENMARK,
His Excellency Mr. Poul Schlüter**

What springs to mind these days when speaking of the protection of children is, of course, the situation of the children affected by the crisis in the Gulf. My Government whole-heartedly supports the pledge in the draft Declaration to ameliorate the plight of millions of children in especially difficult circumstances, including victims of foreign occupation and refugee children.

Protection of children must be seen, however, not only in the context of freedom from oppression and war but also in a broad socio-economic context. Millions of children are threatened by disease, malnutrition and inadequate education. We must offer them opportunities for living under decent social, economic and environmental conditions.

I should like to single out one of the most important factors influencing socio-economic progress: population policy and family planning. Apart from its general impact, it has a direct bearing on the well-being of children, now and in the future.

In many countries, not least among the poorest, the population explosion is the single most important obstacle to development. If the population growth rate in such countries is not reduced, improvements in conditions for the great majority of children will be but marginal.

One last remark: the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a milestone in the endeavours to improve the conditions of children and their protection. Our Parliament is ready to ratify the Convention shortly after it convenes next week.

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**Statement by the President
of the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE,
His Excellency Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano**

For us in Mozambique, the commitment to mitigate the plight of the child and the mother constitutes a crucial component of the overall process of the country's economic and social recovery and development.

It was within this framework that we succeeded in expanding the health care and school networks so as to cover virtually the whole country in the first few years after independence. As a result of this and other activities which had been introduced in this field, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized then that Mozambique had one of the most successful primary health care programmes in Africa. It is true that these efforts cannot possibly continue to produce the expected results as a consequence of the war and other atrocities resulting from RENAMO terrorist activities in Mozambique.

In the wake of such cruelties nearly 45 per cent of the primary schools have been destroyed, depriving over 600,000 children of primary education.

Over 900 health centres and dispensaries, representing one third of the whole primary health care network, have been destroyed or paralysed. Also, as a consequence of the war, it is estimated that about half a million children have lost their lives as a result of the combined effects of the direct impact of the war and the rise in the rate of infant mortality.

Recent surveys show that the rate of infant mortality in Mozambique—159 per thousand—ranks among the highest in the world and that the conditions of malnutrition tend to be progressively worse. Apart from being deprived of access to health care and education, the Mozambican child is also victim of brutalization by the armed bandits who teach them how to kill their own parents.

The Mozambican child experiences the trauma of having been kidnapped, raped and of having watched the killing of his own relatives.

About 400,000 Mozambican children live as refugees in neighbouring countries, and over 600,000 live in accommodation centres for displaced persons inside the country, while some others live abandoned in the streets.

This scenario demonstrates clearly the seriousness of the problems which Mozambique faces today and which threaten the survival and the harmonious growth of the Mozambican child.

In an effort to restore the physiological stability and the total rehabilitation of the child, the Government has embarked on a programme of reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools and health centres destroyed by RENAMO. Alongside the economic structural adjustment programme the Government is pursuing the following: first, mother and health care programmes; secondly, the tracing of the families of abandoned children; thirdly, the integration of children into families; fourthly, the establishment

of a balanced system of mutually supportive community-based services, and, finally, the training of professional community leaders for an adequate handling of trauma-affected children.

In this context, we regard the peace efforts we are making in our country as a contribution to the search for ways and means to provide the Mozambican child with family stability, peace, security and tranquillity.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank UNICEF and the other United Nations family organizations for the support they are giving our children and their mothers. We are also grateful for the efforts of individual Governments, some of which are here represented, as well as the efforts of non-governmental organizations.

I am sure that our children will get more attention from the international community as a result of the commitment we all are making at this Summit.

**Statement by the Prime Minister of LEBANON,
His Excellency Mr. Selim El-Hoss**

In addition to setting minimum standards for survival, health and education, Governments should provide explicit protection for children against violence, exploitation and abuse. This applies most pertinently to children under armed conflict. At present, over 20 wars are occurring throughout the world. These wars range from full-scale civil conflicts to multi-party conflicts and incipient guerrilla insurgencies.

Children's exposure to, and even participation in, war varies dramatically, as does the ability of parents, communities and nations to protect children from war. Some children bear arms or come under direct fire; some are kidnapped, tortured, brainwashed. As a result, some die or are physically handicapped for life. Some children watch in horror as parents, siblings, friends fight, flee or die. Others are separated from their families and become refugees in foreign countries.

Although basic survival needs take priority over psychosocial needs in time of war, there is a growing concern that such overwhelming experiences will have a damaging impact on the development of children, their attitudes towards society, their relationships with others and their outlook on life in general. Some parents or communities have been able to shelter their children from war. However, most families, drained of their resources after so many years of war, feel helpless in protecting their children from events beyond their control. Until we know how to prevent wars, the international community will want to do all it can to empower parents, communities and nations to protect their children from the most serious physical and psychosocial effects of war.

In fact, protecting children in areas of armed conflict is not only humanitarian in its own right: it may also be among the few viable strategies to end the generational transmission of violence that exists in some parts of the world. When parents, communities and nations cannot ensure protection, the direct efforts of the international community may become necessary to protect children's rights under conditions of war. These rights, and the national and international responsibilities, are articulated most fully in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This international treaty, which came into force on 2 September 1990, offers the philosophical and political legitimacy required to guarantee the safety and rights of children.

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**Statement by the President
of the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA,
His Excellency Mr. Zhelyu Zhelev**

(delivered in Bulgarian; English text furnished by the delegation)

I find something symbolic in the fact that the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child coincides with the beginning of actual political democratization in my country. The adoption of a new constitution and legislation based on universal human values is the main task of the present Bulgarian Parliament. I therefore believe that prompt ratification by Bulgaria of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will be a further expression of our desire to resolve our own problems in compliance with the norms and values of the world community. The Bulgarian public fully supports the aims and tasks of the present Summit.

The Declaration and Plan of Action to be adopted at this Summit will reflect our common concern and will be concrete efforts to provide normal conditions for living and the protection of the development of children.

The previous, totalitarian régime has left us a heavy legacy of serious problems in respect of children's lives and development. The infant mortality rate is still high in comparison with that of the other European countries. The polluted environment has an extremely dangerous effect on children's physical, psychological and mental health. There are still evident problems, such as the shortage of housing and school facilities for children. There is a shortage of adequate food, and especially baby food. Another source of alarm is the situation of the social orphans, who make up almost one in three children under 14. Standards of education are unsatisfactory. Juvenile delinquency, neglected children and drug addiction are problems now emerging after long years of concealment. All this is in addition to the specific problems caused by the present transition from totalitarianism to democracy, from a centrally planned to a market economy.

Today Bulgaria badly needs humanitarian aid, baby food and medicines. We ourselves are looking for new forms of social and legal protection for children and mothers.

I hope that with our concerted efforts, the international solidarity on behalf of the child, which is embodied in UNICEF, will help the nations solve the problems of children. This is the hope of a politician, a citizen and statesman, who is also a father.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to the initiators of this Summit, to the UNICEF Secretariat for preparing it and the world Organization for hosting it.

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Statement by the President of COSTA RICA, His Excellency Lic. Rafael Angel Calderón

(interpretation from Spanish)

For the first time in history, the leaders of nations are responding to the noblest and most urgent task of our day: to save that silent majority, children, who, day after day, hour after hour, suffer the blows of hunger, lack of education, crime, war and exploitation. That is why the World Summit for Children is a milestone in the evolution of international relations. We are today at a decisive point in history. We, the peoples of the world, are struggling to meet our moral commitment, given the enormity of the problems suffered by our children.

In full awareness of the great importance of these circumstances, we Costa Ricans bring to this forum of nations a message of unlimited enthusiasm for the cause of children the world over, and a determination to struggle for it. We are convinced that this Summit must be something much more important than a passing meeting of Heads of State. We are convinced of this because of our moral values and our own specific experience.

Costa Rica is a small and relatively poor nation. Because of our meagre resources, we need to choose our priorities on the basis of criteria of legitimacy and urgency. Together with peace, democracy and development with a human face, we have pinpointed children as a legitimate and urgent priority. Therefore, on the basis of a strong national consensus, Costa Rica has succeeded in building an efficient system of nutrition, health care, education and protection for its children. We can say that the protection of children in Costa Rica is taking place within an integrated framework geared towards broad national goals. One of those goals is the protection of the family, since without the family there can be no childhood, there can be no society.

At the regional and international levels, Costa Rica fully supports the economic plan for Central America. We have taken significant initiatives for peace, and now we must also work for development. Without peace or prosperity, there can be no happy children.

In the specific case of Central American children, it is our fervent hope that this Summit will be a turning-point between two eras, between a sad, lost decade and a decade of new hope, for which we shall make enormous efforts.

Of course, we want a more free and more efficient global economy, but we also believe in adjustment with a human face. Efficiency must go side by side with justice. Any global effort for children will fail if we do not arrive at a just solution to the debt problem. The future of our children will, to a great extent, depend on solidarity among nations.

We support the efforts of the international community to close ranks against illegal and unjustified aggression and against drug trafficking that is a crime against mankind. In this regard, we commend the heroic efforts being made by the Government and the people of Colombia.

The Costa Rican people reaffirms its unconditional support for the principle of priority advocated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and for the major goals of the World Summit for Children: the reduction of child and maternal mortality rates by 50 per cent, the elimination of severe malnutrition, the universalization of preventive health care for children, immunization, broad access to drinking water and to basic education.