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Speech by Audrey Hepburn

Press Conference at the conclusion of

"Wiesbaden for UNICEF"

12 December 1991

These are devastatingly hard times for our world.

Africa is suffering from mass malnutrition. 40 million Africans are now displaced by civil conflict - most of them are children.

Millions of Cambodians and Kurds are barely surviving in countless camps - again...most of them are children.

Eastern Europe, Russia, Yugoslavia are facing a winter of despair and as always it will be children who will suffer the most and bear the scars the longest.

In spite of a worldwide recession the people of Wiesbaden have opened up their hearts and given priority to the most vulnerable and fragile; our children.

I am overwhelmed by the extraordinary effort of love you have made. This Wiesbaden initiative is unique - never before has an entire city raised funds for a whole year for children in need.

You, Mr. Mayor have been the driving force behind this splendid action. On behalf of UNICEF I express my deepest gratitude to you, the father of this City, and to every single citizen who has worked so hard and given so generously and lovingly to alleviate the suffering of so many children.

I dearly hope that your shining example will be followed by many other cities all over the world.

Speech by Audrey Hepburn

Launch of SOWCR-1992

Brussels, 19 December 1991

We have, for centuries, lived in ignorance and indifference to much of the suffering around us - this is no longer possible. Thanks to you the media the world can no longer ignore its poor nor its political prisoners, its starving and dying, its wars, violence and injustice. The media has become a lifeline to a world in need.

Thank you for being here today, and for once again showing your willingness to be a voice for those children who are unable to speak for themselves.

Every year, for more than a decade the "report" has called the attention of people everywhere, to the desperate plight of the most neglected most vulnerable and innocent among us, our children. In this report you will read of children suffering from

- malnutrition,
- excruciating poverty,
- disease,
- illiteracy

and the effects of over-population.

I have seen many of these children, and believe me it is heartbreaking. Yet I am sustained by the knowledge that to all of this there is a solution... As Mr. Grant will shortly tell you the 1990s could be a decade of real progress.

Those children that have stricken me with despair are the ones who are the victims of war and civil conflict - and I quote from the "report":

In the last decade, more than 1 1/2 million children have been killed in wars. More than 4 million have been physically disabled - limbs amputated, brains damaged, eyesight and hearing lost - through bombing, landmines, firearms, torture. Five million children are in refugee camps, because of war; a further 12 million have lost their homes.

The time has now come for a worldwide public to cry out against this war on children, against those who use the weapons and those who supply them. If wars must be fought, then, at the very least, children should be protected from their worst effects. (end quote)

We do not have the power to stop a war ... but we do have the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has now been ratified by 100 countries - and it specifically demands ... "all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict." We can and must create a safety net for children - zones of peace and protection. We ask that periods of tranquility and special relief corridors be observed for the benefit of children, ... where war and violence are still taking place.

Last year, at the World Summit for Children, which was attended by 72 heads of State - a promise was made ... that children should have first call on societies' concern

- in good times and in bad
- in war, as in peace
- in times of recession, as in times of affluence.

A man who is dedicating his life to keeping this promise is our Executive Director; a man who has been the driving force and inspiration behind the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child - the World Summit for Children - and the achievement, this year, of Universal Child Immunization for 80% of children in the developing world - the miracle of this decade.

He travels constantly to the 4 corners of the earth - wherever there is a child in need.

Mr. James Grant.