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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board  
1977 session

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD - 1979

Progress report by the Executive Director

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### Background

1. In July 1975, the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1962 (LIX), requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on a proposal for an international year of the child. In November 1975, the General Assembly adopted without a vote, resolution 3406 (XXX) which was substantially the same as the Council resolution. In December 1975, the Executive Director, at the request of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), consulted the relevant organizations in the United Nations system and others on the preparation of the report. The replies, generally giving strong support to the idea, served as the basis for the Secretary-General's report entitled "Measures and modalities to ensure the adequate preparation, support and financing of an international year of the child" (E/5844, 8 June 1976).

2. In the Council discussion of this report in July-August 1976, there was general agreement on the main suggestions in the Secretary-General's report. The Council recommended that the General Assembly should "proclaim 1979 as the "International Year of the Child" provided that its general objectives have been agreed and that arrangements have been made to ensure the financing of its activities" and should "designate the United Nations Children's Fund as the lead agency for this purpose" (Decision 178 (LXI)). The Council also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly in October 1976 a further brief report, including revised estimates of costs.

3. On 21 December 1976, the General Assembly, having considered the Secretary-General's main report (E/5844), the Council decision referred to in paragraph 2 above, and the Secretary-General's further report (A/31/323) containing revised cost estimates, passed by consensus resolution 31/169 proclaiming 1979 the International Year of the Child. (The resolution is contained in annex 1 for convenient reference.)

### The guiding principles of the Year

4. The General Assembly resolution designates UNICEF "as the lead agency of the United Nations system responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the International Year of the Child and the Executive Director of the Fund is to be responsible for its co-ordination...". In the light of the two reports of the Secretary-General referred to above, (E/5844 and A/31/323), as well as Economic and Social Council decision 178 (LXI) of 5 August 1976, The Executive Director interprets and summarizes these principles as follows:

(a) The Year is for all the children of the world, both in industrialized and developing countries.

(b) The objectives of the Year are twofold: advocacy and action. The advocacy is to place the child in the centre of world attention and to guide the attention of the world community to the importance of the child, both as

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a child and as a future adult; to enhance the awareness of the special needs of children on the part of decision makers, parents and the public everywhere; and to further a recognition of the fact that services for children should be an integral part of economic and social development plans. The action is to help governments and others to expand their efforts at the national and community levels to provide lasting improvements in the well-being of children, with special attention to those in disadvantaged groups. This implies a substantial increase in the resources available for services benefiting children.

(c) While the Year is for all the children of the world, in both developing and industrialized countries, there should be special emphasis on action to provide basic services for children in developing countries.

(d) The emphasis must be on action at the country level, with supporting activities at the regional and possibly international levels.

(e) There will be no global conference, but it is hoped that there will be special discussions at the General Assembly both in 1978 and at the conclusion of the Year in 1979.

(f) A separate and new international plan of action is unnecessary as the main elements of such a plan have already been approved by the international community through the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the world plans of action of various other organizations and Years.

(g) A small secretariat must be created within the administrative structure of UNICEF, with officers in New York and Geneva, for the tasks of stimulating, and assisting the activities of governments and organizations; for servicing requests for technical guidance on subjects outside UNICEF's normal scope; and for providing general information materials and activities in support of the Year. As estimated in the Secretary-General's report (A/31/323), some \$4.2 million are required in voluntary contributions to finance the cost of such a secretariat and of information activities for the three-year period from mid 1977 to mid 1980.

#### The IYC secretariat

5. The cost estimates in the second Secretary-General's report (A/31/323) assume that a limited IYC secretariat will start functioning within the administrative structure of UNICEF as from 1 July 1977. It is contemplated that this secretariat will be headed by a special representative directly responsible to the Executive Director. The secretariat will be in New York with suboffices in Geneva and perhaps elsewhere. These offices will be

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staffed by 11 professional staff during the remainder of 1977. Apart from the Special Representative and a Director of the secretariat, this staff will cover functions in the technical field, in information and in liaison with other organizations and bodies participating in the Year. In order to make it possible for the IYC secretariat to start functioning as of 1 July 1977, the Executive Director has appointed a Director of IYC Operations with the task of initiating the necessary preliminary steps. Until July the work is mainly handled by UNICEF staff, the costs of which are absorbed by UNICEF. Selection of IYC staff is well advanced and it is expected that most of those foreseen for 1977 will be in place by 1 July. It is expected that by early 1978, the full complement of 18 professional staff will be required and in place.

#### Financing the IYC operation

6. A certain rearrangement of the annual breakdown given in document A/31/323 of funds required to carry on the IYC operation - planning, preparation and carrying out the Year, has been necessary. This is explained in more detail in a separate paper which will be before the Committee on Administration and Finance (E/ICEF/AB/L.179).

7. It is clear that the success of the Year depends on the full participation and support - including financial support - of governments. A first indication of such support is contributions to the operational costs of the Year. To date pledges for this purpose have been received, in chronological order, from the following governments to a total of \$1.3 million: India \$100,000; the Netherlands \$500,000; Iran \$200,000; and Norway \$500,000. Resolution 31/169 requests the Executive Director to report to the General Assembly in late 1977 through the Economic and Social Council in July on progress made in preparing for the Year, including its financing and the level of contributions pledged.

#### Programmes benefiting children

8. The advocacy, education and information activities of the Year should help realize a most important objective of the Year - to increase resources for programmes in the fields which benefit children. As the problems and needs of children are highlighted by the educational and informational activities of the Year, it may be expected that governments will review their services for children with new perspective and be motivated to assign a higher priority in their national planning and budgets to programmes for the well-being of children, both in IYC and succeeding years. In the industrialized and other major contributing countries, it is hoped that governments would increase their contributions to the United Nations system and through bilateral aid programmes to benefit children in developing countries. The enthusiasm of non-governmental

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organizations and other private groups and individuals in response to the opportunities of the Year should also create a receptive atmosphere, especially in industrialized countries, for widespread fund-raising efforts on behalf of economically, socially or physically disadvantaged children, particularly in the developing countries.

9. It is not anticipated that there will be an IYC financial target as such, but individual organizations may well use the occasion of the Year to seek additional funds. UNICEF already has an objective of \$200 million annual revenue endorsed by the General Assembly and unrelated to IYC. UNICEF hopes that the volume of contributions will permit this target to be attained or even exceeded by 1979 (see also para. 22 below).

#### Consultation and co-ordination

10. The proclamation of the International Year of the Child has generated much interest and activity within the United Nations system among governments and, not least, among non-governmental organizations. Given the wide diversity and scope of the possibilities for advocacy and activities which a Year for the Child gives rise to, wide consultation and careful co-ordination of efforts are clearly needed. Despite the fact that the IYC secretariat cannot be formally established until 1 July, several steps have already been taken to ensure appropriate liaison and consultation with those concerned.

11. Reference has already been made in paragraph 1 to the consultation that took place between the Executive Director and the heads of the organizations of the United Nations system before the resolution was passed. Not only did this process reveal the strong support within the system for an IYC but many of the thoughts expressed in that exchange of correspondence have become part of the basic planning regarding the Year and in many cases should provide a fertile basis for the development of action programmes.

12. The Executive Director considered it indispensable that an advisory or co-ordinating group such as is suggested in paragraph 30 of the Secretary-General's report (E/5844) should be constituted as soon as possible. A first informal meeting was held in late December 1976 in which the Executive Director discussed the modalities of forming such a group, its role and its functions with representatives of United Nations organizations and agencies available in New York. A second meeting which once again showed the lively interest of the organizations concerned was held in early February.

13. As a result of these consultations it was decided to call a first formal meeting of the IYC Advisory Group, as it is now called, in Geneva on 22 March. The Group is composed of those organizations and agencies who have expressed a direct interest in the plans and activities of the Year (annex II).

14. In view of the important role that non-governmental organizations are expected to play in the Year they are, as foreseen in the Secretary-General's report, represented on the Advisory Group. UNICEF has been informed that it is the intention of the non-governmental organizations accredited to the Economic and Social Council, to UNESCO and to UNICEF to create one joint committee for the International Year of the Child. Pending the formal establishment of this committee the organizations were represented at the Geneva meeting by the Chairman-Designate of this committee and the Chairmen of the non-governmental organizations groups associated respectively with the Economic and Social Council, UNESCO and UNICEF.

15. The meeting of the Advisory Group in Geneva was most successful. It demonstrated clearly the value of the Group as a forum for consultation and the exchange of information, as a basis for the co-ordination of activities, and its potential to devise and promote broad interagency measures for the stimulation of activities at the national, regional and international levels. Although it is too early to expect concrete and detailed plans it was most encouraging to see the extent to which practical and constructive thinking about programmes for the Year had already advanced. A first discussion took place about the selection of a limited number of general themes from which inspiration for activities at the national level might be drawn.

16. A separate meeting of information directors of agencies in the United Nations system took place immediately following the Advisory Group meeting under the chairmanship of the Centre for Economic and Social Information (CESI). Important undertakings were expressed for action by the organizations, jointly and severally, in support of the Year in the all-important and diversified field of information.

17. All organizations in the United Nations system participating in the Advisory Group have appointed officers to serve as focal points for liaison with the IYC secretariat. These are mostly senior officers who are not only technically competent but also capable of taking part in the process of policy development and decision-making. The Advisory Group met at that level. The Executive Director will avail himself of suitable occasions, such as the meeting of the ACC to inform the heads of agencies personally of progress made.

#### Letter to all Governments

18. As one measure to encourage governmental participation in the Year, the Executive Director addressed a letter to the foreign ministers or foreign secretaries of all countries inviting their attention to General Assembly resolution 31/169 and highlighting certain of its elements, such as the opportunity the Year provides for re-examining the situation of children

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in the respective countries. It recommended that action within a country should be aimed at raising the level of services benefiting children on a long-term basis. The letter also suggested that governments will wish to have some central point from which to develop and co-ordinate action, such as a broadly-based National Commission for the Year. Reactions to these letter are currently awaited.

19. A separate letter was addressed to the Permanent Representative of certain countries drawing to their attention the need for additional contributions to the operational costs of the Year and seeking their personal support on this issue. It is intended wherever practicable to follow this letter with staff visits to the capitals of the countries concerned.

#### Work in progress

##### Themes

20. It would be desirable to have one universal theme or slogan for the Year as a whole. However, as government commitments to action at country level are of the essence, it would also be desirable in addition to have a number of themes for consideration when action programmes are being prepared. Among those most frequently put forward so far are the child and the family, the rights of the child, women and children as a part of Women's Decade, basic services and the child and education.

##### Targets

21. The desirability and possibility of setting targets for the Year also continue to be discussed. It is clear that realistic impact targets (e.g. all children in a country fully vaccinated by a given year) can only be set after a national review of the situation and needs of children as recommended in the resolution.

22. It appears premature to set an over-all financial target for the Year, and in fact this may never be possible. In general, it is hoped that the country reviews will lead to a perspective plan for the next ten years or more against which a more detailed action programme for perhaps the first five years of that period would be defined. This would include the financing of the new or extended services for which the country may set certain targets e.g. for local participation in running costs. Very often some international support will also be required in developing countries, especially for the

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beginning period. The above-mentioned process will clarify the dimension of the over-all international support needed for the programmes projected by the governments of developing countries in response to the Year. Insofar as targets are concerned with the raising of funds by various organizations, including UNICEF, for their work in the developing countries, this needs to be considered by each organization in due course.

#### Preparation for action at field level

23. Further discussions are being pursued with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in order to assist with the elaboration of their plans for the Year and to lay the basis for co-ordination of effort. UNICEF is emphasizing action in developing countries. The Board has before it a recommendation by the Executive Director (E/ICEF/P/L.1702) for a commitment from general resources of \$3 million to assist developing countries that wish to participate to prepare their programmes for IYC.

24. The Executive Director has sent a letter to all UNICEF National Committees encouraging them to make whatever contribution they can to the celebration of the Year in their own countries, by participating in the activities of National IYC Commissions or other co-ordinating bodies and by increasing their efforts both at making UNICEF's work better known and understood and at raising funds for it.

25. The Executive Director is also encouraging non-governmental organizations to play the fullest possible part in the Year and suggesting ways in which they may do so. It is hoped that NGOs not normally involved with children will be persuaded to engage in advocacy, information activities, sponsor projects, raise funds, or engage in other activities to promote the objectives of the Year.

26. A first leaflet on the Year has been prepared and should soon be available in English, French and Spanish. A logo or emblem for the Year is being sought. The organization of an international inaugural event that might launch the Year in a dignified and suitably impressive manner is being studied.

27. There are encouraging reports, as yet unofficial, of National IYC Commissions already being formed in some countries, and increasing signs of support and serious planning from international and non-governmental organizations.

Annex 1

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

/on the report of the Second Committee (A/31/411)/

31/169. International Year of the Child

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on measures and modalities to ensure the adequate preparation, support and financing of an international year of the child, 1/ Economic and Social Council decision 178 (LXI) of 5 August 1976 on an international year of the child and the additional report of the Secretary-General 2/ prepared in the light of the discussions in the Economic and Social Council,

Recognizing the fundamental importance in all countries, developing and industrialized, of programmes benefiting children not only for the well-being of the children, but also as part of broader efforts to accelerate economic and social progress,

Recalling in this connexion its resolutions 2626 (XXV) of 24 October 1970 containing the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974 containing the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order and 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975 on development and international economic co-operation,

Deeply concerned that, in spite of all efforts, far too many children, especially in developing countries, are undernourished, are without access to adequate health services, are missing the basic educational preparation for their future and are deprived of the elementary amenities of life,

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1/ E/5844.

2/ A/31/323.

Convinced that an international year of the child could serve to encourage all countries to review their programmes for the promotion of the well-being of children and to mobilize support for national and local action programmes according to each country's conditions, needs and priorities,

Affirming that the concept of basic services for children is a vital component of social and economic development and that it should be supported and implemented by the co-operative efforts of the international and national communities,

Bearing in mind that the year 1979 will be the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child 3/ and could serve as an occasion to promote further its implementation,

Aware that, for an international year of the child to be effective, adequate preparation and the widespread support of Governments, non-governmental organizations and the public will be required,

Believing that administrative costs for the international year should be kept to the minimum necessary,

Taking note of the statement made by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund before the Second Committee, 4/

1. Proclaims the year 1979 International Year of the Child;
2. Decides that the International Year of the Child should have the following general objectives:
  - (a) To provide a framework for advocacy on behalf of children and for enhancing the awareness of the special needs of children on the part of decision-makers and the public;
  - (b) To promote recognition of the fact that programmes for children should be an integral part of economic and social development plans with a view to achieving, in both the long term and the short term, sustained activities for the benefit of children at the national and international levels;
3. Urges Governments to expand their efforts at the national and community levels to provide lasting improvements in the well-being of their children, with special attention to those in the most vulnerable and particularly disadvantaged groups;
4. Calls upon the appropriate organs and organizations of the United Nations system to contribute to the preparation and implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Child;

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3/ General Assembly resolution 1386 (XIV).

4/ A/C.2/31/SR.60, paras. 28-32.

5. Designates the United Nations Children's Fund as the lead agency of the United Nations system responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the International Year of the Child and the Executive Director of the Fund to be responsible for its co-ordination;

6. Invites non-governmental organizations and the public to participate actively in the International Year of the Child and to co-ordinate their programmes for the Year as fully as possible, especially at the national level;

7. Appeals to Governments to make contributions or pledges for the International Year of the Child through the United Nations Children's Fund to ensure the adequate financing of activities for the preparation and carrying out of the Year;

8. Expresses the hope that Governments, non-governmental organizations and the public will respond generously with contributions to attain the objectives of the International Year of the Child and, through the United Nations Children's Fund and other channels of external aid, to increase substantially the resources available for services benefiting children;

9. Requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-third session, on progress in preparing for the International Year of the Child, including its financing and the level of contributions pledged.

106th plenary meeting  
21 December 1976



Annex 2

Membership of IYC Advisory Group

United Nations system of Organizations

Office for Inter-Agency Affairs and Co-ordination (OIACC)

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Division of Human Rights (DHR)

United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDC)

United Nations Social Defence Research Institute (UNSDRI)

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO)

World Food Council (WFC)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Volunteers, Geneva (UNV)

United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

World Food Programme (WFP)

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

World Health Organization (WHO)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

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Representations of Non-Governmental Organizations/IYC Committee

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