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UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
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15 September 1954  
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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board

STATEMENT TO UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD 127th MEETING  
9 SEPTEMBER 1954 BY DR. C. A. EGGER, DIRECTOR,  
AFRICA, EUROPE AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL OFFICE

UNICEF ASSISTANCE TO EUROPE AND NORTH AFRICA

Although the problems and the background situation in Europe are less dramatic than those in Asia as described to you at the 126th meeting, I can assure you that both the governments and the people in Southern Europe and North Africa are no less interested in improving their living conditions and their health standards for future generations of mothers and children. As you see from the requests which have come before you this year from these countries, the value of UNICEF's aid and that of the specialized agencies of the United Nations is being increasingly recognized and sought by them, and by the increasing number of countries that are joining this international cooperative for children. This great interest is confirmed by the very real work that has gone into the implementation of the programmes in which UNICEF is assisting in Southern Europe and North Africa.

The requests from Europe now before the Board are for help in maternal and child health services, in milk conservation, care for handicapped children and in mass disease control. I would like to show you a more comprehensive picture of our work in these fields in Europe and North Africa.

Mass Health Campaigns - Trachoma

The Board learned at the last session of the satisfactory development of the trachoma campaign in Morocco. We are very happy now to report on progress in the second territory where trachoma is being attacked, Tunisia. Since early 1954, trachoma control work has been going on in Tunisia and more than 200,000 mothers and children have already been treated. There is great enthusiasm among the health authorities and advisory personnel over the first results. As in Morocco, it is difficult to evaluate the results at this stage but

it is interesting to note that there are indications that the trachoma campaign will prove as fruitful in Tunisia as in Morocco. The programme in Tunisia has not been easy because we do not deal with a stationary population but with nomadic groups which can be reached only with considerable difficulty. Success of the campaign is dependent very largely on the education of the people, health education playing an important part in this whole work. The Tunisian authorities, not only in relation to trachoma but also to other health programmes, have made very good use of films and other means of transmitting basic health knowledge to the people.

You will see from the requests before the Programme Committee that a new country, Spain, has become interested in establishing the first pilot campaign against trachoma in its southern provinces. Trachoma in Southern Spain is similar, clinically, to the disease as it appears in North Africa. We now have mass campaigns moving ahead in Morocco and Tunisia and a pilot campaign is being prepared in Egypt. With the addition of a campaign in Spain, we shall soon be able to deal with trachoma on a regional basis.

#### Maternal and Child Welfare

Turning to another field which is of real importance to the rural areas in Southern Europe, I should like to tell you of the development of adequate maternal and child health services. Even the more advanced countries in Europe are greatly concerned about their infant mortality figures and are as anxious as the under-developed countries to find the causes for high mortality of infants, whether diarrhea, syphilis, pneumonia or prematurity. UNICEF is giving aid at various stages of development and at various levels. This aid, however, should be seen as a complementary action to that taken by the health authorities and people of the countries concerned; if one is to have a true picture of this great effort being made, one must look at the progress as a whole. For example, if we analyse the value of the proposed UNICEF participation in MCW activities in Spain, we must take into account the real effort of the Spanish authorities since the war to develop their own MCW services. Spanish pediatricians and nurses have tried to utilize the best known preventive concepts in this work with the result that infant mortality dropped from approximately 100 per 1000 live births just after the civil war to 50 per 1000 in 1953.

/I would like

I would like to mention here that the training work of the International Children's Centre, in offering workers from many countries the possibility to study and observe modern developments, has had considerable influence in the advancement of these services in a number of countries.

#### Handicapped Children

The Board will remember that some years ago UNICEF made its first investment in equipping of centres for the training of personnel for the care and rehabilitation of handicapped children. This initial investment has led to a much wider development than originally anticipated. The first handicapped children's programme in Europe was in Greece. Such help has also been given to Italy and to Austria. In each case, UNICEF's assistance has helped to bring together in the work for handicapped children a number of organizations, university <sup>medical</sup> groups, social welfare workers, and so on, and probably for the first time, these countries have realized that this problem can only be attacked by close collaboration of all interested groups. The idea has emerged that such a programme on a much broader basis would help the individual organizations through the use of national centres to develop improved methods of care and of training of personnel. UNICEF may be asked to participate further in these schemes. In each of these programmes credit must also be given to WHO and to the United Nations Department of Social Affairs for their excellent services and advisors.

To cope with a serious outbreak of poliomyelitis in Greece UNICEF was recently able to provide three iron lungs which will arrive in Greece in the coming week, to be used in treatment of an increasing number of cases.

#### Milk Conservation

In the field of milk conservation, our projects in Europe are developing satisfactorily as you will see from the Executive Director's Report. The two new dry milk plants, one in Slovenia and one in Southern Italy, will start operations in October. In Southern Italy, five dairies are being equipped and four liquid milk plants will be in operation by the end of this year.

With regard to Yugoslavia, we have agreed with FAO that a broader study will be made in the coming winter on the basis of which Yugoslav plants may be guided to cut down their production costs and smooth out distribution problems. Further attention must also be given to the economic aspects of encouraging  
/production, effective

production, effective price policy and methods of distribution.

Work in the milk processing field is also going forward on other fronts as evidenced by a new request from Finland for additional UNICEF assistance in the bottling of pasteurized milk and by a request from the Government of Greece for assistance from UNICEF and FAO in both a survey of milk production and possible additional participation in the development and utilization of milk resources in Greece.

#### Environmental Sanitation

We have received a request from the Government of Greece for an overall environmental sanitation programme in Northern Greece. Both WHO and ourselves are interested in and appreciate the real value of the work that has gone into the preparation of this request and feel that it deserves consideration, and we want to bring it to the attention of the Board at the earliest possible moment.

#### National Committees

Before closing, I would like to refer to the increasing numbers of national committees in Europe. Such committees have been established in Norway, Denmark and Sweden and we are developing increasingly better relationships with them in order to permit them to keep up with the development and progress of our work and to enlist the support of the public and of especially interested groups. I am convinced that, if we want to maintain these helpful committees, we will have to remain in close contact with them, let them share in our work and help in the development of their activities.

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