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## AUDREY HEPBURN IN HER OWN WORDS

(Transcripts of statements)

**Question**      *How long did it take you to make the decision to become a UNICEF Ambassador ?*

**Answer**            *About two minutes. If you deny childhood, you deny life. They can't speak up for themselves, so we must. But it's like, how do you define love ? It's a very, very deep feeling but it's - I think the most important force of life.*

\*

*I've known UNICEF for so many years and I've, you know, total trust in them. I was very happy.*

**Question**      *In what way had you known them for so many years, the work of UNICEF?*

**Answer**            *Well, because I - I did emerge from the last war, along with hundreds and thousands of other children in Holland with a very poor health and because of years of malnutrition, and UNICEF did come in right after the liberation with the way they do now in all kinds of emergencies - with food and clothing and medication and blankets.*

\*

*Some people might not know what it means to be hungry, deprived and so forth. Never do I think that when I see a child in Africa who's at death's door. But what I've always had and maybe that I was born with, was an enormous love of people, children.*

*I loved them when I was little. I used to embarrass my mother by trying to pick babies out of prams at the market. You know that kind of thing. The one thing I dreamed of in my life was, to have children of my own. It always boils down to the same thing, of not only receiving love but wanting desperately to give it, enormous need to give it.*

\*

*This whole tragedy (in Ethiopia) is because there's no water. We can't make it rain, but when it does, at least we can help provide the country with ways of containing it.*

*I see marvelous projects of UNICEF where they are literally with their hands building dams.*

*UNICEF means the survival, development and protection of children all over the world. Africa, Asia, South America, everywhere and if I may sum it up in a very short phrase, and*

*this will say as long as I have breath, for the people of Ethiopia, all they need is the assistance to help themselves which they are yearning to do and UNICEF is giving them a spade, let us say, to dig their water wells. Let it not be to dig the graves of their children.*

\*

*I suppose, I have in my travels seen the worst and the best in a sense. The needs of children but also what's been done for them, and I do think that perhaps today, never has there been more suffering in more places all at once.*

*At the same time, never has there been so much hope. Because we've had the greatest gift that mankind could possibly give to children, which is the "Convention on the Rights of the Child". Two hundred and fifty thousand children die every week.*

*Last week, next week - and nobody really talks about it. Nevertheless, it's the greatest shame and tragedy of our times. And it must stop.*

\*

*How strange it is that there isn't a science of peace. There's a science of war. Nothing comparable to the science of armaments and strategy. There are colleges of war but why can't we study and have science of peace ?*

**Peace starts with children.**

*We teach them to hate. We teach them intolerance and racism an all of that. Children, if you leave them alone, they'll play with each other, regardless what color, creed or anything.*

\*

**Question**      *Why do you continue to do this, which brings you one dollar a year, and what rewards do you get ?*

**Answer**        *It's - it's the most rewarding job I've ever had and one continues because one must. It's so important. But also because I can't stop.*

\*

*I think I' ve been terribly privileged and it's logic that somebody who is privileged should do something for those who are not. Again, that's the way I was brought up and everybody around me in my childhood did so, - considered it the right thing to do.*

*You know, I don't think anybody ever sat down and asked why. They knew why. Because it's necessary. And what we do or what I do is very little. I mean this is not a false modesty. I have a lot to be modest about. But it's necessary.*

*Because finally if a child has an accident, who is the most important, the person who makes the instant phone call, the ambulance that comes, the doctor who operates right away? Who saves the life? It needs so many of us and some do a lot more than others. And all of them do more than I do.*

*But it makes me feel good to know that what I do is necessary, too.*

\*

*And after survival, the most important thing is education, education. Because only that way will children be able to be productive for themselves, for their families or their country.*

\*

*Yesterday, we went into the mountains quite far to a rural area that not many people can get to, because it's so far away. But unlike many other small rural areas I've been to in other countries, it's rural but not forgotten. And that is terribly encouraging, because there is a health center, there is a women's education center, there's a school, still they lack many things. This school lacked books which UNICEF is trying to provide.*

**Question**      *Where do you plan to go in the next few week ?*

**Answer**            *After the Vietnam visit, I'll go to Paris and new York. Naturally I want to raise money, because this country does need some help, but more than anything, I want to give them the real picture of a very beautiful country with the most beautiful children.*

\*

*The question I'm most frequently asked is what do you really do for UNICEF? Really my task is to inform, to create awareness of the needs of children. To fully understand the problems of the state of the world's children, it would be nice to be an expert on education, economics, politics, religions, traditions and cultures. And I'm none of these things. But I am a mother and will travel.*

\*

Children - is there anything more important than a child? All of us here tonight are privileged, but we're privileged in a world that allows forty thousand children to die every day. These lives need not be lost. We already know that through immunization and low cost healthcare, many lives are safeguarded.

*And that is what UNICEF has done for more than forty year, worked to save the children of the world.*

\*

*Question You have gone onsite a lot, have you not?*

*Answer Yes. And in Africa, I've been to the Sudan and Ethiopia and since been to Bangladesh and Vietnam and -*

*Question What is not being done?*

*Answer Peace. Things are getting better. There's a ceasefire in Angola and Ethiopia since a few days. Namibia is at peace. There's still a war in Liberia and Mozambique. And that is basically what I'm pleading for because until there's peace, we won't be able to construct.*

*And finally that is what UNICEF and all the other humanitarian agencies are about is to develop, help develop these countries.*

\*

*There's this curious - embarrassment, timidity that comes over one when you do walk into a feeding center like that. I feel I shouldn't be there. I think I should leave them alone. It's like walking into somebody's room who is dying and that the family should be there. At the same time, longing to pick up one of these children and - and give it some kind of warmth.*

*On the other hand, they're so frail that I worry I am going to break their little body and - and it's unbearable. It just is so totally unacceptable to see small children just die in front of your eyes, obviously because they're starving, but also because they are so frail they really finally die of disease.*

*And you somehow on the one hand feel impotent that you can't do enough. You're not in time to save at least those little lives. And on the other and it's - it's kind of comforting to be there and see how much is being done.*

\*

*Question Miss Hepburn, we're approaching the year 2000, did you ever think that there would be this kind of tragedy repeating itself ?*

*Answer I don't know if during the first great famines in Bangladesh, during the great famine in the thirties in Russia, during the Irish famine, and what did we do about that ? Now we're at least trying and doing it rather well. But we're impatient because now we see the children dying right in front of our eyes.*

*Most of it on television. I've seen it happen and I'm filled with - with a rage at ourselves. I don't believe in collective guilt but I do believe in collective responsibility. But it is the international community - and that is the beauty of humanitarian, of relief workers of humanitarian aid - that regardless of what's going on - of the danger, all the diseases - that they're getting themselves, they do it. And they don't give up.*

\*

*Question How do you feel about politics complicating issues as it is being seen to be done right now ?*

*Answer Politics are something which are very, very hard for me to understand, because the machinations are so complicated. Politics by definition are supposed to be for the people. For the welfare of people. Humanitarian means human welfare and responding to human suffering.*

*That's finally what politics should be, ideally. And that's what I dream about. It may be unique in history that it's humanitarians that are keeping this country afloat. I think perhaps with time, instead of there being a politicalization of humanitarian aid, there will be a humanization of politics. I dream of the day that it will be all one. And one of the reasons that I wanted to come to Somalia, not because I can do very much, there cannot be enough witnesses. If I can be one more and speak up for one child, it's worthwhile.*

\*

*I have this extraordinary thing that's happened to me, to be able to express my need to help children and to care for them in some way. I can personally do very little, but I can contribute to a whole chain of events which is UNICEF.*

*And that's a marvelous feeling. It's like a bonus to me towards the end of my life, and if this career has given me - has left me with something very special, this voice, this curiosity people have still to see me, to talk to me; which I can use for the good of children. What could be nicer?*

\*

*I cannot leave you without speaking of a hunger that food can never alleviate. A hidden hunger which I have seen so much of. And perhaps has affected me the most deeply. The hunger for affection.*

**Famine and war have killed millions of parents. Their children live on, robbed of the security, care and love only a mother and father can give. This is the farreaching effect of hunger that scars young lives forever.**

**Why ? When the way and low cost means are there to safeguard and protect these children.**

*It is for leaders, parents and young people, - young people who have the purity of heart which age sometimes tends to obscure, - to remember their own childhood.*

**And come to the rescue of those who start life against such terrible odds. Simply because they are children. Every child has the right to health, to education, to protection, to tenderness, to life.**

*Thank you.*

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**For information on UNICEF, or to send contributions for the  
Audrey Hepburn Memorial Fund  
for UNICEF projects in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan**

**please contact :**

**The nearest National Committee for UNICEF**

**or**

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3 UNICEF United Nations Plaza (H6F)  
New York NY 10017, USA**