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**UNITED NATIONS
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1975 session

PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD

Note by the Executive Director

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, at its fifty-seventh session last July, adopted Resolution 1891 (LVII) requesting the views of the Executive Board on the proposal for an International Year of the Child (a copy of the resolution is contained in annex I).
2. The purpose of this Note is to draw this resolution to the attention of the members of the Board so that it will be in a position to consider the matter at its session in May. As of possible use to members in formulating their views, the Executive Director provides in this Note background and other information. The Board will also have before it a document submitted by the International Catholic Child Bureau and the International Union of Child Welfare entitled "Proposal for an International Year of the Child" (E/ICEF/L.1331).

Background

1974 Executive Board session

3. So far as UNICEF is officially concerned, the idea for an International Year of the Child (IYC) was first advanced at the 1974 session in a statement to the Board by the Chairman of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee for UNICEF. (See Report of the Board, E/ICEF/633, para.184).

Fifty-seventh session of the Economic and Social Council

4. During the Economic and Social Council's consideration of UNICEF at its fifty-seventh session, as part of the item "Operational Activities for Development", a statement was submitted by the International Catholic Child Bureau and the International Union for Child Welfare.^{1/} A number of Governments referred to this statement, as well as to the proposal made at the UNICEF Board session, generally endorsing the idea. At the same time, members of the Council had in mind Council Resolution 1800 (LV) of 7 August 1973 on International Years and Anniversaries, as well as General Assembly Resolution 3170 (XXVIII) on the same subject of 17 December 1973.^{2/} In essence, both resolutions encourage the designation of international years only on the most important occasions, and, when possible, celebrations of briefer duration. The net effect of the discussion in the Council last July, in which UNICEF as an organization took no official position, was the resolution to which the Board must now respond.

General considerations

5. Following are some of the major matters which the Executive Director suggests the Board may wish to consider in reaching its decision.

^{1/} For the convenience of the Board members this is reproduced in Conference Room Paper E/ICEF/CRP/75-9.

^{2/} These resolutions are reproduced in Conference Room Paper E/ICEF/CRP/75-10.

Government support

6. It seems clear that the major reasons for the Council's decision in relation to this proposal was a realization that, to be successful, an IYC like perhaps any "year", requires full support of a wide spectrum of Governments. In the case of the present proposal, the support of non-governmental organizations concerned with children can almost certainly be assumed. The nature of the subject is also such that it is reasonable to expect that significant support from the private sector generally, could be obtained. The question of government support is, however, another matter. It cannot, at this point, be taken for granted, principally because of a general reluctance to continue to designate international "years" as reflected in the resolutions to which reference has been made in paragraph 4. While Governments are, of course, and indeed should be, responsive to the wishes of private organizations and the general public, it cannot be assumed that these wishes alone will, in due course and in good time, generate the type of support that would be needed to make such a year successful. On the other hand, the experience of the past seems to have demonstrated the basic proposition, that if a "year" is to be successful, a genuine commitment by Governments concerned is a prerequisite. Hence it would seem that the Council in its resolution, has placed upon the Executive Board an obligation to consider this matter objectively and seriously, in order to give the Council the best advice it can.

7. In this connexion, two examples may be cited from past experience on the need for government support: the United Nations Appeal for Children (UNAC) in 1948 and the World Refugee Year (WRY) in 1959/60. Both were launched by the General Assembly and both involved advocacy of the subject and generated funds that were significant by the standards of the time. These additional funds in the case of UNAC came from the general public and in the case of WRY, from Governments as well, the latter also ooo taking certain actions regarding refugees which were necessary at the time. The campaigns in both cases were particularly successful in countries where they enjoyed the full support of the Government. A more extensive summary of UNAC is contained in annex I.

8. At this juncture, it is perhaps relevant to note the point made in the note of the International Catholic Child Bureau and the International Union of Child Welfare concerning "international year fatigue" (E/ICEF/L.1331, para.4), i.e. that this reaction was probably confined principally to those parts of Governments directly concerned and to international civil servants similarly concerned. The broader spectrum of Governments at top level and the public at large probably does not suffer from such an affliction simply because they have not been successfully touched by most previous international years. International Women's Year has attracted wide interest. If this continues, the question will arise as to whether international opinion will welcome a Year for the Child as a natural follow-up endeavour or will prefer something else, or a respite from "years" altogether. (Annex III lists previous important international "years" under auspices of the United Nations or agencies in the United Nations system.)

Objectives

9. In addition to the necessity for government support, perhaps the other major lesson that has been learned from experience with international years in the past is the over-riding importance of being able to set forth fairly concrete objectives that can be achieved in the course of, or as a result of, the "year". Broadly speaking, most "years" have had at least one or two major objectives: a general advocacy of

action on behalf of the subject of the year; and fund-raising to support such action. A Year for the Child could and probably should have both objectives. From this point of view, the subject of an IYC is perhaps a particularly propitious one. Broadly speaking, the needs of children are well known and there are a wide variety of specific programmes going on to meet them, lacking only, for success, adequate support. This support has to be understood as not only more financial aid but also, in a wider sense, a deeper commitment through national development policy and greater participation at the local level.

10. In this connexion, attention is also drawn to discussion of objectives contained in the note of the International Catholic Child Bureau and the International Union for Child Welfare (E/ICEF/L.1331, paras.5-12). This is not the occasion to comment on the specific objectives suggested therein. However, the paper does illustrate very well the basic point that an International Year of the Child lends itself to the establishment of concrete objectives. Indeed, precisely because there is so much to be done for children, the problem may be to strike the proper balance between a spectrum of objectives wide enough to attract world-wide support but narrow enough to be manageable. From UNICEF's viewpoint, it would, of course, be preferable to place major emphasis on the rapid expansion of basic children's services in developing countries wherever this is feasible.

Relationship to other activities on behalf of children

11. It will also be important, in reaching a decision on the advisability of a year, to have a clear view as to where such an activity would fit, in relation to other activities that are currently going on and that may be taken up in the future on behalf of children. In broad terms, UNICEF and others concerned, are now bending every effort to enlarge assistance to children, especially in the interrelated fields of health (including family planning), nutrition and education, and in both the more overt emergency situations and poorer sections of the population generally in the developing countries. These efforts have received - potentially at least - an improved impetus as a result of the world conferences on population and food last year. Important follow-up activities are now taking place. At the same time, the United Nations system as a whole - member Governments and organizations - is making a major effort to prepare for the Seventh Special session of the General Assembly next September which is to deal deeply and comprehensively with the problems of development and the structure of the United Nations system.

12. UNICEF will, of course, try its best to see that programmes for children receive their appropriate share of attention at the Seventh Special session, not only on the grounds of need but also for the potential they hold for a direct attack on the interrelated problems of nutrition, health, education and population through rapid improvement in the quality of life.

13. Meanwhile, these activities also constitute an excellent preparation for an IYC, should it be decided to have one.

Organization

14. An important question with regard to any international year is its organization and direction. Thus far, essentially three methods have been followed: (1) the General Assembly has asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations to be in

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charge, which has meant that officials appointed by him have assumed responsibility for the work; (2) the General Assembly has created a separate and temporary structure headed typically by a Secretary-General for the particular "year"; or (3) the General Assembly has designated an agency of the United Nations system to assume responsibility for the "year". In the present case, contact with Governments and committees that should be established would require the full-time attention of a very senior official. Hence methods (1) or (2) would appear to be appropriate. UNICEF would be ready to make available all its experience and the use of its field staff. However, it would need a small number of additional staff in order to be able to do its share.

Timing and need for preparation

15. Experience has also shown that to be successful, adequate time for preparation is essential. This is a major reason why those concerned thus far have considered 1978 as the earliest appropriate time for a "year" if other prerequisites are met. This kind of timing also provides a respite from international years, assuming the General Assembly adheres to its present Resolution and does not designate other international years in the interim. It is also recognized by those supporting an IYC that now, and in the immediate future, the international community needs to focus on a series of problems fundamental to the very structure of the international community, such as new developments in the field of trade and payments, world-wide inflation and recession, etc. As noted above, enlarged programmes for children could and should form part of this larger endeavour, but obviously they could not, in that context, preempt world attention as they should in a successful "year".

Need for adequate financing

16. There appears to be general agreement among those thus far supporting an IYC that, if it is to be held at all, it should be a resounding success and not just a "publicity gimmick". The latter would probably be counter-productive in the long run. There should, however, be no illusions about the costs of mounting such an endeavour - they would be significant, and could well involve expenditures in the order of several million dollars. If the "year" is successful, the financial results could be a high multiple of the investment.

17. Significant savings, compared with some other "years", could be achieved by not holding a special international conference. It might seem preferable to schedule an important item on the agenda of the General Assembly at the beginning of IYC to launch it, and a similar item at the end to assess results. However, a full-time staff will be needed for 3 or 4 years starting from perhaps, some 5 - 10 persons and building up to 15 - 20 or more, in addition to services that could reasonably be expected to come from the major interested non-governmental organizations and from UNICEF. An important test of the genuineness of government support would be willingness to provide necessary financing sufficiently in advance to ensure proper planning. This could be accomplished by providing that any decision in principle to hold an IYC should provide that it would only go into effect when \$2 million for expenses have been assured. Presumably, such a sum would have to come mainly from special contributions from supporting Governments.

Summary and conclusions

18. Although there is currently a certain "fatigue" over international years, an IYC is the type of subject that lends itself to the setting and achieving of important and visible objectives. It could stimulate important action on behalf of children in the countries concerned and lead to a large increase in resources available for children's programmes. If genuinely supported by Governments, it could be an outstanding success.

19. It must be emphasized, however, that this kind of bold endeavour naturally requires wide support, notably from Governments, and adequate preparation and financing. Unless Governments are prepared to undertake serious commitments to support such a "year", it would not appear wise to initiate one. The Executive Director recommends that any decision in principle to have an IYC should specify that it only go into effect after \$2 million has been assured.

20. On the other hand, it is important for the international community not to wait for an IYC before mounting a major new effort on behalf of children, especially those most seriously in need. The conceptual framework for basic services for children exists, but more work needs to be done in operational and organizational patterns in some cases. Major policy decisions by Governments to enlarge basic services should be taken, and related commitments by donor governments should be made. The administrative machinery for channelling assistance exists and could be readily enlarged. Preparations for an IYC should not be taken as a reason for postponing this action.

21. If the foregoing analysis appeals to the Board, it might wish to transmit its essentials to the Economic and Social Council.

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Annex I

Proposal for an International Children's Year
(Economic and Social Council resolution 1881 (LVII))

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolution 1800 (LV) of 7 August 1973 on international years and anniversaries,

Taking note of the proposal made by a number of Governments and non-governmental organizations at the **fifty-seventh** session of the Council that an International Children's Year should be proclaimed at some time in the future, and taking into account paragraph 18⁴ of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund 3/ and the considerations set forth in the statement submitted by the International Catholic Child Bureau and the International Union for Child Welfare,

Requests the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund to consider the proposal for an International Children's Year at its next annual session and to present its views on the subject to the Council at its fifty-ninth session.

1918th plenary meeting
31 July 1974

3/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No.9 (E/5528).

Annex II

The United Nations Appeal for Children

A United Nations Appeal for Children (UNAC) was launched in 1948 by the United Nations Secretary-General, on the basis of resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, to bring to the attention of the world the plight of millions of children and to supplement the resources of UNICEF and other agencies engaged in child relief. Fund-raising from the public was conducted in each country by a National Committee, either as a "one day's pay" collection or in some alternative form better adapted to the particular country. Agreements were entered into between each National Committee and the Secretary-General, particularly as regards the disposal of the funds collected by the committee. In carrying out the campaign, the Secretary-General was advised by a Committee of the Economic and Social Council and by an International Advisory Committee which included representatives of non-governmental organizations in category A willing to take an active part in the campaign. The Director of the Appeal and paid staff were part of the office of the Secretary-General. Arrangements were made between the Director of the Appeal and the Executive Director regarding certain services and facilities made available by UNICEF.

By the end of 1948, UNAC campaigns had been held or launched in forty-five countries and more than thirty Non-Self-Governing Territories. Several of these campaigns continued into 1949. The aggregate gross proceeds were \$31.5 million. Net proceeds were \$29.8 million of which \$11.1 million went to UNICEF, \$1.4 million to UNESCO, \$11.2 million to nationally selected voluntary agencies for child relief operations in countries other than those in which the funds were collected, and \$6 million to nationally selected agencies for relief of children in the countries of the donors.

Annex III

Main international years carried out under
the aegis of organizations in the United Nations system

<u>Year</u>		<u>Staffing responsibility</u>
International Geophysical Year (1957)	-	WMO
World Refugee Year (1959-1960)	-	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
World Mental Health (1960)	-	WHO
International Health and Medical Research Year (1961)	-	WHO
World Seed Year (1961)	-	FAO
International Year of the Quiet Sun (1964-1965)	-	WMO
International Co-operation Year (1965)	-	United Nations
International Rice Year (1966)	-	FAO
International Tourist Year (1967)	-	United Nations
International Human Rights Year (1968)	-	United Nations
International Education Year (1970)	-	UNESCO
International Year of Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1971)	-	United Nations
International Book Year (1972)	-	UNESCO
World Population Year (1974)	-	United Nations
International Women's Year (1975)	-	United Nations

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