

PART III: TOWARDS A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 7. VISIONING THE FUTURE

Introduction

As the end of the decade approached, UNICEF embarked on the prodigious task of articulating a new vision for children in the 21st century, mobilizing partners around it, and defining its own organizational focus for the first years of the new millennium. These tasks involved a series of broad consultative processes both within UNICEF as well as with key partners and experts around the world, including - increasingly - with children themselves. Building on an assessment of past experiences and an analysis of current trends, UNICEF worked with others to identify priority issues for children in the new millennium and to map out an agenda for action. It also threw itself into a vast social mobilization effort to galvanize the political will, leadership and partnerships needed to renew commitments to children and to carry the agenda forward.

This chapter will trace the evolution of strategic thinking and 'visioning' for the future through key consultation processes and documents produced by UNICEF over the roughly two-year period of 1998-2000. Thereafter, as preparations for the Special Session for Children got underway, the development of a global agenda for children increasingly merged with the formal preparatory committee process for the organization of the Session and the crafting of an outcome document entitled '*A World Fit for Children*', which will be described in chapter 8. The key thrusts of the *World Fit for Children* and UNICEF's part therein as articulated in its Medium-term strategic plan (2002-2005) will be outlined in chapter 10.

A vision for children, key transformations, and the strategic role of UNICEF: the work of the 'Tarrytown' group

The 'Tarrytown' process extended from December 1997 to September 1998, bringing together for consultation and comment a large number of UNICEF staff members to begin the task of visioning and shaping a global agenda for children for the early years of the 21st century and, within that, helping to define UNICEF's strategic focus beyond 2000. The core group, known within UNICEF as the "Tarrytown Future's Group", drew upon the views of a wide range of colleagues in headquarters divisions, regional management teams and technical working groups, broadly assembled to bring clarity, expertise and breadth of experience and vision to the undertaking.¹ A number of papers and materials were produced on the key priority themes that had been identified for analysis. These included: early childhood care and development; gender equality; learning; violence and exploitation; adequate living standards/basic services; adolescents; and child participation. Each team was asked to assess the global context, challenges and unmet needs and opportunities for action beyond 2000 and to recommend specific priority areas for future global action for children, including an analysis of the major transformations that would be required to achieve the objectives. After discussions highlighted the utility of the 'life cycle' approach to interventions and outcomes for children, the initial 8 teams were regrouped into four to define programmatic approaches for: infancy and early childhood; the primary education years; and adolescence; as well as for basic social services that are key throughout the lifecycle, with cross-cutting issues of gender, children's participation, non-violence and learning addressed throughout.²

Feeding into the process of reflection at the time was a review of programmatic lessons learned from UNICEF experience in the 1990s, which, on the basis of interviews with key UNICEF staff and available documentation, identified nine factors considered critical for success in achieving objectives for children. These included political will; decentralization of decision-making and resources; mobilization of key stakeholders at all levels of society; strong partnerships and alliance-building; good information and databases for informed policy-making; appropriate conceptualization and analysis of problems coupled with a willingness to address them; simple, cost-effective and reliable technology; ambitious, but doable goals, with time-bound and measurable targets; and well-trained, motivated

¹ Members of the Tarrytown 'futures group' included Maria Calivis; Marta Santos Pais; Urban Jonsson; Nigel Fisher; Kul Gautam; Richard Morgan; [Martin Mugwanja](#); and Marjorie Newman Williams, working together with technical teams.

² From *The focus of UNICEF's work beyond 2000* (CF/EXD/IC/1999-02), 12 February 1999; and *Note for the record on Tarrytown team leaders meeting*, July 1998. See also Tarrytown working paper series, UNICEF Programme Division

staff exercising good management.³

A synthesis of all the discussions, ideas, products and outcomes of the work process was compiled in October 1998,⁴ from which a recommendation for the focus of UNICEF's work beyond 2000 was produced for internal discussion.⁵ This was further distilled in an Executive information note which was circulated throughout the organization as the most current expression at the time of where UNICEF was headed.⁶ After more internal discussions and revisions, a paper on "*The Future Global Agenda for Children – Imperatives for the 21st century*" was prepared and presented to the UNICEF Executive Board at its June 1999 session.⁷

As expressed in Executive Director Carol Bellamy's memo accompanying the information note sent to the field, the quest to construct a renewed agenda for children was fraught with difficulties, not the least of which stemmed from the historical weight of "*the welter of competing and variegated factors [out of which] a vision must be framed.*" These included the legacy of the World Summit for Children – with the need to take account of both successes and 'unfinished business'; the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the cumulative impact of the international conferences of the 1990's; and the advent of UN reform and the way it shapes cooperation in the field. Above all, however, a future agenda needed to be broad enough to encompass and provide relevance for the startlingly diverse array of social conditions affecting children in different parts of the world and ambitious enough to make a difference to children and women who, after a decade of progress, and on the eve of the millennium "*still constitute the vulnerable and disinherited of this earth.*" The challenge seen by UNICEF was to provide the leadership and the correct combination of "*sturdy pragmatism and hopeful idealism*" to shape a future course for all partners which could mesh the imperatives of survival as emphasized in the Summit goals, with emerging new priorities so that, "*together, they provide us with a compelling raison d'être for the next century.*"⁸ One of the challenges in the process would be to define an appropriate conceptual framework as the over-arching organizing principle within which all components of a future agenda would easily fit, and to which other competing frameworks could most easily be accommodated. A further challenge would be to clearly delineate and maintain conceptual clarity between the 'global agenda' and UNICEF's own institutional focus.

For those involved in the Tarrytown process, there was a sense of historical moment, excitement and renewal in the air – with UNICEF felt to be on the cusp of new approaches which could successfully marry the best of strategic interventions from the past with broad new, transformative solutions for the future.⁹ With a vision of children in the 21st century firmly anchored in a human rights approach, the focus of a global agenda would be on the development of human capacities and sustainable processes needed to effect the key social transformations vital to the realization of the rights of children and women. Key principles were based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the ethical and normative framework and instrument to achieve children's rights, coupled with recognition of the centrality of women's rights and well being. A clear need was seen to develop strategies to effectively address both the immediate and underlying conditions affecting key outcomes for children, with a dual focus on goals as well as the sustained processes necessary to achieve them. Creation of an enabling environment was seen to involve positive governmental action, social policies, and legal reform to support and empower families and civil society. Also required were human development strategies based on principles of good governance, participation, and inclusiveness, with an emphasis on good quality early childhood care as the core of long term social development. Enhanced international cooperation and partnerships would include civil society partnerships and the responsible involvement of the private sector.¹⁰

The suggested components of a new global agenda would need to include the following: a) early childhood care for survival, growth and development, including attention to the health, care and survival of mothers; b) ensuring learning opportunities for all children and an enabling environment to access and use them, through quality schools as well as alternative forms of basic education and a more explicit focus on other critical environments in which children learn; c)

³ Paper by Steve Esrey, *Programmatic lessons learnt*, September 1998.

⁴ *Towards a Global Agenda for Children Beyond the Year 2000: A Vision, Key Transformations, and the Strategic Role of UNICEF*. The UNICEF "Tarrytown" Futures Group, October 1998

⁵ "*The Focus of UNICEF's Work Beyond 2000*" (For Internal Discussion, November 1998

⁶ "*The Focus of UNICEF's Work Beyond 2000*", CF/EXD/IC/1999-02, 12 February 1999

⁷ "*The Future Global Agenda for Children – Imperatives for the 21st century* (E/ICEF/1999/10), 10 April 1999.

⁸ CF/EXD/IC/1999-02, op cit.

⁹ From UNICEF history project focus group discussions (Marta Santos Pais) and interviews with UNICEF staff (Richard Morgan, Marjorie Newman Williams) conducted by Sheila Tacon ([Note: Interview transcripts to be finalized](#)).

¹⁰ *Towards a Global Agenda for Children Beyond the Year 2000: A Vision, Key Transformations, and the Strategic Role of UNICEF*. The UNICEF "Tarrytown" Futures Group, October 1998

measures to promote and ensure the full development, protection and participation in society of adolescents; d) pursuit of adequate living standards for all through ensuring access to basic services; broadening opportunities for livelihoods; and provision of safety nets for the most disadvantaged; e) children's participation; f) gender equality and ensuring the equal rights of women and girls; g) elimination of all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, particularly those directly affecting children and women.¹¹

The group further offered perspectives on UNICEF's role within the global agenda, identifying key principles for its work based on its comparative advantages and suggesting major strategies and priority areas for UNICEF advocacy and action beyond the year 2000, in early child care and development; adolescent health, development, protection and participation; learning; basic services; gender equality; protection against violence, exploitation and abuse, including possible 'flagship' interventions in priority areas.¹² As delineated in the paper, a central part of UNICEF's role would be to provide continued support to the unfinished agenda of the WSC as a major step towards realization of a vision for children's human rights and a global ethic for children. At the same time, UNICEF would focus increasingly on issues and strategies emerging as a result of new global trends and from the almost universal ratification of the CRC. UNICEF, with its allies and partners, would promote the formulation and adoption of a new global agenda, including specific commitments, goals and priority actions for the realization of children's rights, and would support and carry forward components and goals of that new agenda through global advocacy and partnerships; region-specific initiatives; and country programmes as the spearhead and foundation of all work. It would also work within UNDAF to promote children's human rights. Priority contributions would be guided by: the mandate and Mission Statement of UNICEF; the expected impact of interventions on the sustained realization of children's and women's rights; the need to effect positive changes in attitudes and behaviours related to children's rights, and to place children centrally on the development agenda; the importance of social transformation in both the long and short run; the need to address the most significant problems facing children and women; and adoption of a holistic approach.¹³

Thoughts from Tarrytown

"The central feature of a new Agenda for children in the 21st century should be to break the vicious cycle of poverty which creates and re-creates undernourished infants, poorly educated young children, marginalized adolescents, unsafe and premature motherhood – and which fundamentally undermines the fulfillment of children's and women's human rights. By confronting this vicious cycle at strategic points in the evolution of the parent-child, through interventions and strategies founded on the principles of human rights and the reality of social transformation, the world can create a virtuous cycle, through which each generation can realize a quantum leap in the situation of children and achieve sustained progress in human development. By focussing our efforts on key points in the cycle – particularly early childhood, maternity and adolescence – and by supporting the basic service interventions required at these points as well as the learning opportunities needed by all children, UNICEF can ensure that its resources make a significant contribution to creating sustained progress. UNICEF advocacy will promote the Global Agenda as a whole and the building of partnerships and mobilization of resources necessary to maintain its impact. By broadening its programmatic focus from child survival to early childhood, including young children's growth and development, UNICEF can build on the recognition that this area provides the nucleus for sustained development. This will also ensure that UNICEF's role is strengthened as a development as well as humanitarian agency."

Towards a global agenda for UNICEF beyond the year 2000: a vision, key transformations and the strategic role of UNICEF. The UNICEF "Tarrytown" Futures group, October 1998 (Internal UNICEF document)

Fruit of the initial stages of a broad process of reflection and consultation, the wealth of ideas, options and strategies proposed by the Tarrytown group were to undergo further modification, distillation, and refinement as the visioning process and strategic planning in UNICEF evolved. Yet a number of critical thrusts were retained in various forms and contributed to subsequent efforts to shape and design both a global agenda for children and an institutional focus for UNICEF. Key among these was the conceptual framework provided by the life cycle approach.

¹¹ *Towards a Global Agenda for Children Beyond the Year 2000: A Vision, Key Transformations, and the Strategic Role of UNICEF. The UNICEF "Tarrytown" Futures Group, October 1998*

¹² These were to undergo further review and modification. In *The focus of UNICEF's work beyond 2000 (CF/EXD/IC/1999-02)*, for example, the proposed priority areas for UNICEF programming were identified as 1) maternal well-being, child survival and early childhood development; 2) basic education, children's participation and learning, especially for the 'missing children'; and 3) protection, participation and development for disadvantaged adolescents – areas in which it was felt UNICEF could make a significant difference. A particular focus would be on achieving positive outcomes in early childhood care and development, and education. Further modifications were added as the strategic planning processes for the *Medium-term Strategic Plan (2002-2005)* got underway in earnest (see chapter 10)

¹³ *Towards a Global Agenda for Children Beyond the Year 2000: A Vision, Key Transformations, and the Strategic Role of UNICEF. The UNICEF "Tarrytown" Futures Group, October 1998 (Internal UNICEF document)*

Looking at the life of the child, as defined by the Convention aged 0-18, and recognizing the essential parent-child bond and particular importance of the mother, three critical “moments” were identified as crucial for interventions aimed at breaking the chains of inter-generational disadvantage, impoverishment and failed human development through actions that converge to bring about positive outcomes for children. The three critical periods were: pregnancy; infancy and early childhood; and adolescence, a period of life to which UNICEF had paid only limited attention in the past. It was proposed that both the global agenda for children and the priority areas for UNICEF programming needed to focus on actions to effectively address these critical periods in human capacity development, and on transforming the underlying and structural conditions that affect outcomes for children.¹⁴ Some ambiguity may have arisen in subsequent discussions and depictions of the three critical moments – deriving, perhaps, from difficulties in distinguishing between the critical moments themselves (pregnancy, early childhood; and adolescence) and the desired outcomes (for infants, children, and adolescents). They may also relate to difficulties in fully placing women within the ‘lifecycle’ perspective.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the ‘lifecycle’ approach and conceptual framework provided a powerful focus for UNICEF’s strategic thinking and its conceptualization of programmatic interventions needed to achieve critical outcomes for children.

Towards a “future global agenda for children”

This approach, along with many of the other key ideas emanating from the Tarrytown process, was taken up in *The future global agenda for children – Imperatives for the twenty-first century*. This paper was presented to the UNICEF Executive Board as the centrepiece of its agenda at its June 1999 annual session, under the rubric ‘positioning UNICEF to meet the needs of children and women in the 21st century.’¹⁶ As Executive Director Carol Bellamy stressed in her opening statement to the Board:

“The future belongs to those bold enough to act on their dreams – and UNICEF, which has never been bashful in pursuing its mandate, has a 21st century dream for children.....animated by the same spirit that launched the World Summit for Children – and that gave birth a decade ago this November to the world’s most acclaimed human rights instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose principles inspire our work and light our path.”

UNICEF was suggesting that paths towards that dream for children should be built around the life-cycle perspective, focusing on “*those moments of intervention in the life of a child that can open the way to dramatic gains for human development,*” and aiming at three key outcomes (for infants, school-aged children, and adolescents) that are crucial to ending the cycle of global poverty. “*The knowledge, the resources and the strategies all exist to make these outcomes for children possible,*” stated Carol Bellamy, “*and I am convinced that it can be done in a single generation.*” As evidence, she cited the human development gains made by countries that have placed the well-being of children and the advancement of women among their overarching priorities. Noting that the only missing ingredient was political commitment on a global scale, and resources and actions to match, she outlines UNICEF’s intent in mobilizing ‘the leadership initiative’ as “*the first step in realizing a universal agenda for child survival, development, participation, and protection that will culminate in a series of events linked to a Special Session of the GA in 2001.*”¹⁷ She spoke of the challenges that were impervious to sector-based strategies alone – armed conflict, poverty, HIV-AIDS - and emphasized the need to forge broad new alliances (with community-based organizations; people’s movements, the private sector, and within the UN as well) as the international community made its collective way forward.

Along these lines, the Board report outlined the UNICEF secretariat’s preliminary recommendations for a future global agenda for children and the focus of UNICEF beyond 2000. The proposals built on progress for children since 1990;

¹⁴ *The Focus of UNICEF’s Work Beyond 2000* (CF/EXD/IC/1999-02), 12 February (based on the Tarrytown report and recommendation).

¹⁵ Some have also argued that complicated efforts to achieve consensus in shaping the WFFC – see UNICEF history project interview with Jo Becker conducted by Sheila Tacon ([NOTE: Interview transcripts still to be finalized](#))

¹⁶ “*The future global agenda for children – imperatives for the twenty-first century*” E/ICEF/1999/10, 13 April 1999. This paper was presented in tandem with papers on the “*Progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children* (E/ICEF/1999/9) and “*Programme cooperation for children and women from a human rights perspective* (E/ICEF/1999/11). Input into the deliberations at the session came from speakers on human rights as the guiding framework for human development (including Dr. Savitri Gooneskere, professor of law at University of Colombo speaking of ‘the internationalization of human rights’ which connected rights to policy and also to development); on the dangers and opportunities for human development in the new era of globalization (including Dr. Lincoln Chen, Executive Vice-President of the Rockefeller Foundation, who pointed to the positive potential of ‘the globalization of values’); and on the anti-poverty approach to helping disadvantaged children which identified investments in early childhood development as key to breaking the cycle of poverty (Ricardo Moran, senior economist with the Sustainable Development Department of the Inter-American Development Bank).

¹⁷ The ‘leadership initiative’, launched in 1999, was the first thrust of the larger ‘Global Movement for Children’, which took form during the preparatory processes for the Special Session.

drew on lessons learned in the course of the decade, and recommended actions to address some of the formidable challenges that require urgent collective action. The report argued that there was already broad consensus on many of the issues that negatively influence human development. Most are persistent problems, but they are compounded by new concerns such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, sharply declining official development assistance, rising national debt among poor countries, an unfettered global economy that is creating both unprecedented wealth and growing disparities, and increasing instability and conflict in many countries. However, the report also reasons that major new progress in human development is possible within a single generation, if the global community will commit to three key outcomes for children. These are the following:

- ◆ Infants start life healthy and young children are nurtured in a caring environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and intellectually able to learn;
- ◆ All children, including the poorest and most disadvantaged, have access to and complete basic education of good quality;
- ◆ Adolescents have opportunities to fully develop their individual capacities in safe and enabling environments and are helped to participate and contribute to their societies¹⁸

UNICEF stressed the need for renewed global commitment to sustainable human development, based on an agreement to make child survival, protection and development the cornerstone for future progress, with major changes in development planning and prioritizing to be guided by the norms and standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the remarkable consensus on the necessary conditions for progress that the global development conferences of the 1990s had forged. Drawing on the rich legacy of the decade, which provided both the normative and operational framework for the future, “*there is a yearning for a bold new vision and a search for effective approaches that will make dramatic progress possible*” in the new millennium. Further breakthroughs for children depended on the creation of an enabling environment to 1) strengthen the capacity of states to protect the rights of children and women by ensuring access to basic social services and an adequate standard of living; 2) strengthen partnerships between state and civil society; 3) ensure gender equality; 4) ensure education and learning to form human capital for economic growth and social capital for tolerance and respect; and 5) encourage participation and expression by children. Progress also depended on the identification of critical entry points to unleash major transformations, based on the inherent link between the survival, development and well-being of children, and the realization of women’s rights. Positive outcomes in the three critical stages of intervention outlined above would be dependent on significant changes in the allocation of public sector investments, and political will and renewed efforts to resolve conflicts, combat HIV/AIDS, overcome discrimination and violence, and to help poor families, especially women, to care for and protect their children. In conclusion:

“UNICEF and the UN system must work to convince national governments and the international community that investing in children’s well-being and protecting their rights are the surest way to regain momentum for human development, to build cohesive societies and to make a quantum leap in positive social change within one generation.”¹⁹

Plans for the coming months were for UNICEF to engage in broad consultations to further define both the proposed global agenda for children beyond 2000 and UNICEF’s specific contributions to it, with discussions to be held with a wide range of partners both within the UN system and outside, and governments to be engaged in a dialogue on the strategies, roles and commitments needed to move forward. Technical consultations with development researchers and practitioners in different regions, as well as with experts in children’s issues helped further elaborate and validate the proposed strategies for implementing the agenda and assessing future progress. In UNICEF’s view, the process of defining the agenda more fully provided opportunities to forge a broad coalition of partnerships and leadership for children, as planning and mobilization around the special session for children gained momentum.

Identifying “Emerging issues for children” and continuing work on “a new global agenda”

A report on *Emerging issues for children in the 21st century* was prepared by UNICEF on behalf of the Secretary-General for consideration at the first substantive session of the preparatory committee in May 2000.²⁰ The paper represented UNICEF’s first major contribution in response to GA resolution 54/93 requesting the Secretary-General, with the support of UNICEF, to assist the preparatory committee with substantive inputs to Special Session preparations. The report reviewed progress for children since the World Summit in 1990, drew on lessons learned over the course of the decade, and analyzed emerging issues for children in the 21st century, making proposals for future action. It examined major challenges facing children, including: deepening poverty and greater inequality; proliferating

¹⁸ *The future global agenda for children – imperatives for the twenty-first century* (E/ICEF/1999/10), 13 April 1999.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century* (A/AC.256/3 – E/ICEF/2000/13), 4 April 2000

conflict and violence; the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS; and continuing discrimination, particularly against women and girls. Reiterating the earlier report to the Board on *The future global agenda*, the *Emerging Issues* paper argued that major progress in human development was possible within a single generation if children's and women's rights were respected, protected and fulfilled, and if the global community would commit to three key areas related to critical stages in the life cycle: the best possible start for children in their early years; a good quality basic education for every child; and an enabling environment for adolescents as they develop their capacities.

Noting the “*convergence in development thinking in favour of the centrality of human rights as the normative underpinning of human development*,” it highlighted the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women providing the “*universally agreed norms and standards against which policies and strategies for children and women can be tested, objectives defined and progress measured*.” It also made note of the scientific findings on crucial aspects of the human development cycle which are informing new thinking on development priorities. It suggested that the starting point for international development strategies emphasizing human development should be the rights and well-being of children, for “*it is through children that intergenerational cycles of poverty, exclusion and discrimination can be broken*.”

Delegates at the 1st substantive prepcom session warmly welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on ‘*Emerging Issues for children in the twenty-first century*’, prepared with the support of UNICEF.²¹ It was recognized that significant progress had been made over the decade, but that much remained to be done both in completing the unfinished agenda of the World Summit for Children and in addressing the myriad new challenges of the decade ahead. Persistent poverty and inequality, proliferating conflict and violence, the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS and continuing gender discrimination were highlighted as key global challenges. Broad consensus was reached on the salience of the three outcomes to be pursued through future action for children to ensure a good start in life, a good quality basic education and opportunity for adolescent development and participation.²²

The preparatory committee entrusted the Bureau, with the support of UNICEF, with preparation of a first draft outcome document for the Special Session. It was recommended that thematic consultations involving experts in various fields be held to determine how to shape the operational strategies that would achieve practical and measurable outcomes for children throughout their life cycle. These strategies would form the basis of an agenda for the future to be adopted at the special session. It was agreed that such an agenda should be broad enough to address the concerns of children in all parts of the world, while prioritizing key actions that would make a difference to the most disadvantaged children. It was also agreed that the outcome document to be adopted by the Special Session should be innovative, concise and action-oriented, with clear underpinnings in the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This touched off further drafting processes informed by broad consultations and reviews, with UNICEF producing successive versions of “A New Global Agenda for Children”, including proposed operational targets and indicators. These documents served as the basis for a series of consultations held with key NGOs and CSOs (February, May and September 2000); technical consultations with experts in Atlanta, Georgia (October 2000); and a consultation with UN funds and agencies in New York (October 2000), accompanied by many more informal consultations.

The technical meeting in Atlanta was of particular note, with wide-ranging input provided by participants covering child-focused policies; political choices and advocacy related to the prioritization of children's rights in the new century; elements related to the Global Movement for Children; and priorities to be raised at the Special Session. As summarized by UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Kul Gautam, the key messages emerging from the consultation were as follows.

Key issues from the ‘Atlanta’ consultation²³

- ◆ **Need for a paradigm shift based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.** The CRC provides the normative framework that changes the way we see and do things. With the child not just a recipient of care and services, but a holder of rights, we must move from ‘unmet promises’ to ‘fulfilling obligations’. Goals and rights are technically feasible and - given the prosperity

²¹ The *Emerging issues* paper represents UNICEF's first major contribution in response to GA resolution 54/93 requesting the Secretary-General, with the support of UNICEF, to assist the preparatory committee with substantive inputs into the processes of preparation of the Special Session (see discussion in chapter 8).

²² The *Emerging issues paper* was also presented for information to the UNICEF Executive Board at its annual meeting at the end of May.

²³ *New global agenda for children: technical consultation*, Atlanta, 2-1 October 2000. Draft consultation minutes (second version of 14 October 2000)

in the global economy – they are financially affordable, so there is no excuse for inaction. Governments are now States Parties to the CRC and are accountable for the achievement of child rights. Civil society can and should exert stronger pressure, with an accent on their role as independent monitors at the national level.

- ◆ **Reaffirmation of the use of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a programmatic framework.** Drawing on experience gained over the decade in translating CRC principles into actions and norms for programmes, and building on the useful holistic framework developed by the CRC Committee, more work is needed in prioritizing actions to promote rights and interventions based on a life-cycle approach, depending on country-specific circumstances, for the gradual realization of rights in a politically inspiring agenda.
- ◆ **The importance of effective goals and targets.** Rights imply goals and targets, which - to be effective – must be time-bound, measurable, and backed up by resources. In the current atmosphere of ‘target fatigue’, it is important to avoid empty promises. Strong support was expressed for inclusion of targets on disparity reduction, along with some process-related targets.
- ◆ **Investment in children: the need for resources, financing and costing.** Reaching ambitious goals and protection rights may be costly, but the cost of inaction is often much higher. We need to make the case that investment in children makes excellent economic sense, thus making the new agenda for children credible in the eyes of powerful finance ministers. The children’s agenda should not be about charity, but about laying the foundation of a strong economy and a just society. There is an urgent need for substantial debt relief and innovative funding schemes for children, with special priority for Africa, given the massive retrogression in child well-being and vulnerability.
- ◆ **Get children on other agendas.** UNICEF and its partners need to ensure that children’s issues and perspectives are on the agendas of other key conferences, with the Special Session on children seen not in isolation from the others, but as a major peak in the build-up of the movement to make this happen.
- ◆ **Sovereign states – transnational solutions.** A paradox that has become apparent is that some of the most significant achievements for children – such as efforts to eradicate smallpox and polio – have been driven primarily by international actors, not by national authorities. Children’s issues increasingly require transnational solutions.
- ◆ **Changing roles of families and caregivers.** The well-being of the child depends increasingly on the environment and the behaviour of family and care-givers, with our understanding of the importance of this support increasing as well. The cross-cutting challenge of HIV/AIDS, which in some countries is completely changing demographics, is highlighting the critical importance of the environment and the role of care-givers.
- ◆ **Positive articulation of the agenda.** We need to present the children’s agenda not as a series of problems to be solved, but as a new approach to development – a new hope for the future. The programmatic approach needs to be founded on a better understanding of the different stages of childhood, and which specific interventions provide the most strategic and effective support. The agenda needs to project children - and particularly young people - as a resource, a group with the power and potential to bring about desired changes.
- ◆ **Education as the key to unlocking cross-sectoral synergies.** Many argued for a ‘big push’ in education, and a prioritization for UNICEF in this area, for without significant progress in basic education, many other goals and rights will not be achieved or fulfilled. Given the lack of progress since Jomtien and Dakar, the sense of urgency needs to be stressed. There is a clear opportunity and positive potential for private sector support and mobilization for public sector education. The impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector also needs to be addressed on a ‘war footing’.
- ◆ **Need to capture the imagination with language and ideas that are innovative, inspiring, compelling and energizing.** A number of terms were suggested by participants to capture the imagination in a way that will move the agenda forward. These included: *Good start for children; New deal for children; Marshall plan for children; New coalition for children;* and the *Global Movement for Children.*

UNICEF came away from the meeting invigorated by the richness of the debates and guided by the advice and support from participants. Strong encouragement was given to UNICEF to exercise its leadership role as the passionate driving force working for and with children and to speak out strongly on behalf of a huge constituency. UNICEF was urged to become more active in the international debate on global policies and global governance as they impact on children and the poor, combining, thus, its good work at national level with stronger advocacy at the global level. This would help keep children’s issues high on the international agenda and other fora. When invoking the power of government leaders, UNICEF was also urged to bear in mind the untapped power and energy of ordinary people, and children themselves as key actors in any future global movement or agenda for children.

Thereafter, as preparations for the Special Session on Children intensified, the ‘visioning’ and agenda-setting for the future increasingly merged with processes involved in the crafting of an ‘outcome document’ for the Session. A small drafting team was established to develop successive drafts of such an outcome, entitled “*A World Fit for Children*” which was submitted to an extensive round of review before consideration by the preparatory committee at its 2nd substantive session. These processes took place in tandem with a vast social mobilization effort to build a Global Movement for Children, which helped further build consensus around key priorities for children, as detailed in the following chapter.

**CHAPTER 8: PREPARING A SPECIAL SESSION
AND MOBILIZING PARTNERS**

Introduction

In resolution 51/186 (1996) the General Assembly decided to convene a Special Session in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and requested the Secretary-General to submit at that time a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action, including appropriate recommendations for further action. GA resolution 54/93 (1999) reiterated the call for an end-decade review, scheduled the Special Session on Children to be held in September 2001, and set out its purposes, which were to review achievements towards the WSC goals and to stimulate renewed commitment for future action for children. It emphasized the importance of establishing participatory processes at national, regional and international levels, and encouraged partnerships among a wide range of stakeholders - including children and young people- in order to achieve the required momentum to take forward children's rights and needs. The resolution set up an open-ended preparatory committee comprising member state representatives to address organizational issues related to the participation of a broad range of actors, agenda-setting and preparation of the outcome of the Special Session. It urged full participation of member states, with Heads of States and Governments invited to assign personal representatives to the Preparatory Committee. The Secretary-General, with support from UNICEF as substantive secretariat, was requested to provide regular input to the preparatory processes and the Special Session, including the review of progress at end-decade and preparation of a report outlining emerging issues for children for consideration at the first Preparatory Committee meeting. The Secretary-General was also requested – again with support from UNICEF – to mount a public information programme to raise awareness of children's needs and rights and of the Special Session, its objectives and significance, with governments encouraged to do the same on a national basis.

The resulting preparations for the Special Session involved a multi-tiered series of reviews, consultations, and agenda setting, mobilizing a diverse array of partners at local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels over a period of more than two years. The process might best be visualized in the shape of an interactive pyramid, with extensive local and national level reviews and consultation processes feeding into sub-regional and regional reviews and agenda-setting - the results feeding into global consultations and reviews informing preparation of the Secretary-General's end-decade review, and all of these feeding into the formal preparatory committee process of preparation for the Special Session. Mobilization of partnerships and commitments at all levels was enhanced through the launch of the *Global Movement for Children* (GMC) and its *Say Yes for Children* campaign which helped stimulate a coalescence of partners around the commitment to work together to build a better world for children. Spearheaded by some of the world's largest child rights organizations, the Global Movement seeks to build a massive constituency of people from all walks of life to support child rights and demand accountability and action for children in the decade ahead; its launch through *Say Yes* helped bring unprecedented attention to the cause of children worldwide.

All of this contributed to the tremendous momentum and sense of expectations for the Special Session as the final countdown began. Then came September 11th and the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., leading to the tragic loss of lives and forcing a postponement of the Special Session under the realization that, in the words of UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, "*no child – in industrialized and developing countries alike, is ever truly safe from the horrific effects of armed conflict and violence of every kind.*"²⁴ When preparations for the rescheduled Special Session were taken up once again, it was under the shadow of war – in Afghanistan, the Middle East, and elsewhere. But this served only to renew determination, as it confirmed the importance of concentrating all energies and partnerships on efforts to build a world fit for children. By the time the rescheduled Special Session was held in May 2002, broad-based national reviews of the situation of children had been conducted in nearly 160 countries; governments, NGOs, organizations of civil society, and children and young people themselves had contributed to regional commitments in six regions; and the preparatory committee had held three substantive sessions, several extended bureau meetings, and numerous informal consultations. The Global Movement for Children had given birth to new initiatives and partnerships, and the *Say Yes* campaign had generated more than 95 million pledges of support around the 10 critical imperatives identified as building blocks for a world fit for children. These ten imperatives, in turn, were incorporated into the outcome document of the Special Session for Children – a *World Fit for Children* -

²⁴ Introduction to "*Building a World Fit for Children*". UNICEF Summary report of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, 8-10 May, 2002. (First draft, 24 May 2002; Revised draft, 26 June 2002).

whose text was negotiated over a period of nearly a year and a half and serves as the foundation for follow-up in the coming years.

End-decade review processes and reporting have been described in *Chapter 6* – representing the culmination of a decade-long focus on the rigorous collection and analysis of data on the situation of children and women which helped ensure that the Special Session on Children would be much more than a ceremonial occasion of ‘talk-fest’ or ‘medieval fair’.²⁵ Initial consultative processes undertaken by UNICEF in its efforts to define the parameters of a new global agenda for children have been discussed in *Chapter 7*. The current chapter examines in more detail the formal intergovernmental processes established for preparation of the Special Session and its outcome; the review processes and agenda-setting at regional level; and the vast social mobilization effort to rally partners around key commitments for children through the Global Movement for Children at all levels. It includes a focus on UNICEF’s role as substantive secretariat in support of Special Session preparations and as a key initiating partner of the Global Movement for Children.

Shaping the process

The Special Session for Children was an historical first for UNICEF - its design and organization the result of a creative process of hard work, determination, and not a little imagination. Unlike the World Summit for Children, which had been organized as a meeting of Heads of State, the Special Session fell fully within the parameters of processes for UN conferences, representing the first-time ever the UN General Assembly included in its agenda a debate on children. UNICEF, as substantive secretariat, was thus bound to follow General Assembly rules and procedures. In so doing, however, it faced a unique challenge, for in contrast to other issues in the UN, there is no secretariat or inter-governmental body or commission within the UN machinery to deal with children’s issues. A comparative review of UN +5 conferences and events yielded no easy models to follow in the organization of a special session for children. UNICEF therefore found itself charting new waters as it began - in late 1998/99 - to reflect on and design the political processes and body to carry the agenda forward. (*see box*)

Within UNICEF, a small organizational unit was created within the Office of the Executive Director to begin the process of reflection and define UNICEF’s support for Special Session processes.²⁶ Such reflection was greatly enriched through discussions with the 6 member states of the original Initiator’s Group for the 1990 World Summit, whose active and committed involvement was key in the development of resolution 54/93 (1999) setting out the parameters of the preparatory processes. Thereafter, while one member of the initiator group – Mali – continued to play a formal role through nomination to the preparatory committee bureau, the other 5 members continued as informal sounding boards for UNICEF and the Bureau, providing consistent guidance and support. They were also active in regional mobilization processes.²⁷

The Special Session on children: highlights in the design of the preparatory process

- ◆ **Where to situate the process?** Should processes be based within the 2nd Committee of the GA (Economic and Financial) where operational activities for development are discussed - including UNICEF’s programmes of cooperation - or within the 3rd Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) where child rights are discussed? In the end, it was decided to situate the process within the General Assembly itself - one of the few UN conferences or +5 processes to do so. One advantage of this setting was in the balance of issues it represented – embracing both human rights and development. With overall leadership provided by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, UNICEF served as substantive secretariat for the session, assisting the SG in preparing substantive reports to the preparatory committee and the General Assembly – including the SG’s end-decade review of progress over the decade. UNICEF also assisted the Bureau in designing the preparatory process; in preparing and revising the outcome document; and in conducting the negotiations leading to its adoption. The UN General Assembly Affairs Secretariat served as technical secretariat, including provision of conference and documentation services.
- ◆ **What kind of bureau to establish?** It was decided that a small and high-powered bureau would be the most effective political body, with five members at ambassadorial level appointed by the GA reflecting a regional balance. Three of the five were also members of the Security Council, lending additional weight and prestige – though this also placed additional demands on the time of the involved bureau members, particularly as the other two bureau members were frequently absent ([can we say this?](#)) The core Bureau members functioned as a very collegial, tight and flexible group, working in very close collaboration with the UNICEF Secretariat. This was, of course, an advantage, though it may at times have led to a feeling of by the wider membership of the GA.
- ◆ **What kind of outcome to produce and how to produce it?** Given the close monitoring and follow-up of the WSC over the decade, it was agreed that the SG’s end-decade review need not be a negotiated document, but there was still need for a

²⁵ Marta Mauras, in UNICEF History project Focus Group discussions

²⁶ See UNICEF Board document E/ICEF/1999/17

²⁷ Interview with Bertrand Desmoulins, UNICEF

framework for preparation and endorsement of an outcome document. At the first organizational session, UNICEF was given the mandate to prepare a substantive paper as the background and basis for the outcome to be developed. Successive drafts produced by UNICEF and then with the Bureau went through extensive processes of consultation, review, and revision through the first two Prepcoms until processes of inter-governmental negotiations on the text were taken up at the third Prepcom meeting. These continued until the close of the final day of the Special Session itself.

- ◆ **How to ensure broad civil society participation?** The General Assembly as a rule only accepts participation by ECOSOC-accredited NGOs, but very early in the process, the GA agreed to a resolution enlarging this to all NGOs in partnership or collaboration with UNICEF in the field. Given the sensitivities of a number of governments to NGO constituencies, this was seen to represent a clear vote of confidence and trust in UNICEF – “*proof*”, in the words of one UNICEF secretariat member, “*of UNICEF’s capital in terms of its legitimacy and credibility – both technically and politically*”. Ambassadors Durrant, Chowdhury and Schumacher were instrumental in guiding this process along. The work of UNICEF country and regional offices in the field and the campaign-style launch and organization of the Global Movement for Children helped spur civil society mobilization. The result – the largest ever participation of NGOs in a special session, and the attendant broad-based commitment to follow-up action.
- ◆ **How to involve children?** A key defining element of both the preparatory processes and the Special Session itself was the active involvement of children – a clear first in the history of the UN. Their participation was provided for from the beginning, in GA Resolution 54/93 (1999), and was further stipulated the following year in Resolution 55/26. While the idea of children participating in the august doings of the United Nations was at bit threatening to some, and met with a certain level of initial resistance or scoffing, these were overcome, and the processes through which such participation was organized and the high level of commitment, responsibility, and insight demonstrated by the young participants themselves transformed what could have been just another UN conference into a truly revolutionary event.
- ◆ **How to engage regional commitment?** Though formal, UN preparatory processes were not undertaken at regional level, UNICEF’s unique position as a field-based organization, with strong regional offices engaged with different networks and mechanisms for partnership facilitated innovative and high level regional participation in both the Global Movement and preparations for the Special Session – resulting in strong regional commitments to children.

Following the Special Session, a round-up of lessons learned from the process highlighted the importance of the trust, leverage and credibility enjoyed by UNICEF, and the accompanying scope given to it by member states to cross boundaries, for example in the participation of NGOs and young people. In the view of many, it was just such latitude and scope for innovation, along with the expanded partnerships that this made possible, that contributed to such a successful event.

Sources: UNICEF History Project Interviews by Sheila Tacon with Nora Galer; Bertrand Desmoulin; Hanns Schumacher; Patricia Durrant; Chowdhury and others ([NOTE: Interview transcripts not yet finalized](#)); UNICEF SSC report; round-up of lessons learned at core working group meeting (16 May, 2002); other discussions with UNICEF staff

As UNICEF’s engagement in the planning processes grew, a coordination mechanism was developed to ensure appropriate oversight, implementation, and reporting on preparations for both the Special Session for Children and key Global Movement activities. This consisted of a Core Working Group, established under the direction of UNICEF Deputy-Director Kul Gautam, and a Steering Committee chaired by Executive Director Carol Bellamy. With further intensification of activities, a number of Task Forces were charged with implementation of key elements of each process. Overall policy review and approval lay with a policy group chaired by UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, assisted by her three deputy directors. Throughout the preparatory processes, communication with UNICEF field offices was maintained through the Global Management Team; moreover, extended membership in the Core Working Group included regional staff and National Committee focal points, thus ensuring close collaboration between the field and headquarters.²⁸

Closer to the date of the Special Session, an Events Coordinator was appointed to develop a clear conceptual framework for the supporting events. This helped ensure that the thematic events being planned were in line with the key priorities of the Outcome document and that other events organized by major constituencies of the Global Movement for Children emphasized action-oriented commitments.²⁹

Regional reviews and agenda-setting

Although no formal regional preparatory process was established, regional and sub-regional bodies were encouraged to contribute to reviews of progress for children, to organize appropriate processes to build partnerships for and with children, and to participate in preparations for the Special Session and the Global Movement for Children. The response was striking, with extensive processes of reflection drawing on the results of national-level reviews, and strong statements of commitment for the future emanating from a host of regional gatherings drawing together representatives of governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations, international agencies and inter-regional bodies, the

²⁸ Interview with Bertrand Desmoulin, UNICEF

²⁹ Interview with Bertrand Desmoulin, UNICEF

media, and children themselves. The role of UNICEF regional offices – working in close coordination with UNICEF offices at country-level - was crucial in supporting such processes, in mobilizing high-level commitment, and ensuring wide participation by a broad base of partners, including children. In this, they built on lessons learned through rich experiences over a decade of working with regional structures and partners for follow-up and monitoring of the World Summit for Children. Particular efforts were made to give voice to children. (See box on Opinion polls)³⁰

Children and young people speak out through opinion polls

One of the most significant advances over the decade has been the heightened recognition of children's right to express themselves on issues of concern to them and to participate in decisions that affect their lives. "*Children are not only our future, they are our present, and we need to start taking their voices very seriously. We must listen carefully to what young people have to say and give them every opportunity to speak*", said UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy. In the run-up to the Special Session, notable efforts were made to involve children and young people in consultative processes and to elicit their views on priority problems. Opinion polls conducted by UNICEF over the period 1999-2001 provided one means of doing so. Based on representative samples of boys and girls aged 9-18 in 72 countries in three regions of the world, nearly 40,000 interviews were conducted in all. They reflect the views of some 500 million children and young people on issues related to their lives, families, schools, communities and governments, as well as their hopes and dreams for the future. The results helped provoke heightened national debates and fed into key regional agenda-setting processes.

- ◆ In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, in the first multi-country poll of its kind, the 1999 "*Voices of Children and Adolescents*" survey included 11,852 boys and girls aged 9-18 in 20 countries, representing the opinions of 103 million children and young people in the region. The results featured as a key input into two major meetings in 2000 – the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, and the Tenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State.
- ◆ In **Europe and Central Asia**, the "*Young Voices*" poll in 2000/2001 surveyed 15,200 children and adolescents aged 9-17 in 26 countries in CEE/CIS and Baltic States, 9 countries in Western Europe, and the UN-administered province of Kosovo, representing the voices of over 93 million children. Preliminary results were presented in Berlin in May 2001 at the first-ever conference on children in Europe and Central Asia.
- ◆ In **East Asia and the Pacific**, the "*Speaking Out!*" opinion survey conducted in 2001 covered 10,073 children and young people aged 9-17 in 17 countries and territories, representing some 300 million young people in the region. Results were presented in Beijing in May 2001 at the region's Fifth Ministerial Consultation on Shaping the Future for Children.

The often startling survey results serve as a wake-up call on key issues. Some of the findings revealed strongly divergent views among children from wide-ranging socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and age-groups, reflecting the diversity of life experiences and perhaps disparities. Others, however, highlighted common themes and shared concerns – many of which were later echoed by children participating in the Children's Forum. Among the highlights:

Children in all regions emphasize the **centrality of family**, which is recognized as a main source of values and learning, and as a wellspring for emotional and physical well-being. Children have a generally high degree of trust in parents, but overall, relations with mothers are described as more positive than relationships with fathers. Children overwhelmingly recognize the importance of education, with the right to education among the most frequently cited right in all regions and further educational improvements among the top demands made of governments. Learning was the most common reason given for going to school. Most students reported positive relations with teachers, though some express a desire for teachers to listen more. Indeed, a general sense of **not being consulted or listened to** on the issues that matter to them was among the concerns raised by many children and young people – whether at school, in the home, or in the local community. Children and young people generally have a **respect for authority** – especially of parents, teachers, religious leaders, and others. However, they express a remarkably high level of **disaffection with political leaders**. Alarming, many children and young people appeared **unprepared for the ever-growing threat of HIV/AIDS**, with large numbers lacking the essential knowledge needed to protect themselves from infection. Another finding of grave concern were the **high levels of violence, aggression and insecurity** reported by many children and young people, both inside and outside the home. Many young respondents displayed a **keen awareness of discrimination and a desire for social justice**.

UNICEF is using the results of the polls to help guide advocacy and programming support efforts, and is encouraging others to do likewise. The findings should help translate the voices of young people into better policies, more effective budgets, and changed attitudes and behaviours towards young people's participation in society.

Sources: *Voices of children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional Survey*. UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, n.d.; *Speaking out! Voices of children and adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific. A regional opinion survey*. UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, September 2001; *Young voices. Opinion Survey of children and young people in Europe and Central Asia*. UNICEF, August 2001.

³⁰ Key sources of information for the following section include UNICEF regional office analytical reports; the UNICEF Special Session Newsletters (#s 1-4); UNICEF's report on the Special Session (revised draft version of 26 June 2002); documents on the regional commitments; web-based information; other sources)

◆ Latin America and the Caribbean

In the culmination of a series of regional follow-up meetings to the World Summit for Children, representatives at the 5th Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas (Jamaica, 13 October 2000) signed the *Kingston Consensus* as the regional contribution of the Americas to the special session, affirming their commitment to ensuring that children reach their full potential through policies and actions that recognize their human rights³¹. A *Regional Report of the Americas on progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children and the regional accords (1990-2000)*, was issued by the Government of Peru as the IV Secretary Pro-Tempore American, as the basis for deliberations at the Meeting,³² and the results of the first regional opinion poll featured as a key input.

“Make every necessary effort so that children and adolescents have opportunities to fully develop their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social capacities and to guarantee and promote respect for human rights” (the Kingston Consensus)

Significant commitments were also made at the 10th Ibero-American Summit on Children and Adolescents (Panama, December 2000) which adopted the *Panama Declaration on Children and Adolescents* signed by 21 presidents and heads of state. This was followed up at 11th Ibero-American Summit meeting (Lima, Peru, November 2001) which adopted a *Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents* as a guide for common efforts over the next decade. The plan includes 18 new goals for children and adolescence as well as establishment of a monitoring mechanisms for effective follow-up. In sub-regional follow-up, at the July 2001 Summit meeting of the 14-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Caribbean countries were urged to mobilize all necessary resources for children and ensure their high level participation at the Special Session. In November 2001, in preparation for the 2nd World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Yokohama in December 2001, 24 government representatives met at a regional preparatory conference in Montevideo, issuing a “*Commitment for the implementation of a regional strategy to combat commercial exploitation of children*”.

◆ East Asia and the Pacific

“...today’s children are tomorrow’s future generation, who must be enabled and equipped to achieve their full human potential and enjoy the full range of human rights in a globalizing world” (Beijing declaration)

At the Fifth Ministerial Consultation on Shaping the Future of Children

held in Beijing in May 2001, representatives from 21 countries across East Asia and the Pacific issued the *Beijing Declaration on Commitments for Children*, pledging to put the well being of children at the centre of their agendas.³³ This was the fifth in a series of high-level consultations in the region to monitor and review progress towards the goals of the World Summit, and the first to feature the active participation of young people – several of them official members of government delegations. They presented feedback from the Children and Young People’s Forum held in Thailand in April 2001, including a list of priority actions for governments to ensure children’s rights. The highlights of a regional opinion survey of children and adolescents were presented, covering 10,000 children in 17 countries and territories, along with an annotated atlas of regional progress towards World Summit goals prepared by UNICEF. A second regional youth consultation drew together children and young people from 10 countries to review the *Beijing Declaration* and the draft *World Fit for Children*, formulating a joint recommendation urging national action plans for follow-up to the special session.

In other events of note, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convened the Third Asia/Pacific Intergovernmental meeting on human resources development for youth in Bangkok (June 2001), focusing on integrated approaches to sexual and reproductive health, prevention of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. The 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Yokohama in December 2001 focused attention on this difficult issues and generated extensive discussion including through the regional processes of preparation for the event, with UNICEF contributing to knowledge development through the preparation of a regional profile of the problem in *Children on the Edge*.³⁴

³¹ *The Kingston Consensus on Children and Social Policy in the Americas* (Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, Kingston Jamaica, 13 October 2000) (See also document A/S-27/13, 16 April 2002 for full text).

³² *Regional Report of the Americas on progress towards the goals of the World Summit for Children and the regional accords (1990-2000)*, issued by the Government of Peru as the IV Secretary Pro-Tempore American (Promudeh)

³³ *Beijing Declaration on Commitments for Children in the East Asia and Pacific Region for 2001-2010* (Fifth Ministerial Consultation on Shaping the Future of Children, Beijing China, 14-16 May 20001 (See also document A/S-27/13, 16 April 2002 for full text).

³⁴ *Children on the edge*

◆ **Europe and Central Asia**

Representatives of 51 European and Central Asian countries and the Holy See came together for

“We commit ourselves to meeting our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and thus to ensuring that all children in Europe and Central Asia enjoy their rights” (The Berlin Commitment)

the first time ever in Berlin (16-18 May 2001) for a Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia. Participants included representatives of the European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations system and NGOs, as well as young people, representing the culmination of a vast consultation process with decision-makers and activists at every level. Acknowledging both the progress made over the decade, as well as the serious challenges that remain, conference delegates endorsed the ***Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia*** which outlines priority goals and sets out a 20-point agenda for action to address critical issues affecting children and young people³⁵. The initial results of the *Young Voices* poll – the largest ever survey in the region - were launched at the Berlin Conference, reflecting the views of over 90 million children from 35 countries. The Conference also considered the views of 50 young people from 27 countries as expressed in a letter formulated at a forum held in Budapest, Hungary in April 2001 *“Towards a Young People’s Agenda for Europe and Central Asia”*. Civil society organizations and NGOs, including youth representatives, also met from 8-11 April 2001 in Bucharest at a regional CSO Consultation on Children in CEE/CIS and Baltic States, producing *‘A Region Fit for Children’* as an outcome document.

Two hundred participants including prominent members of parliament, business leaders, representatives of civil society, academia and the media, and young people themselves from 27 countries gathered together in Stockholm, Sweden in June 2001 at a *Generation in Jeopardy Conference*. Here they discussed the situation of children and youth in the different countries in the region – including countries in transition – and help build the Global Movement for Children in the region. Their commitments are articulated in the *Stockholm manifesto* which stresses that children’s rights must be at the centre of policy reform; civil society, the private sector and young people must be seen by governments as partners in social reform; and public care of children in State institutions must make way for family-based alternatives. Corporate social responsibility was also one of the key themes of the conference.

A Decade in Transition - published in 2001 as the 8th Regional Monitoring Report of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre MONEE - reviewed the first 10 years of transition in the region, providing a wealth of statistical data and policy analysis based on social trends affecting children and families. With a focus on income inequality and child poverty, health, education, and child protection, the MONEE report provided the substantive underpinning to advance a priority agenda for children, in line with commitments made by governments and NGOs.

◆ **South Asia**

The ***Kathmandu Understanding: Investing in Children in South Asia*** was adopted by

“We agree that children are the future of our nations and, therefore, investing in children should be a national priority” (Kathmandu Understanding)

representatives from the seven countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) gathered at the South Asia High-level Meeting on Investing in Children (Nepal, 22-23 May 2001)³⁶. It reflects consensus on the need to forge new alliances and mobilize more resources for children throughout the lifecycle. The high level meeting was preceded by two days of consultations with corporate leaders from the seven SAARC countries who declared their readiness to invest in children in a framework of equal partnership with children and governments. Lively discussion at the meeting was generated by a group of children from the region called “the Change Makers” who articulated their own vision for the future. A background paper on investing in South Asian Children was prepared for the high-level meeting by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.³⁷

The 11th SAARC Summit meeting in Kathmandu in January 2002 noted with appreciation the *Kathmandu Understanding* and agreed on a *Summit Declaration* urging concrete measures to invest in children as a strategy to reduce poverty in the long run, and to intensify broad-based actions to achieve priority goals. Governments gathered at the Summit also signed on to two important conventions affecting children – the Convention on the Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children, and the Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of

³⁵ *The Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia* (Berlin Conference – Children in Europe and Central Asia, Berlin, Germany, 16-18 May 2001. (See also document A/S-27/13, 16 April 2002 for full text).

³⁶ *Kathmandu Understanding: Investing in Children in South Asia* (South Asia High-level meeting on investing in children, Kathmandu, Nepal, 22-23 May 2001) (See also document A/S-27/13, 16 April 2002 for full text).

³⁷ *Investing in South Asian Children, A background paper for the South-Asian High-level meeting, Kathmandu, 22-23 May 2001*. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, Nepal, (ed. Ashok Nigam, UNICEF)

Child Welfare in South Asia. The UNICEF publication, *Children of South Asia – Our Future, Our legacy*, drawing on rich new data from national end-decade reviews, informed and enriched debates at the Summit.

In other meetings conducted in the run-up to the special session, a symposium held in Rawalpindi (July 2001) examined achievements of the SAARC Decade Plan of Action for the Girl Child, adopting the *Rawalpindi Call for Partnership and Action* to sustain progress, while a number of expert consultations focused on education quality and access – particularly for girls (Kathmandu); early child development (Maldives 2001); and commercial sexual exploitation of children (Dhaka 2001). All of these consultations emerged with specific strategies to serve as a basis for action in individual countries.

◆ Africa

“Today’s investment in children is tomorrow’s peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development” (the African Common Position)

In follow-up to the July 2000 OAU Lome Summit Declaration on *“Africa’s children, Africa’s future”* which had encouraged

member states to articulate a visionary but feasible agenda for African children over the next decade, a special OAU *Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children in Africa* (Cairo, Egypt 28-31 May 2001) helped build momentum for a dynamic movement for children across the continent, bringing together governments, civil society, young people, and a range of other constituencies and institutions. After a frank and thorough appraisal of progress and setbacks over the decade, the Forum adopted the *African Common Position as Africa’s contribution to the special session of the General Assembly on children*, reinforcing long-term commitment to child welfare and to practical realization of the rights of the child in Africa.³⁸ The *African Common Position* was presented to the 37th OAU Summit in Lusaka (July 2001), which marked the formal end of the OAU and the birth of the African Union, with the Summit deciding to establish a Committee on the Rights and Welfare of Children to which member states are to report every two years.

Numerous other regional and sub-regional gatherings in Africa reinforced commitment to further action for children from a wide range of stakeholders. Parliamentarians from the Maghreb and West and Central Africa meeting in Mauritania (April 2001) issued the *Nouakchott Appeal*, affirming commitment to action for children in the context of the CRC, CEDAW and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. First ladies from African countries gathered in Marrakech, Bamako, Libreville, Kigali and Cairo to tackle key issues plaguing African societies, including discrimination against the girl child, HIV/AIDS, and children affected by armed conflict. HIV/AIDS was also the subject of a number of other high-level meetings on the continent. Traditional chiefs from 8 West African countries meeting in Niamey (April 2001) issued the *Sahel’s Engagement*, signaling their resolve to assume a critical role in the promotion of the rights and well-being of women and children. A Conference of Arab-African Ministers of Finance drew together representatives from 39 countries in Marrakech (May 2001) at an historic meeting to review the situation of children and the need for financial resources in their favour. The World Youth Forum of the UN System brought together youth groups and representatives of UN agencies for five days of debate in Senegal (August 2001), resulting in the adoption of the *“Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy”* addressing youth concerns in 10 critical areas. After the reaffirmation of commitment to education for all and the launch of the UN Girls’ Education Initiative at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (April, 2000), the Girls’ Education Movement (GEM) was launched in Uganda in August 2001, with girls from across Africa sitting down with education ministers and prominent education experts to discuss ways of creating girl-friendly education.

◆ The Middle East and North Africa

In June 2000, the League of Arab States invited members to undertake national reviews of the situation of children and to participate in

“...the children of the Arab World, more than half its current population, are presently our greatest resource and most valuable asset for the future. We need to listen to their views and take them into consideration when designing future plans” (The Cairo declaration: towards an Arab world fit for children)

preparations for the Special Session. Thereafter, a cascading series of regional consultations and reviews brought together different groups of partners – mobilizing governments, civil society, young people, the private sector and UN agencies around renewed commitments for children. After extensive national preparations, some 70 young people from 16 countries gathered in Amman (November 2000) for a Regional Youth Forum held under the patronage of Queen Rania of Jordan, issuing a *“Call to Action”* outlining key concerns and recommendations. This was picked up in regional media and in the Regional Arab Civil Society Forum on Children organized in Morocco under the patronage of HM King Mohammed VI (February 2001). The Forum brought together more than 200 participants from 21 countries

³⁸ *The African Common Position as Africa’s contribution to the special session of the General Assembly on children: Declaration* (Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children, Africa Fit for Children). Cairo, Egypt, 28-31 May 2001 (See also document A/S-27/13), 16 April 2002 for full text).

and 10 regional and international organizations (including NGOs, parliamentarians, young people, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States) to examine achievements over the decade, identify priorities for the future and develop frameworks for action., resulting in the *Rabat Declaration* which provides a comprehensive set of recommendations.

For the first time in over 50 years, the Arab Summit meeting (Amman, March 2001) included children on their agenda and issued a comprehensive *Arab Framework for the Rights of the Child*. It also decided to hold a High level Conference on Children. Several more specific meetings added to the emerging consensus on action needed to promote the rights of the children. 1) The Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers (Amman, April 2001) convened in cooperation with the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the Jordanian Institution of Diplomacy adopted the “Amman Declaration on the Use of Children as Soldiers”; 2) the Arab African Finance Ministers Meeting on Children (Marrakech, May 2001) recommended mechanisms to enhance financial resources for programmes for children; 3) the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children (Cairo, May 2001) presented a vision for African children; 4) the Arab-African Forum against the sexual exploitation of children (Rabat, October 2001) broke the wall of silence and recommended increased human and financial resources to overcome sexual exploitation of children.

A regional plan of action on the rights of the child entitled *An Arab World Fit for Children* emerged from a Regional Symposium on Children held in Beirut (April 2001) organized by the Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (ESCWA); the League of Arab States, and UNICEF. The Symposium brought together more than 200 people from 16 countries and a number of civil society organizations and young people, in addition to media professionals and representatives of United Nations agencies³⁹. With further refinements by an expert group, *An Arab World Fit for Children* was adopted by the second Arab High Level Conference on Children (Cairo, May 2001) which drew together 150 delegates from all 22 member countries of the League of Arab States. The dynamics of these events, the concomitant involvement of opinion leaders, and the increased media coverage combined to advance children’s issues higher on national and regional agendas and to secure commitments for the future.

Preparatory Committee processes

In accordance with resolution 54/93, formal preparations for the Special Session were undertaken by an open-ended Preparatory Committee comprising all member states and observers of the General Assembly and supported by UNICEF, as substantive secretariat.⁴⁰ Following the invitation from the General Assembly, over 70 heads of State and Government assigned personal representatives to the preparatory process. The work of the Preparatory Committee was facilitated by a bureau composed of five member states representing the regional groupings. The bureau was elected at the first organizational session of the preparatory committee from 7-8 February 2000, with Ambassador Patricia Durrant (Jamaica) as chairperson, Ambassadors Madina Ly Tall (Mali); Anwarul Chowdhury (Bangladesh); and Hanns Schumacher (Germany) as vice-chairs; and Ms Lidija Topic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) as rapporteur. In May 2002, Ambassador Iftexhar Chowdhury (Bangladesh) was elected to replace Anwarul Chowdhury.

In a decision aimed at increasing grassroots and developing world participation, the first organizational session decided to invite NGOs to participate in the preparatory process, including both those in consultative status with ECOSOC – who normally attend such events - and those in collaborative relationship with UNICEF in the field. This was a significant departure from standard UN procedures. It represented a breakthrough in efforts to expand the basis of representation in the debates and give voice to those who are not normally heard on the international conference circuit but who are closest to children’s realities on the ground. Successful identification of such partners was made possible by UNICEF’s strong field presence and network of country offices in over 160 countries, areas and territories, resulting in over 1,600 NGOs invited to participate in Special Session processes.⁴¹

³⁹ UNICEF press release: *The regional symposium on children concluded in Beirut with the announcement of “An Arab World Fit for Children”*.

⁴⁰ Sources for the section include official reports of the prepcom meetings; UNICEF GMC/SSC updates; the UNICEF Special Session Newsletter (#s 1-4); UNICEF’s report on the Special Session; CRIN’s Prepcum updates; SSC web-based information; and other information.

⁴¹ See interviews conducted by Sheila Barry with UNICEF staff members Nora Galer and Margaret Kyenkya on the significance of this decision. As expressed by Margaret Kyenkya, “*NGO involvement in the Special Session is nothing short of a miracle for me*”. Ambassador Patricia Durrant also refers to such NGO participation as a “breakthrough”, and was strongly supportive of involving them as stakeholders in the process at the outset (Interview by Sheila Tacon). Margaret Kyenkya pointed to parallel processes occurring within UNICEF to grant more flexibility for collaboration at field level with small or informal groups. (Exdir, April 2001, updating 1986 basic cooperation agreement). [\(NOTE: Interview transcripts not yet finalized\)](#)

Thereafter, three substantive sessions of the preparatory committee (Prepcom) were held in New York. These sessions, drawing on broad participation from a wide range of stakeholders including government, NGOs, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and experts in key domains, helped foster spirited debate on critical issues affecting children and advance reflection on strategies to address key challenges. They also provided a space for experiences to be exchanged, for partnerships to crystallize; and for coalitions and alliances to take root and expand.

◆ **1st substantive session (May 30-2 June 2000)**

Nearly 1000 participants gathered at the UN in New York from 30 May to 2 June 2000 for the first major working meeting to prepare for the Special Session. Representatives from almost all 189 member states and major United Nations bodies took part, as well as more than 235 national and international NGOs. Young people were a significant presence at the session, included as members of some government delegations, as invited panelists, and as participants in side events. These young people proved to be eloquent spokespersons, providing personal, passionate, and insightful perspectives on issues affecting children around the world.

As described in more detail in Chapter 7, delegates at the session warmly welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on *‘Emerging Issues for children in the twenty-first century’*, prepared with the support of UNICEF,⁴² and entrusted the Bureau, with the support of UNICEF, with preparation of a first draft outcome document for the Special Session.

Three panels of internationally recognized experts – 12 in all, including two youth panelists – considerably enriched discussions of 1) progress and constraints in implementation of the WSC goals; 2) emerging issues for children; and 3) future action to address critical needs at each stage of the life cycle. Among the issues highlighted by the panelists were the importance of political commitment, leadership, and accountability; the need to forge new and creative partnerships and to harness the power of today’s science and technology for children; the linkages between education and efforts to eliminate child labour; recognition of children as bearer of rights; our obligations to stop all forms of violence against children, and the importance of child-friendly economic policies. The critical nature of early childhood development was stressed since *“Before building a house we need to build a foundation”* (Dr. Gregory Gerasimov, Child Health and development Specialist). Child participation in issues of concern to them was also a cross-cutting theme, with Dilia Loranzo, youth activist from Colombia, stressing that *“We want to be part of the solution”*.

Among the side events organized at the session, an interactive panel facilitated by Plan International featured speakers from NGOs from the South who addressed issues related to the mobilization of children and the grassroots voice and participation in shaping a global movement for children. An informal panel of young people, co-hosted by the

NGO participation in preparatory processes

NGOs and CSOs played a vital role in preparatory processes at local, national, regional and international levels, symbolizing the growing strength and vitality of civil society as partners and agents of change in the Global Movement for Children, with actions and alliances crystallizing particularly around promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guide and framework for action. NGOs participated in a number of national end-decade reviews in diverse settings, contributed to regional agenda-setting, and were a dynamic presence in prepcom processes and the special session itself, which granted unprecedented openness to participation by grassroots NGOs that would normally not have a voice at the UN. This resulted in a rich diversity of constituencies represented in the debates. The NGO Committee on UNICEF, acting as counterpart to the substantive secretariat, convened a task force to organize the participation of NGOs at the prepcoms and Special Session, focusing particularly on logistical arrangements. NGOs also formed regional and issues-based caucuses active on a variety of substantive issues. Key among these was the Child Rights Caucus, created in early 2000 to serve as an NGO lobby group pressing for a strong child rights-based approach to the Special Session and its outcome, including through formulation of a *‘Children’s Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade’*; ongoing consultations with UNICEF; and the preparation of successive alternative texts of the draft outcome document. Regional caucuses helped organize NGO participation and input into regional consultations, prepared reports for the prepcoms, and lobbied governments on the outcome document, while the focused nature of the thematic caucuses added impact to their lobbying efforts on specific themes. Side events organized by NGOs at both prepcoms and the special session presented rich and diverse occasions to raise awareness, share experiences and learn from best practices on a number of issues. NGOs were also strong promoters of children and youth participation in all levels of preparatory processes. And through the SSC process, UNICEF was able to strengthen its working relationships with youth NGOs, as well as with religious groups; women’s groups; the International Union of Local Authorities and key professional groups such as paediatricians.

Sources: CRIN, *The United Nations Special Session on Children: time for action*; CRIN Newsletter 14; UNICEF history project interviews (Margaret Kyenya, UNICEF).

⁴² The *Emerging issues* paper represents UNICEF’s first major contribution in response to GA resolution 54/93 requesting the Secretary-General, with the support of UNICEF, to assist the preparatory committee with substantive inputs into the processes of preparation of the Special Session. The paper was also presented for information to the UNICEF Executive Board at its annual meeting at the end of May (see discussion in chapter 7).

Government of Canada and UNICEF featured six panelists – all under the age of 20 – from Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, the Philippines, Cote d’Ivoire and South Asia, chaired by Ms Hortense ME Bla, a youth activist from Cote d’Ivoire. The panelists spoke passionately about their own experiences and the difficult realities of life for children in many parts of the world.

The first substantive session agreed that the participation of children and young people in the Special Session would be ‘substantial’, although it was left unclear the exact form that participation would take. Participation of children in both the preparatory process and the Special Session was itself the subject of much discussion and debate. The strong stand taken by the Bureau, UNICEF and key NGO leaders in favour of children playing a prominent – indeed a central – role was widely supported by most member states, but some were initially less than enthusiastic. After all, children had never addressed the General Assembly before, nor had large numbers ever participated as full-fledged delegates. Concern was expressed that their participation could be disruptive – a distraction from the ‘real work’ of the Preparatory Committee and Special session. But in the end, the argument in favour of children’s participation prevailed, on the grounds that it would be inconceivable in the 21st century – the era of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – to hold a global children’s summit without significant children’s input and participation. And there was general agreement on the need to ensure that such participation was not merely symbolic or decorative, but meaningful. (see box). In its resolution 55/26 (2001), the General Assembly itself reiterated once again the importance of participatory processes involving a broad range of actors – highlighting in particular the role of children and young people, and urging States to “facilitate and promote their active contribution to the preparatory process, including in the work of the Preparatory Committee and the special session.”⁴³

Children and young people in the preparatory processes

In the lead-up to the Special Session, UNICEF worked with a wide range of partners, including civil society organizations and young people, to identify the most effective and meaningful way for children and young people to participate in processes linked to the special session and global movement for children leading up to and beyond the Special Session. UNICEF invited three young people to be initial members of the Youth Advisory Group (later named the Youth Reference Group) to help in developing communications strategies for the Global Movement for Children and the ‘Say Yes’ campaign; planning the Young People’s Forum; and contributing to other events. Together with Save the Children and Plan International, UNICEF hosted a meeting in October 2000 in London to discuss adolescent participation in the Special Session process. The aim was for the special session to provide an impetus to long-term efforts to promote children’s participation in decision-making processes and ensure that their voices are heard, and to make progress towards respecting children as equal citizens. The primary emphasis was on the national and regional levels, which are closest to everyday realities. Governments and NGOs were encouraged to involve children and young people both in their reviews of the implementation of the WSC goals and as participants in regional consultations. This was often facilitated by – or indeed, helped to stimulate, the creation of national institutions for children’s representation, such as children’s congresses or networks of young people, a variety of which are supported by UNICEF in diverse settings around the world. The Youth Opinion Polls conducted in three regions were another way of channeling the views and perspectives of children and young people into the public arena so as to contribute to public debate. Young people’s participation as part of official delegations, panelists, and NGOs at PrepCom processes was also encouraged – their insights and inputs adding significantly to the richness of debates at these sessions and contributing to the growing momentum in support of children as a force for change, as experience and expertise in the organization of such participation increased. For children and young people who could not attend these preparatory events, an interactive website was established through UNICEF’s *Voices of Youth* project, and the ‘Say Yes’ campaign allowed millions of others to make their voice heard on the 10 priority actions for children. The children and young people who took part in the preparatory processes made two things very clear – they wanted to be treated as partners, and they wanted their views taken seriously by the adult delegates. After the 2nd PrepCom, the Bureau asked UNICEF, as substantive secretariat to facilitate organization of a separate gathering for children to be held in conjunction with the Special Session – the historic Children’s Forum - planning for which was undertaken together with members of the Under-18 Participation Task Force of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and other partners.

Sources: *Reviewing the participation of young people in the second SSOC prepcom: an overview, lessons learnt and next steps* (BD/KW/NNB, 07/02/01); UNICEF Special Session Newsletter and updates; UNICEF SSC report; “*Road to the special session on children: an overview and lessons learned on the planning process of the Children’s forum and child participation in the Special Session for Children, as was scheduled for September 2001* (Draft 2, November 2001)’ CRIN Newsletter #14, June 2001 see also *Strategy for CSO and young people’s involvement in the Special Session and Global Movement for Children* (draft, 28 February 2001)

◆ 2nd substantive session (29 January – 2 February 2001)

The second session of the Preparatory Committee was attended by representatives of more than 150 governments and some 380 NGOs, including both UNICEF- and ECOSOC-accredited organizations, as well as many young people. Several government delegations were headed by high level representatives, including ministers, as well as 21 personal representatives of heads of State and Government. Six governments included young people in their delegations, as did many NGOs. Some young people delivered statements to the Prepcom session on behalf of their governments and took

⁴³ General Assembly Resolution 55/26. *Preparations for the special session on children* (A/RES/55/26), 9 January 2001.

part in official debate as NGO representatives. Children and young people also provided comments on the outcome document, took part in panel discussions as presenters, and actively participated in many NGO side events.

The meeting reviewed initial findings of the end-decade review, based on UNICEF's presentation of preliminary data trends.⁴⁴ The presentation was extremely well-received, as was the systematic monitoring and analysis of progress towards the goals over the decade, with one of the important contributions of the WSC follow-up process seen to lie in its contribution to the development of indicators and support for capacity-building in data collection and analysis. Such efforts have resulted in a clearer picture of trends affecting children and women, providing a better basis for results-oriented planning. Delegates commented on both progress and constraints in achievement of the World Summit Goals, with many taking the opportunity to outline key trends and prospects in their countries. Panel discussions were held on two key themes – the girl child and adolescent development and participation, involving 12 panelists from different regions and technical backgrounds. The overriding importance of the CRC was stressed in providing the standard against gender discrimination, while country examples of challenges and positive experiences in youth participation emphasized the need to develop processes and spaces where young people can discuss the issues that confront them and explore solutions.

UNICEF and the five initiating partners of the Global Movement for Children presented the GMC to hundreds of NGOs attending the session, distributing an information kit on the movement and inviting NGOs to *Say Yes for Children* and sign up to the 10 imperatives of the Rallying Call. Briefings were also provided on linkages between the Special Session on Children and a number of other international conferences and events.

During the session, government representatives, NGOs and UN entities offered extensive comments on the draft provisional outcome document, *'A World Fit for Children'*. With the support of UNICEF, and taking into account the views expressed, the Bureau was authorized to prepare a revised draft for distribution prior to its consideration at the third substantive session. The Prepcom agreed on an agenda and format for the Special Session and adopted arrangements for NGO participation.

3rd substantive session (11-15 June 2001)

The 3rd substantive prepcom session was well-attended by high-level delegates, including ministers and over 50 personal representatives of Heads of State and Government. Participation by children was significant – with thirty-five children under the age of 18 included in government delegations from 14 countries, and another four delegations included young people aged 18-22. Nearly 870 representatives of 387 NGOs also attended the session, including 110 children and young people. Most UN agencies, funds and programmes were also represented in the proceedings.

One of the high points of the prepcom was the overwhelmingly positive reception from member States, UN agencies, and NGOs to the Secretary-General's review of follow-up to the World Summit for Children, *We the Children*, presented by UN Deputy Secretary-General Mme. Louise Frechette (*see also chapter 6*). Some 79 government representatives, 10 UN agencies and 14 NGOs made statements on the report at the prepcom's plenary session, praising its high quality, objectivity and frankness and referring positively to its comprehensive scope, factual detail, depth of analysis, clarity of style, structure and presentation. There was near unanimous support for the report's findings which were welcomed as a solid and convincing basis for the negotiation of the outcome document of the Special Session. Most speakers also used the occasion to describe the end-decade review processes that had taken place in their own countries, providing a vivid picture of the remarkable levels of mobilization that these entailed, and of the invaluable support provided by UNICEF country and regional office.

The engagement of UN partners

Partners within the UN system took the occasion provided by the 3rd preparatory committee session to highlight particular points in their own follow-up to the WSC (some 15 UN entities submitted end-decade reports). They also identified future priorities for children falling within their individual mandates – making visible in this way just how many stakeholders are involved in global efforts on behalf of children and how very inter-sectoral are both the challenges and the strategies for addressing them. **WHO** stressed that healthy growth and development were fundamental human rights of every child and adolescent and that investment in health was vital to poverty reduction. **ILO** noted the growing consensus on child labour and particularly its worst forms as an urgent issue to be taken up, building on the international legal framework established to combat this and supporting the global movement developing against it. **UNFPA** noted that gains in reproductive health depend on addressing contextual factors including unequal gender relations and poverty. **FAO** pointed out that malnutrition is not an issue that can be dealt with by the health sector alone, stressing the importance of investment in rural development and agricultural productivity to ensure children's right to food. **WFP**

⁴⁴ See presentation by Kul Gautam.

identified priorities for improving the nutritional status of adolescent girls, pregnant women and mothers; providing nutritious complementary foods; and focusing on particularly vulnerable women and children. The **Committee on the Rights of the Child** noted that the WSC placed ratification and implementation of the Convention at the centre of the international agenda, with a decade of experience proving the importance of reinforcing consensus on grounding all commitments on the human rights of children. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**) pointed to the obligation under the CRC to promote and encourage international cooperation to implement the economic, social and cultural rights of children; raised the need to combat all forms of discrimination as a means of eliminating disparities, and identified juvenile justice and human rights education as issues to be strengthened. **UNHCR** quoted a refugee child who said "*If we are the future and we are dying, there is no future*". The **World Bank** highlighted the importance of : early child development as the foundation for human development; nutrition, including household food security, as a core part of any approach to poverty reduction and children's well-being; school health to achieve both health and education goals; and enhanced participation of children and young people.⁴⁵

In the context of the end-decade review, two panel discussions took place on subjects related to the two Optional protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – children and armed conflict, and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The panels provided in-depth views on these themes with panelists representing different regions and technical backgrounds including two young people who made striking interventions based on their personal experiences.

As with the previous sessions, numerous side-events were also organized, touching on a wide range of topics and issues. Highlights of the week included a panel discussion between two child delegates (from Benin and Uruguay), UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, and Thomas Hammarberg of Sweden and a live web debate moderated by UNICEF's "*Voices of Youth*" project involving children from 17 countries, Senator Landon Pearson of Canada, and Carol Bellamy. Many under-18s were also actively involved in caucuses and in writing for the daily NGO newspaper, *On the Record for Children*, which provided high-quality coverage and analysis of events. A preparatory workshop held at UNICEF House prior to the Special Session attracted 120 delegates under 18, organized by UNICEF and the NGO Steering Committee's 'Under-18 participation task force' which helped prepare the young people for participation in official meetings and side events. A child-friendly version of the outcome document, prepared by Save the Children, was used by the under-18s for discussion and comment.

The Global Movement for Children and the *Say Yes* campaign received high visibility at the prepcom, including during the plenary session, where UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy showed a film of pledges by leaders and celebrities and Queen Rania of Jordan spoke stirringly of *Say Yes* as a mobilizing force in her country. A *Say Yes* exhibition stand featured campaign T-shirts, posters and photos from around the world, while a workshop on 'Making the Global Movement for Children come alive' showcased creative *Say Yes* campaigns from around the world.

Central to the work of the session were negotiations on the draft outcome document of the Special Session, *A World Fit for Children*. The negotiations were based on a third revised draft prepared by the Bureau following informal consultations with the Committee, NGOs and entities of the UN system. Up to this time, inspired partly by its experiences with the WSC declaration and plan of action, UNICEF had hoped to achieve consensus on a Special Session outcome document that would be so compelling and so thoroughly the product of broad-based consultative reviews that formal negotiations on the text could be foregone. The Summit process had allowed a very good outcome document to emerge and to be adopted by governments without a great deal of heavy negotiations. UNICEF wanted to see something similar this time – hoping to produce a good, strong document and avoid a contentious or difficult negotiating process that might serve to water down the commitments made.⁴⁶ This, however, was not to be the case, as member states clearly wanted a more direct hand in the drafting process.⁴⁷

The Committee made definite progress towards consensus: despite time constraints, agreement was reached on more than half of the text. Differences on other parts were significantly narrowed down and constructive alternatives close to consensus were put forward for further informal consultations to complete negotiations on the remainder of the text. The informal consultations resumed for two days at the end of June 2001, and again in late August and September, reaching agreement on nearly 80% of the text before being cut short by the tragic events of September 11, which led to

⁴⁵ Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children – resumed third session (draft report) (A/AC.256/L.16), 17 September 2001.

⁴⁶ Interview by Sheila Tacon with Peter Crowley and others (NOTE: interview transcripts not yet finalized)

⁴⁷ As one UNICEF staff member put it, "*They wanted to negotiate – that's what they do*". (Nora Galer, in interview with Sheila Tacon). See also interviews by Sheila Tacon with Ambassadors Durrant, Chowdhury and Schumacher, for key insights on the context and processes for inter-governmental negotiations within the UN; and interviews with Ahmed (Sudan) and Leyton (Chile on behalf of the Rio group) for additional perspectives from member states (NOTE: interview transcripts not yet finalized).

the postponement of the Special Session until May, 2002. Negotiations were taken up once again in April and early May for finalization of the outcome document, with the focus on hammering out consensus on the remaining issues of contention (see panel).

Negotiating outcomes: the difficult drive for consensus

For the purposes of negotiation, many delegations organized themselves according to major groups. These included the 15-member European Union; the 18-member 'Rio group' of Latin American countries; and a newly formed group of 23 called 'some developing countries' (SDC) made up predominantly of Islamic countries but also a few others such as Cuba and China. This group was formed to fill the void left by the Group of 77's failure to adopt a position for the Special Session negotiations. Other individual actors included the US, Canada, Japan; non-EU European countries; individual countries of Asia and Africa; and the Holy See. During the final stages of negotiations, a "like-minded group" emerged, represented by Liechtenstein, who spoke on behalf of Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, San Marino.

Although not included in negotiations among delegates, a number of NGO coalitions continued to lobby delegations from the sides. Key among these were the Child Rights Caucus which was intent on ensuring an outcome document firmly rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and a number of faith-based NGOs pushing for parental rights, abstinence, and a roll-back of reproductive health rights.

The line-by-line process of negotiation of text was – inevitably, perhaps - slow and rather cumbersome, as delegates from widely diverse cultural, social and political struggled to reach agreement on issues of deep concern to them all and to see that their perspectives were appropriately reflected. The protracted nature of the debate may, in fact, be seen as one measure of the importance attached to the outcome of the special session, which delegations rightly saw as setting the path ahead for children over the coming decade. With so many stakeholders in the future, building a consensus is bound to be difficult. So too, there was the heavy legacy of previously 'agreed text' to contend with. Language was available on a variety of issues from a plethora of previous agreements, resolutions, and outcomes, with much time spent by each delegation in a 'cut and paste' approach, sifting through alternatives to offer up morsels that best suited their purposes. It seemed at times that we had truly become, in one bureau member's observation, 'prisoners of words'. At other times, negotiations over particular passages were protracted because of bargaining strategies including trade-offs on different issues. And finally, of course, there were real and concrete differences that divided many delegations on key issues.⁴⁸

These included issues related to **resources and ODA** (including debate on commitments to previous ODA targets); **the environment** (including the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities); **children affected by armed conflict** (particularly in reference to the Israel-Palestine dispute; language regarding the impact on children of sanctions in Iraq; and humanitarian access and aid to internally displaced populations); **child labour** (with debate hinging on whether to deal with its worst forms only or to address all child work); and **follow-up and monitoring** (including questions on levels of responsibility and linkages with the CRC). A number of these issues had been taken up through informal working groups organized by the prepcom to help iron out differences, but debates continued.

Of the issues still outstanding in the final countdown to the Special Session, the following proved among the most contentious:⁴⁹:

- ◆ **the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child** as a framework for action, and language on **child rights in general**, with the US delegation in particular reluctant to accept the Convention as the comprehensive or over-arching framework for action and more comfortable with traditional language on well-being.
- ◆ **reproductive health rights**, where the specter of abortion led to reluctance by some (for example SDC, US) to agree on language regarding reproductive health services in general, and the issue of adolescent girls in particular posing problems for a number of delegations. These disputes spilled over into debates on the promotion of 'healthy lifestyles'.
- ◆ **juvenile justice**, where points of contention hinged on deep differences over the death penalty and life imprisonment for children under the age of 18.

In the end, after a final stretch that saw delegates negotiating for close to 24 hours straight, consensus was achieved on all outstanding issues, and *A World Fit for Children* was finalized and adopted by the General Assembly close to midnight on the final day of the Session. The final agreed text acknowledges that the Convention contains a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the

⁴⁸ Ambassador Chowdhury, who led negotiations on some of the 'problem' issues, reflected on constraints and challenges of the consensus-based inter-governmental negotiating process, observing in particular that "*We have really become prisoners of words*". At the same time, he said that the negotiations – while difficult - were necessary, and that crafting a suitable language is important, with a key aim to "*pick up language which will provide opportunities for action*". "So", he observed wryly, "*We throw our hands up in frustration, but continue to work*". (Interview by Sheila Tacon and focus group discussions). Ambassador Durrant also noted that the process, while "*very difficult, long and arduous*" and marked by intense discussions, had the virtue of being country- and regionally-driven. Discussions were enriched by national end-decade reviews and regional consultations. "*We have to ensure that neither the bureau nor the secretariat impose their views*". (Interview by Sheila Tacon). (NOTE: Interviews to be finalized)

⁴⁹ NGOs provided detailed and incisive coverage of negotiation processes. See, for example, successive issues of *On the Record for Children*, by the advocacy project; and *Prepcom Update*, published by CRIN

protection and well-being of children, recognizes the importance of other international instruments, and retains a strong rights-focus. Reproductive health issues were resolved in a manner consistent with previous commitments (ICPD+5 and Beijing+5). While some NGOs (and some delegates as well) expressed disappointment at certain aspects of both the outcome and processes of negotiation, others pronounced themselves pleased, and the prevailing view of UNICEF is that the Outcome Document presents an extremely strong and positive basis for forward movement.

Sources: *On the Record for Children*; UNICEF staff observations; UNICEF SSC report; UNICEF oral history interviews; CF/EXD/2002-009; other

At the opening ceremony of the Children’s Forum at UN Headquarters in New York (May 5, 2002), 19-year old Rhys Campbell of Jamaica asked the distinguished adults on the podium (including Secretary General Kofi Annan, Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, and Carol Bellamy of UNICEF) why it was taking so long for officials to come to agreement on the outcome document. After the ripple of laughter among the assembled guests had died down, Ambassador Durrant gave her well-considered and reasoned reply, pointing in essence to the wide-ranging and participatory consultative processes that had been set in motion at all levels to ensure that the broadest possible input from the widest possible set of partners was drawn. The processes outlined above are a testimony to the sincere efforts to ensure that all voices have been heard and have contributed to the crafting of a document which, it has been recognized, must serve as a path forward for all.

Partnerships for change: the Global Movement for Children

Through what was known as the ‘leadership initiative’, first articulated in 1999, UNICEF aimed to mobilize political will around a common vision for children, and to build an alliance of influential actors – governmental and non-governmental – with the power to shape national laws, policies, budgets, institutions and programmes, as well as to social attitudes and behaviours towards children and adolescents.⁵⁰ As strategic thinking evolved, and preparatory processes for the Special Session got further underway, the leadership initiative began to be further conceptualized as one element within a broader Global Movement for Children (GMC), which UNICEF, in collaboration with key partners, sought to inspire, develop, and support. Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace prize laureate, and Graca Machel, expert on children in armed conflict, began to work with UNICEF in May 2000 to build broad support to change the world for and with children. Together they called on leaders from government, civil society and the private sector to form a global movement committed to securing children’s rights, convinced that “*The future of our children lies in leadership and the choices leaders make.*”⁵¹

“We cannot waste our precious children. Not another one, not another day. It is long past time for us to act together” (Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel)

An expanded sense of leadership

An urgent call to leadership was sounded in UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children Report 2000*, which sought to “*fan the flame that burned so brilliantly for children a decade ago*”, calling on leaders in industrialized and developing countries alike “*to reaffirm their commitment to children*”, and calling as well for vision and leadership within families and communities, “*where respect for the rights of children and women is first born and nurtured and where the protection of those rights begins*”. It made clear that the leadership required for the next millennium extends beyond traditional sectors and governmental structures, to engage all those who share a concern for human progress – people’s movements, community-based organizations, youth movements, women’s groups, professional networks, artists and intellectuals, the mass media. “*It is a global leadership that will work bottom-up as well as top-down, involving Heads of State, leaders in the political, business, academic and religious communities, and children and adolescents themselves who are already working towards positive change in their families and in their communities*” (SOWC 2000, 17). This message was echoed in the *State of the World’s Children Report 2002*, which was devoted to the theme of leadership.

Conceived as a force for change, the basic aim of the Global Movement for Children was to broaden, strengthen and focus existing partnerships around a common future agenda for children. The term has since been applied to the coalition of organizations, sectors, and individuals who share a common vision of a world fit for children. Founding members include the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC); Netaid.org Foundation; PLAN International; Save the Children; UNICEF and World Vision, who have since been seeking to expand the partnership, particularly among NGOs and NGO coalitions and other civil society organizations committed to the aims of the movement. Care International has most recently signed on to the core group of partners.⁵²

⁵⁰ *The leadership initiative for children* (CF/EXD/1999-02), 25 March 1999; and *The Global Movement for Children: overview, questions and answers*, as of 21 January 2000). See also *The State of the World’s Children 2002* on leadership.

⁵¹ (Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel, “:At the service of the children of the world”: Letter presented to UNICEF on 6 May 2000; UNICEF SSC report)

⁵² Sources of information on the GMC include: *Change the world with children . Global Movement for Children Information kit* (prepared by UNICEF on behalf of the Global Movement for Children, March 2001; Global movement for children, consultation

The Global Movement for Children is developing as a united voice for all those throughout the world working to ensure that every child, without exception, is assured the right to dignity, security and self-fulfillment. As a movement, the GMC seeks to build a far-reaching constituency to promote child rights, to take actions for their implementation, and to demand public accountability. Building on the lessons learned in other movements for social change –the women’s movement; the struggle for civil rights in the United States; and the environment - the coalition aims to mobilize a massive groundswell of public opinion in support of children’s rights, and to expand partnerships at all levels, strengthening the voices of all those already working on behalf of children and bringing in others.

The core of the Movement is seen to be adults and children, working together, for it is no longer seen to be enough for adults to change the world for children -- they must change the world *with* children, acknowledging children’s right to speak and to participate in the decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives. Another key principle is the belief in the importance of leadership at all levels – not just government leadership, but leaders in civil society, grassroots organizations, the private sector, and youth groups – all of whom are seen to have a vital role to play as actors for social change. A third unifying principle is that the key focus for action is at the local and national levels, where the real impact of positive change for children can be made.

In many ways, the Global Movement for Children is the crystallization and further refinement and intensification of a process that has roots in the mobilization of partnerships behind the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals and the commitments of the World Summit for Children⁵³. Seeking now to build on these processes and partnerships, and to draw lessons from both progress and constraints encountered over the past decade, the Movement articulated a ‘rallying call’ setting out its basic principles and the 10 critical imperatives for children. These imperatives were, in turn, incorporated into the outcome document of the Special Session for Children, forming a framework of commitment by governments to building *A World Fit for Children*.

The ‘Rallying Call’ of the Global Movement for Children

- ◆ In every child who comes into the world, the hopes and dreams of the human race are born anew.
- ◆ Children are the bearers of our common future - a future that is in our hands as never before. For the world has the knowledge, the resources and the legal imperatives to give every child the best possible start in life, in a family environment that offers the love, the care and the nurturing that children need to grow, to learn - and to develop to the fullest.
- ◆ The entire community of nations acknowledged as much when they embraced the Convention on the Rights of the Child - and vowed, a decade ago, to fulfil the goals of the World Summit for Children. These obligations must be met, not only by governments, but by all of us.
- ◆ Yet in this new Millennium, it is clear that more - much more - must be done if the world is to protect the rights and meet the needs of all children.
- ◆ Our determination is rooted in the knowledge that in furthering the best interests of children, the most effective actions must come from within the context of our own lives and hearts, and from listening to children and young people themselves. As members of the human family, each of us is responsible. All of us are accountable.

The 10 critical imperatives:

1. **LEAVE NO CHILD OUT:** Because every girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights, all forms of discrimination and exclusion against children must end.
2. **PUT CHILDREN FIRST:** Governments must meet their obligations to children and young people. At the same time, everyone -- including individuals, non-governmental organizations, religious groups, the private sector, and children and adolescents themselves -- must recognize their responsibility to ensure that child rights are respected.
3. **CARE FOR EVERY CHILD:** All children must enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, especially through immunization, good nutrition and diet, clean water and adequate sanitation, proper housing and a safe and healthy environment.
4. **FIGHT HIV/AIDS:** Children and adolescents and their families must be protected from the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS.

with civil society organizations, 23-25 February 2000, NY; web-based information on the GMC; other internal UNICEF documents; UNICEF report on the Special Session on Children

⁵³ Note: The term ‘global movement’ itself was used in an early UNICEF consultation on follow-up to the World Summit for Children which foresaw a similar process of alliance-building and coalition-strengthening for children (See report of Greenwich consultation CF/EXD/1991-001, 18 January 1991, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the current document.) Participants at the Special Session on Children clearly perceived the anchoring of the Global Movement in processes initiated over the 1990s. For example: “*The 1990 World Summit and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came into force the same year, were landmarks in the history of children’s issues. For the first time ever, a political consensus was built around children, placing them firmly on the international agenda. The Summit embraced the principles in the Convention and was, in effect, the first global movement aspiring to convert these principles into action*” (Mr. Andreas Moushouttas, Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, Cyprus)

5. **STOP HARMING AND EXPLOITING CHILDREN:** The violence and abuse that children suffer must be stopped now. And the sexual and economic exploitation of children must also end.
6. **LISTEN TO CHILDREN:** Everyone must respect the right of children and young people to express themselves and to participate in decisions that affect them, consistent with their evolving capabilities. And we must listen and act.
7. **EDUCATE EVERY CHILD:** All girls and boys must receive a compulsory, free primary education of good quality.
8. **PROTECT CHILDREN FROM WAR:** Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict.
9. **PROTECT THE EARTH FOR CHILDREN:** There must be urgent steps by every one of us -- including governments, civil society and the private sector -- to assure the well-being and security of future generations by safeguarding the environment at global, national and local levels.
10. **FIGHT POVERTY; INVEST IN CHILDREN:** Because children suffer the most from poverty, the fight against it must begin with them. This includes investing in social services that benefit the poorest children and their families, such as basic health care and primary education. At the same time, the well-being of children must be a priority objective of debt relief programmes, development assistance and government spending.

In a series of consultations prior to the Special Session, the core partners of the GMC formed a Convening Committee consisting, initially, of the heads of the initiating partners along with the co-chairs of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, with the president of World Vision International elected as Chair and the Chief Executive of Plan International as vice-chair. They agreed to establish a coordinating secretariat, staffed by an interim coordinator and assistant and temporarily housed at one of the partner organizations until a permanent location is found. They established a 'seed fund' for partner contributions to the cost of the secretariat for the first year, and are considering a variety of next steps for follow-up after the Special Session.

Say Yes for Children

Say Yes for Children was launched as the communications and mobilization campaign of the Global Movement for Children in April 2001 (see panel). One year later (by May 2002), it had collected nearly 95 million pledges from people around the world, making it the largest campaign of its kind, as confirmed by the Guinness Book of Records.⁵⁴ In submitting their pledges – either electronically through the special website maintained by Netaid.org Foundation, or on paper forms in their communities – individuals of all ages, from all walks of life, and from over 170 countries voiced their belief that “*All children should be free to grow in health, peace and dignity*” and affirmed their solidarity with the Global Movement for Children by signing on to the 10 critical imperatives necessary to ensure a better future for children. Each person was also asked to identify the three most urgent issues affecting children in their country, knowing that their pledges would be heard at the Special Session on Children, when the results of the campaign were presented to world leaders. A special ‘Action Matrix’ provided along with the pledge forms also helped identify ways of getting further involved in Global Movement activities.⁵⁵

A communication strategy for the Global Movement

After a pivotal meeting of the UNICEF Global Communication team in November 1999, a ‘brand anatomy’ exercise was undertaken in early 2000 with the help of the ad agency TBWA. The aim was to develop a far-reaching communication strategy and campaign for the Global Movement that would help change the way the world thinks about children. An initial idea was to shock people out of their complacency through an aggressive message to the effect that the world currently discriminates against children and must stop. But this soon gave way to new approach which would urge people to sign onto actions to help “*change the world with children*”. The idea of holding a ‘*global referendum*’ on children caught hold; NetAID signed on for the referendum, and further efforts focused on developing clear parameters for such an activity. Priority actions for children – it was clear – should be grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but they should be expressed in a simpler form, understandable to all. Debates and discussions emanating from the series of consultations held on the ‘global agenda for children’ helped focus and crystallize ideas on the key priorities, with 10 key principles gradually emerging as the ‘*rallying cry*’ of the Global Movement. It was decided that these 10 points should be the basis for the global referendum, through which people would be asked to “*Say Yes*” to children. The next phase was to work through the country and regional UNICEF offices for the *Say Yes* launches. And the rest, as they say, is history – or rather, the future.

(Source: Interview with Corrinne Woods, conducted by Jean Ando and Carol Watson)

The ripple effects of this massive effort have been enormous, as the campaign went far beyond the written pledge forms to prompt a remarkable wave of social mobilization. It rallied the support of human rights activists, parliamentarians, students, grass-roots action groups, community leaders and entire families around a common hope for the world’s children. From country to country, NGOs joined together in coalitions and alliances – gaining new strength to move

⁵⁴ UNICEF report on SSC

⁵⁵ Information on the *Say yes* campaign is drawn from a variety of material produced by UNICEF’s Division of Communications, including a *Say yes for Children Global review*, compiled December 2001; and other promotional material; as well as Regional Analytical Reports by UNICEF Regional Offices, and the UNICEF report on the Special Session for Children

forward. Support from the corporate sector opened new possibilities and encouraged partnerships. International leaders including Presidents, Prime Ministers and First Ladies, and celebrities have added their voices to *Say Yes*.

Children and young people by the millions – activists and change-makers in their own right – seized the opportunity to *Say Yes*. Through children’s parliaments, schools, and youth groups and associations, they advocated among peers and adults alike for their rights. They planned entire campaigns, hosted debates and discussions on national priorities, canvassed extensively for pledges and brainstormed on future actions for the Global Movement for Children.

Say Yes has traveled in caravans, spread through schools, and teamed up in door-to-door campaigns, crossing rural and urban borders, and reaching both young and old to raise awareness and encourage activism. It has been emblazoned on T-shirts, on leaflets, and banners. Its messages have been broadcast on media ranging from the popular children’s TV networks such as Nickelodeon and Fox Kids Latin America, to BBC, CNN and a vast array of local broadcasting. *Say Yes for Children* also became the official strap line for the 2001 FIFA World Cup games viewed by millions. In addition to Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel, international spokespersons and supporters included UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan, South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, Muhammed Ali, Bill Gates, Rigoberto Menchu and others.

Say Yes – Selected highlights from the field *

- ◆ In **West and Central Africa**, the Global Movement for Children was officially launched in Ouagadougou in February 2001, and people were mobilized for the *Say Yes* campaign through coalitions of government, NGOs, and UN agencies, resulting (by end 2001) in some 7,090, 650 pledges. A number of special events provided opportunities to promote the GMC and *Say Yes* - these included the Pan-African movie and television festival in **Burkina Faso**; the African Nations Football Cup games in **Mali**; and the Regional Conference of Parliamentarians from the Maghreb and West and Central Africa in **Mauritania**. In **Liberia**, the *Say Yes* campaign was used to promote HIV awareness and other critical issues, and the paramount chief of Bong county was so successful in community mobilization that he was invited to a consultation of communications officers to share his experiences. In **Nigeria**, President Olusegun Obasanjo launched *Say Yes* and declared that “*Fighting poverty and educating our children is the best investment we can make for the future of our children*”; 16 cross-sectoral focal groups worked together on the campaign, women’s groups were active in its support, and 2,000 children and youth volunteers were mobilized for the GMC. In **Gambia**, a GMC Committee of parliamentarians was set up at the National Assembly and for the first time in Gambia’s history, parliamentarians, religious and community leaders, parents and children sat together to discuss child rights in regional consultations culminating in the 2nd National Forum on Children which incorporated the 10 *Say Yes* imperatives into their document “A Gambia fit for Children.” In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the *Say Yes* launch coincided with the establishment of the national preparatory committee for the special session, with six priorities identified for action, including family reunification which became the focus of a national campaign. In **Ghana**, *Say Yes* was launched by the President at fund-raising event for children which featured a Children’s Parliament debate at which the President announced full commitment to education reforms and actions to halt child labour and abuse. In **Sierra Leone**, the campaign focused on the specific goal of quality basic education for all.
- ◆ In **Eastern and Southern Africa**, high profile national launches of the Global Movement for Children were conducted by presidents or other high-ranking government officials, with national task forces comprising government, NGOs, international agencies and children and young people constituted to plan and implement the *Say Yes* campaign. Communities, villages, social and professional groups, students and individual citizens were mobilized, resulting in 5.5 million pledges – most of which were printed and distributed by air and road. In **Southern Sudan**, ravaged by years of civil war, particular excitement was felt as local people realized that their opinions would be heard. In **Kenya**, grassroots NGOs made a special effort to reach out to over 50,000 AIDS orphans with the *Say Yes* campaign; over 100 private sector companies participated; and an International Emmy was awarded for the most creative and original national television programming. HIV/AIDS and child protection were the focus of the **Say Yes** campaign in Swaziland, where local churches and religious organizations were active in mobilization efforts. In **Angola**, where UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy participated in an advocacy event, 2,000 children presented a 70,000-signature appeal against the exploitation and abuse of children to the UN SG’s special representative. In **Eritrea**, *Say Yes/GMC* stimulated reactivation of the intersectoral CRC Task Force made up of government, NGOs, the national youth group, UNICEF and Save the Children UK; students and teachers were mobilized for the campaign in six regions. In **Madagascar**, a national children’s forum organized during the *Say Yes* campaign ended with a concrete proposal to establish a Youth Parliament. In **Malawi**, the President discussed child rights with a group of young people as he signed his say yes pledge, and a children’s parliament was convened for the first time. In **Tanzania**, youth activists who spearheaded many activities of the *Say Yes* campaign initiated processes for the establishment of a national Junior Council, and President Mkapa responded positively to an appeal from village children to repeal prison sentences for children. In **Namibia**, the two houses of Parliament met jointly to make their *Say Yes* pledges and join the GMC in the presence of 50 children. In **South Africa**, *Say Yes* was launched in conjunction with five major child-rights initiatives; local pop stars released a song on child rights; and pledges in 10,000 schools drew in over 1 million children.

- ◆ In **East Asia and the Pacific**, where over 4.2 million pledges had been made by end 2001, the *Say Yes* campaign helped to raise the profile of children's issues, forge closer alliances with broadcast media, and bring together new partners for children, with many strategies used to engage children and adults in the GMC. In **China**, a children's publication group espoused the cause and brought in 96% of the total at the time of 2.4 million registrations. In **Mongolia**, where a famous pop star sang as the president, prime minister and members of parliament signed up, the campaign reached nearly one fifth of the population. Ongoing initiatives include new weekly radio and television programmes on children's issues and the launch of a 'Child-to-Child' movement involving over 3,000 Mongolian adolescents. In **Cambodia**, half a million school children made *Say Yes* pledges in a campaign launched by the Prime Minister – the results were presented to the King, the National Assembly and the Senate at the end of the summer. In **Malaysia**, the Prime Minister also launched the *Say Yes* campaign, personally intervening to increase from two to twelve the number of child delegates to the Special Session. In **Papua New Guinea**, the Speaker of the National Parliament launched the campaign with the participation of children, MPs, ministers, provincial governors, department heads, NGOs and members of the diplomatic corps. In the **Philippines**, where almost a quarter of a million pledges were collected, the president launched the campaign. In **Viet Nam**, 825,000 pledges were collected, including a special effort to collect votes from 10,000 children in vulnerable situations.
- ◆ In **Southern Asia**, successful "Say Yes" for children mobilization and voting campaigns were held in Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and among Afghan children in Pakistan. Meena, the heroine of a popular animated film series launched in the region by UNICEF, has been declared as the South Asian ambassador for girls' rights in the GMC, and an animated spot was produced to support "say yes" (ROSA RAR 2001) In **India**, a local school was the site of the campaign launch, with *Say Yes* activities extended through different regions through the collaborative efforts of NGOs, youth clubs, schools and local government. In **Pakistan**, the campaign was launched at the closing ceremony of a child rights festival in Lahore, at which some 3,000 pledges were cast; volunteer teams took forms to children in jails, orphan homes, institutions for the disabled, and working children. In **Sri Lanka**, where *Say Yes* was launched by the president, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement – the largest NGO in the country – mobilized its network of 7,000 volunteers behind the GMC; over 5,000 religious leaders endorsed *Say Yes*; children in over 50 urban schools in Colombo actualized their pledges through support for rural schools, and some 15,000 children were consulted for their views on national and international priorities. In **Bangladesh**, the campaign was launched by the President, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, with a surge of interest displayed by civil society and the private sector. In **Nepal**, street theatre and focus group discussions were among the diverse mobilization activities for the GMC. In **Bhutan**, the campaign focus was on education and was accompanied by distribution of a CRC resource guide.
- ◆ In the **Middle East and North Africa**, the *Say Yes* campaign emerged as a powerful advocacy and partnership building tool for the Global Movement for Children. From its regional launch in Beirut during a children's symposium on 26 April 2001, where the Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs was the first to pledge his support, the 6-month campaign continued to draw traditional and non-traditional partners under a universal banner to vote and work for the three most relevant issues affecting the lives of children. Challenges included overcoming lack of modern technology in some areas: in **Iraq**, a total of 20 partners managed to collect and analyze almost 3.5 million votes, the third highest in the world after India and Kazakhstan. Four other countries in the region – **Algeria, Jordan, Morocco and Syria**, all collected more than a million votes. In **Lebanon**, pledge forms were distributed through the national postal services and CNN, in cooperation with UNICEF, set up a student bureau where child rights and youth stories were put together for airing during the special session. In **Oman**, the campaign was linked to a number of national events, including National Breastfeeding Week, while in **Yemen** the campaign led to a national debate that attracted full media coverage on the situation of children. In **Jordan**, *Say Yes* was launched by Queen Rania, a strong and vocal advocate for children's rights. King Abdullah II and Queen Noor also pledged their support, and in just 21 days, over 1 million pledges had been gathered and regular *Say Yes* events continued to mobilize all sectors of society. In **Sudan**, the president led the pledge-signing with his Council of Ministers, and the leader of the Opposition signed a pledge to abolish FGM. In **Qatar**, the campaign was organized around a national programme to disseminate information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was extended an extra week due to popular demand.
- ◆ In the **CEE/CIS and Baltic States**, The *Say Yes* campaign was a success in the region, mobilizing over 16 million pledges and sparking discussion around the ten points of the rallying call. More than 6,00 children attended the regional launch in **Turkey**, where Mrs. Nane Annan was the special guest speaker. In **Azerbaijan**, the first deputy Prime Minister presided over the national launch at the popular International Freestyle Wrestling Tournament; mobile groups of volunteers collected pledges through a wide variety of community events; and local government units supported local campaigns. In the **Russian Federation**, nearly 9,000 children participated in the national launch in Moscow, floating messages to the special session on balloons: this was followed by roundtables, conferences and workshops bringing young people, NGOs and government together in discussions of critical issues. In **Georgia**, the campaign was coordinated by a coalition of 42 NGOs and the results reviewed by 166 representatives of the Children and Youth parliament. In **Kazakhstan**, a coalition of 14 national NGOs and youth organizations came together in support of the GMC; young journalists were trained as *Say Yes* leaders during a Youth Media festival; 3,000 young people participated in a GMC march; and a Knowledge Lesson on *Say Yes* was conducted in schools, gathering more than 3.5 million pledges in a single day. In **Albania**, a contact group of 8 organizations, key parliamentarians and individuals joined together to create a dynamic new coalition – the Albania Children's Alliance - which was instrumental in the formulation of a region-wide civil society children's strategy paper for the Special Session. (DOC)

- ◆ In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, where some 3, 386,588 votes were tallied, the *Say Yes* campaign was a key focus of mobilization efforts helping to build a wider consensus for children at all levels including the media, the public sector, intellectual and moral leaders, the general public, and children and adolescents themselves. (TACRO RAR). In **Honduras**, where President Carlos Roberto Flores pledged his support, a national alliance of 15 NGOs and 3 governmental institutions coordinated a campaign which included a nation-wide vigil by youth movements and the national football team sporting *Say Yes* T-shirts during international matches. In the **Dominican Republic**, a coalition of 42 NGOs came together to renew commitments to children. In **Haiti**, young radio journalists broadcast information about the 10 imperatives for children through a special children's radio programme and went from school to school to inform students and their teachers about the GMC. In **Argentina**, thousands pledged at the annual telethon 'Un sol para los chicos' , while **Belize** launched a made-for TV video of *Say Yes* featuring leaders from all walks of life. In **Mexico**, pledge distribution and collection involved federal institutions, media groups, private sector entities, NGOs, Scouts, church groups and political parties, while the campaign in **Peru** was driven by the 30 private and public institutions which form the National Commission for the Rights of Children and adolescents that integrates nationwide with 17 local commissions.

- ◆ Countries in the **industrialized world** also participated in *Say Yes*. In **Italy**, the NGO coalition 'For the rights of children and adolescents' was the driving force behind a successful campaign at local, national and international levels. In **Australia**, the Coalition for Australia's Children, comprising 53 national NGOs, incorporated *Say Yes* into their Vote for Children campaign which was run ahead of the general election in November 2001. In **Austria**, where the campaign was primarily promoted online, NGOs, educational institutions, youth organizations, the media, ambassadors and others were mobilized to encourage pledging. In **Greece**, a school-based campaign was promoted in 5th grade classes and kindergartens around the country, with youth associations and clubs actively involved. In **Japan**, efforts focussed on raising public support for the campaign as a springboard for ratification of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rome Statute. In the Netherlands, a campaign by postcard was promoted nationwide; public debates were held on children, and a special song was produced by a popular children's choir.

*Information based on UNICEF Regional Office Analytical reports (2001) and the *Say Yes for Children, global review* prepared by the Division of Communication, UNICEF, NY (December 2001).

The *Say Yes for Children* campaign gave voice to a new global community of advocates for children, and the Special Session on Children was their turning point, with a growing constituency standing poised to ensure that words would be put to action. As Mrs. Nane Annan noted at the Forum on Women's Leadership for Children during the Special Session on Children, the almost 95 million people who took part in the campaign had voted the following critical actions among the most urgent global priorities: *Educate every child; Stop harming and exploiting children; Fight HIV/AIDS; and Leave no child out*. The energy, motivation, and alliance-building generated by *Say Yes* and other activities of the GMC contributed immeasurably to the sense of commitment, urgency and emphasis on partnerships that characterized discussions, deliberations and debates at the Special Session on Children. They also provided a firm foundation for moving ahead in global efforts to create a world fit for children.

CHAPTER 9: CELEBRATING A SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN

Introduction

The Special Session on Children, held from 8 to 10 May 2002 at the United Nations in New York, was a gathering like no other. It will be remembered for the new ground broken for children, particularly in their participation. It will also be remembered as a summit of leadership, a summit of substance, and a summit of partnership. It represented a milestone in the burgeoning Global Movement for Children which seeks to rally the world around key commitments that serve as a foundation for building a world fit for children. In the aftermath of the September 11th bombing of the World Trade Centre and the volatile conditions characterizing much of the world, there was an acute sense of the high stakes involved. *“This is not just a Special Session on children,”* declared UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in his opening address, *“It is a gathering about the future of humanity. We are meeting here because there is no issue more unifying, more urgent or more universal than the welfare of our children”*. Noting the historic nature of children’s involvement, he urged all present to listen attentively to their views, for *“To work for children, we must work with children”*. As UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy observed in her opening address, *“This is the first time the General Assembly has addressed the issue of children in a Special Session. And never has a major UN meeting invited so many children and young people as official delegates...their participation is what makes the Special Session special.”*

Never had a conference on children drawn so many participants – not even the World Summit for Children, the watershed gathering 12 years before whose unfinished goals for child survival, development and protection were a major focus of the Session. There were delegations representing some 190 countries. The subject of children brought more summit-level participants than ever before to a General Assembly special session— 69 presidents, prime ministers, vice presidents and royalty. Moreover, it provided the occasion for a truly broad-based summit of leadership, with opinion leaders and change-makers drawn from all spheres of society. Participants included over 2,000 representatives of nearly 700 NGOs and civil society organizations from 117 countries (or 88?), 250 parliamentarians from 75 countries, mayors of cities around the world, senior religious leaders from the major faiths, key figures from private and public sectors, UN bodies, Nobel laureates, celebrities, UNICEF ambassadors, and more than 400 children and young people.⁵⁶

It was the children who took centre stage, bringing the message of their deliberations at the Children’s Forum to the General Assembly, speaking at the opening of all key events, dialoguing with leaders, and driving home the reality of their situation through their compelling stories and voices. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, making concluding remarks on behalf of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, said the three-day event marked the first GA assembly where children were not only seen but also heard. *“They captured our hearts, they captured our minds. They inspired us with their energy and enthusiasm. They reminded us of our past promises and they asked for action now.”* Their participation marked a turning point in wider acceptance of children as citizens and key stakeholders in decisions about the future.

In many countries around the world, through parallel events organized just before, during or immediately following the Special Session, governments, NGOs and children helped keep the issues of the Special Session in the public spotlight. These included candlelight vigils (Guatemala City; Manila); press conferences (Zagreb); children’s parliaments (Orissa; Ankara); a children’s week (Venezuela); a march and rally for children’s rights (New York); and other social mobilization activities. These helped make of the Special Session and its deliberations a truly global event.

Full details on the Special Session and its supporting events are recorded in the report on the Special Session compiled by UNICEF.⁵⁷ Drawing on that report, the following chapter presents key highlights from the official programme of the session as well as from the supporting events organized around key constituencies and priority themes.

⁵⁶ From *Special Session on Children, Preliminary report* (EXDIR 2002 –009)

⁵⁷ *Building a World Fit for Children: UNICEF Summary report of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, 8-10 May, 2002*. Revised Draft, 26 June, 2002. Other details on the Special Session and its outcome can be found on the UNICEF website (<http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/>)

Participation in action: the Children's Forum and message to the Special Session

Some 406 children and young people between the ages of 7 and 18 (242 girls and 164 boys) participated in the historic *Children's Forum* that took place from 5-7 May just prior to the Special Session. Two thirds of the children participated as part of official delegations from some 148 countries. The other 141 came as representatives of 91 different NGOs. All were selected at national level – through competitions in schools or communities, membership in youth parliaments, affiliations with NGOs, or involvement in the *Say Yes for Children* campaign. Many of them had participated in national or regional preparatory meetings and were selected by their peers to represent them at the Special Session.

Children's Forum organization

Main organizers of the Children's Forum consisted of a UNICEF working group, the 'Under 18 Participation Task Force' of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, and two young people from New York. The Forum programme was drafted by representatives of UNICEF and Save the Children, based on expectations of the participants and consistent with the rallying call of the Global Movement for Children. Assistance at the Forum was provided by an international team of 18 adults and two youth facilitators who helped guide events and discussions. Vital on-site assistance was also provided by partner NGOs, including Save the Children, World Vision, and the Girl Scouts, among others. A team of 40 interpreters worked throughout the Forum, which was conducted in English, French, and Spanish. A pool of 75 volunteers, including young people, also provided invaluable services – all of which contributed immeasurably to the success of the event. (Source: UNICEF SSC report)

The Forum opened on Sunday May 5 to a packed conference room at UN headquarters where more than 1,200 people were gathered. In his welcoming remarks, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged young people to make a difference at the forthcoming Special Session. *"Your presence here marks a new chapter in the history of the UN", he said. "So far, adults have called the shots, but now it's time to build the world with children. Your voices will be heard, I promise"*. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy too urged the young delegates to make their voices

heard. *"Bring us your ideas, experiences and opinions"*, said Ms. Bellamy. *"You are the ones who bring energy and excitement to this Special Session"*. Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, who served as chair of the preparatory process, also addressed the opening ceremony, which was moderated by Emmen Saeed (age 16, Pakistan) and Rhys Cambell (age 19, Jamaica), and punctuated with bright bursts of music and dance.

As the festivities came to a close, the young delegates prepared for the critical task ahead – telling world leaders, in their statement to the General Assembly, exactly what children and young people expect of them. Over three full days they deliberated, discussed and debated key issues in small working groups as well as in plenary sessions led by panels with diverse representation. They also prepared for participation in the different events of the Special Session. The key outcome of the Forum was a declaration "A World Fit for Us" which was read – in an historic first - at the opening of the Special Session by two child delegates, Gabriela Azurduy Arrieta of Bolivia (age 13) and Audrey Cheynut from Monaco (age 17).

A message from the children of the world

"We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them.

We are not expenses; we are investments.

We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world...

We are the children of the world, and despite our different backgrounds, we share a common reality.

We are united by our struggle to make the world a better place for all. You call us the future, but we are also the present".

From A World Fit for Us, Children's Forum message to the Special Session

The closing ceremony of the Forum was a celebration of diversity and commitment, marked by moments of solemnity, to pay respect to all children who suffered from war and abuse; moments of high purpose, with the reading of the Forum declaration; and moments of cultural enrichment, with children's performances from all around the world. Guests of honour included Nelson Mandela, Graca Machel, Nane Annan, and Carol Bellamy. A particularly high point was the symbolic presentation of the 94 million+ pledges of the *Say Yes for Children* campaign to Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel, for them to transmit, in turn to the Special Session at a special Celebration of Leadership for Children (see box), with a plea to them to tell the world that millions of people stand with *"sleeves rolled up..... ready to support leaders who are committed to children. Tell them, please, that this is the first step of a long journey that we are ready to make with them."*

Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the Forum, and infused with a new determination and sense of solidarity in moving forward. *"This may be the end of the Children's Forum"*, said one, *"but it's the beginning of our work to make children's lives better and to turn our hopes into reality."* As participants gathered with government and

Celebration of leadership for children

This featured a tribute to leaders of the Global Movement for Children and the official handing over of the 95 million pledges gathered during the *Say Yes for Children* campaign. Participants included the UN Secretary-General and Mrs. Annan, Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel, Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu and a host of UNICEF and UN goodwill ambassadors. The Children's Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela and the UNICEF World Chorus were the main musical performers at this gala celebration set out under a grand tent on the lawn of the UN.

NGO representatives to review the Children's Forum and the issues it covered, the children pledged to remain active in their communities when they returned home, recommending the establishment of leadership training workshops and children's councils at all levels to help monitor commitments made by governments at the Special Session.

Children engaged further with government representatives, NGOs, international agencies and child rights activists and shared their views in supporting events held throughout the Special Session. An additional forum for a more informal exchange of views on key issues was provided by five regional *intergenerational dialogues* organized between child delegates and government leaders (44 in all, including 7 Heads of State or Government) as well as representatives of UN agencies. . One meeting was also held on the theme of armed conflict. The sessions were coordinated by the child delegates, who also selected the topics for discussion

Voices raised in concern: plenary debates at the General Assembly

An impressive 187 government representatives made formal statements during the plenary debate at the General Assembly, along with representatives of eight UN entities, twelve observers to the UN; two non-member states; ECOSOC, and eight NGOs. Four of the government delegations included youth representatives. In addition to the formal statements, chairpersons of *three interactive round-tables* presented summaries of key points covered in more informal discussions centered on the overall theme "*Renewal of commitment and future action for children in the next decade*". (see panel). The *Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole* provided additional opportunities for governments, UN partners; inter-governmental bodies, observer delegations and NGOs to make interventions. Chaired by the prep com bureau, the Committee also finalized negotiations on the outcome document and transmitted it for formal adoption by the Plenary at the end of the Special Session.

Government delegations

A number of key themes emerged from the rich diversity of views exchanged in the plenary debates. It was agreed that while much had been accomplished for children since the World Summit 12 years before, much still remained to do, and that, collectively, "*We must wed the unfinished agenda of the past decade with the future challenges facing children and their families*" (Tommy G. Thompson, US Sec. Of Health and Human Services)

References to the tragic events of September 11th underlined the heightened resolve of the international community to come together to combat threats to **peace and security**, with calls to strengthen efforts to prevent conflict and to cooperate in the fight against global terrorism. "*We now know too well after the dreadful events of September 11, 2001, that tomorrow can only be guaranteed for the world's children if we fight emerging threats to peace and personal security for all today. One terrorist act in one country is a terrorist crime against all* (Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of Zambia).

Delegates spoke out against the 'statistics of shame' on children affected by the horrors of ethnic conflicts, wars sparked by greed and hatred, and the escalating violence in the Middle East. There were passionate calls for collective responsibility to end the brutal violation of children's rights in **situations of armed conflict**, to protect children from the negative impact of sanctions and embargoes, and to end impunity for those who commit war crimes. A number of delegates urged rapid ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Young delegates in plenary debates

Four young people spoke as members of their governments' delegations at the Special session. Willmyn Aerdt of **the Netherlands** observed that her presence at the podium meant the youth participation was taken seriously, stressing that "*We are experts in our own field. We must not only be consulted, but we must be involved in the whole decision-making process.*" Heidi Grande from **Norway** highlighted the change brought about by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the perception of children – from victims to citizens in their own right, whose participation would make international efforts on their behalf more effective. Maja Frankel of **Sweden** highlighted the importance of political will for the meaningful participation of young people, who should be seen as a resource rather than a burden. Mabel Fati Houenouwa of **Togo** outlined the challenges of child labour, trafficking, HIV/AIDS and economic sanctions.

Poverty -'the common enemy of humanity'- was identified by the vast majority of speakers as the most serious challenge to the well-being and rights of children, with calls for concerted action on poverty eradication, debt relief, and

international trade, along with renewed commitment to development assistance targets. *“Poverty and disadvantage blight the lives of millions of children around the world, and prevent them from developing their potential. The statistics speak for themselves....Action to abolish child poverty is essential to improve children’s lives today; to enable them to reach their full potential as adults; and to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.”* (The Rt Hon. John Denham, Minister for Children and Young people, U.K.) Also addressed was the need to link such measures to actions to ensure responsible governance. African delegations were particularly forceful in their depiction of the dire effects of poverty and gross underdevelopment on children, - calling for the international community to respond to the Millennium Declaration’s appeal for a ‘first call’ for the children in Africa, whose situation *“remains synonymous with anguish, physical suffering and despair.”* (Mr. Paul Biya, President of Cameroon)

Speakers emphasized that children were a priceless treasure, whose well-being must be at the **heart of sustainable development**. A number of delegates pointed to the natural continuum of commitments linking the Special Session with the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development. *“Children deserve to be at the very centre of our development agenda and international cooperation”* (Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh), with investment in children seen as an investment in the future. *“We truly believe that investing in children must be done by all segments of the society as it is the best insurance that any country and the world could have for sustainable development and social, economic and political stability”* (Korn Dabbaransi, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand).

Numerous speakers described the devastating effects on children of the **HIV/AIDS** pandemic, highlighting as well actions taken to address the situation. It was recognized that the battle against AIDS is a battle for the world’s children, and that more urgent action and international solidarity is needed. A number of delegates also spoke out on the reproductive health rights and needs of adolescents.

Speakers expressed rising recognition of the need to protect children from all forms of **violence and abuse** – raising their voices in an outcry against such child rights violations as the exploitation of child labour, the use of child soldiers, child trafficking, prostitution and pornography, and the proliferation of violence against children, urging the Special Session to send a clear message of condemnation of such abuse. *“Let those of us who abuse our children – whether we are parents, clergy or strangers – stop...Let us ensure that we see the future clearly and we take urgent steps to protect our world and our children from future desecration”* (Mrs. Girlin Miguel, Minister for Social Development, Ecclesiastical and Gender Affairs, St. Vincent and the Grenadines).

Interactive round tables at the Special Session

Round table 1 was co-chaired by President Ion Iliescu of Romania and Prime Minister Nambar Enkhbayar of Mongolia, with introductory interventions given by two children from Uganda (Caroline Barebwoha, 16) and New Zealand (Te Keru Moka, 18). Education was one of the main themes addressed, following the lead of the two young delegates who stressed the importance of education, especially for girls and children from indigenous groups. Other important themes included children’s health and survival; the importance of adequate food and nutrition; the key role of the family; and the impact on children of HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and poverty. The importance of children’s voices was stressed, as was the need for investing in children. *“To love, care for and protect us should be a life-long privilege,”* said Caroline from Uganda. Regional peer reviews involving national leaders were proposed as a means of monitoring progress on the goals of the Special Session.

Round table 2 was co-chaired by President Tarja Halonen of Finland and President Vicente Fox Mexico, with two children from Rwanda (Marie-Claire Umuhoza, 17) and Bangladesh (Toukir Ahmed, 16) initiating the discussions. The importance of listening to children and young people in a true inter-generational dialogue was one of the major themes. Other key themes dealt with protecting children in situations of conflict and war; combating exploitation and abuse; providing each child an equal opportunity to grow and develop; and ensuring education for all, especially girls. Speaking as *“the voice of all the children who have suffered throughout the world”*, Marie Claire of Rwanda was especially eloquent on the effects of war and violence on her family and country: *“I am here without a father, a mother...no one to call me ‘my child’. Call me your daughter. I need love”*. Reconfirmation of rights – including reproductive rights - was essential, as was living up to existing commitments. *“This forum cannot accept that children are negotiable”* said one participant. The special needs of Africa were evoked, along with the importance of regional and international cooperation. A common thread throughout the debate was the need to generate resources and ensure that economic development goes hand-in-hand with human development, with investment in children vital. *“Give us, your children, a good today”* urged Toukir from Bangladesh, *“We will, in turn, give you a good tomorrow”*.

Round table 3, co-chaired by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepal and President Levy Mwanawasa of Zambia, featured introductory interventions by two children from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Sara Mandic, 16) and Suriname (Yang Hgen Fat, 17). Among the main themes was the question of resources needed to achieve the goals of A World Fit for Children. Participants called for achievement of international ODA targets, fairer trading systems and open markets, good governance, and investments in people, particularly children. *“We need you to believe in us and invest in us”*, stressed Yang Hgen from Suriname. All participants

agreed that the cycle of poverty must end if children are to have a good future, with particular efforts needed to reach minorities and marginalized children. Other discussion points dealt with HIV/AIDS; armed conflict and exploitation; the need for special attention to the needs and rights of girls; the importance of providing quality education in a safe and supportive environment; and the critical role of the family – including the need for a family environment free of violence. Children’s rights to express themselves and participate in decision-making was stressed. “Listen to what we have to say,” urged Sara from Yugoslavia, “because it will help you make the right decisions for us...and with us”. All the young participants agreed that words must be followed by clear action.

Source: UNICEF SSC report

Speakers emphasized the **importance of family** as the fundamental unit of society and source of basic social values, and of parents as the primary care-givers of children. Families fulfil that most basic right of children – to be loved and cared for in a warm and nurturing environment – and are critical in shaping the destiny and future of children. Realization of the rights of the child was seen to be intimately linked to the realization of the rights and duties of parents. Policies in support of parents and families were to be promoted, and social assistance programmes established to support, strengthen and complement their care-giving roles. “The family will continue to be the last stronghold against the challenge of history.” (First Lady of Nicaragua)

Many speakers emphasized the importance of **education as a fundamental right** and a keystone for development, noting both progress and challenges in this domain. Investments in quality education were seen as investments in the future, with particular reference to early childhood education and development; the education of girls, reaching the unreached, the value of education as a weapon against AIDS, and education as the purveyor of positive values of tolerance and respect. A number of speakers also highlighted the use of information technology in the school system as

one step in bridging the ‘digital divide’ between north and south.

On leadership and political will

- ◆ “A renewed political commitment and adequate allocation of resources are key factors for the steady and complete implementation of our agreed objectives” (Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania).
- ◆ “We owe it to our children to marshal the necessary political will to provide for their basic needs. We ought not fail them. The situation is urgent.” (Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania)
- ◆ “Our responsibility, as the leaders of today’s world, is to provide the coming generations with hope and perspective for life in the environment of greater understanding, mutual respect and the respect of the right to be loved” (Mr. Beriz Belkić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- ◆ “Without firm political commitment at the highest level, it will not be possible to reform or refine our policies, programmes, budgets and institutions to ensure the best interests of children. It is the vision of leaders and the will of policy makers that could pave the way to a World Fit for Children” (Mr. Korn Dabbaransi, Deputy Prime Minister, Thailand)
- ◆ “The future of our children lies with leadership at all levels and in the choices leaders make.” (Ambassador Ellen Margrethe Løj, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the UN)
- ◆ The implementation of the rights of the child is more than a question of charity; it is a political challenge – requiring a political vision, political will and conscious political decisions.” (Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg, Sweden)
- ◆ “Do we have the political will to give a concerted global response to global challenges? The answer cannot but be in the affirmative because we must safeguard our children and there can be no excuse not to care for our children. (Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, Minister for Women’s Development, Social Welfare and Special Education, Pakistan)
- ◆ “...we must realize and be convinced that the rights of the child require, first and foremost, a genuine political will and, equally important, the mobilization of the necessary resources, without which the situation will remain unchanged.” (H.H. Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Misnad, President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Qatar)

Speakers cited progress in efforts to strengthen and extend **primary health care services**, with significant accomplishments in expanded immunization, the battle against polio, and efforts to combat deficiencies in Vitamin A and iodine. Offsetting such clear signs of progress, however, were reports of resource-starved health structures, little improvement in maternal mortality, and continuing malnutrition among children. Malaria was identified as a major killer, and household food security was a concern for many, as were diseases related to changing life styles the abuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Environmental health threats to children were also identified and the principle of inter-generational justice in environmental protection was evoked as a means of ensuring that children are bequeathed a sound and healthy environment.

Many delegates urged that actions for children should be firmly rooted, anchored and framed in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** which, along with its optional protocols, provides the legal basis, the moral imperative and the essential touchstone for international efforts for children. Numerous speakers drew attention to the powerful influence of the Convention over the decade – in standard setting; as an instrument of advocacy and social mobilization placing children high on the international agenda; as a spur to legal reform and the development of new institutions; as the basis for an expanded vision of children; and as a guide to action.

Speakers were eloquent on the need for **enlightened leadership** and **sustained political will** to secure a world fit for children (see box). At the same time, there was overwhelming recognition of the **need for partnerships** at all levels of society, with the widest possible array of actors and stakeholders to be drawn into an expanding movement for children. It was recognized that government cannot and should not assume all responsibilities, but should enlist and support broad participatory processes involving NGOs and organizations of civil society, parents and caregivers, schools, religious authorities, women's groups and the private sector. A number of delegates highlighted the positive outcomes of just such broad-based participatory processes characterizing national –level follow-up to the World Summit and participation in the Global Movement for Children.

Within such partnerships, there was overwhelming consensus on the value of **children's participation** in society, which is to be promoted through respect for their freedom of expression and their right to be heard on issues that concern them. It was clear that a new vision had emerged of children and young people as citizens, participants, partners, and key stakeholders in all of our actions. *"They are our most important asset. They are our partners for the future. They are our future"* (Ms. Hilde F. Johnson, Minister for International Development, Norway). In a number of countries, children's parliaments, youth councils and other for a were seen as essential structures for the cultivation of participation in democratic societies. The Special Session and the processes leading up to it had helped foster and cultivate a transformation in perspective, with children and young people not longer to be considered as objects of protection or passive recipients of services, but as persons in their own right, with rights and capacities to participate in decision-making on matters that concern them. *"We recognize children as active participants in the construction of our societies and perceive the importance of their vision in the formulation of a common future strategy"* (Pio Cabanillas, Minister/Government Spokesman of Spain, on behalf of the European Union). Young people present at the gathering demanded no less.

Voices for children from the UN system

- ◆ **UNHCR:** *"We have a collective responsibility to address the underlying root causes that increase the susceptibility of refugee children to abuse."* (Ruud Lubbers, UN High Commissioner)
- ◆ **WHO:** Citing the nearly 11 million child deaths each year: *"We must break the silence. We must confront the complacency. Deaths of poor children are not 'inevitable'. They should not be happening. They are a blot on our conscience."* (Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General)
- ◆ **WFP:** On the importance of school feeding programmes: *"There is no comparable opportunity available in the world to make such a dramatic difference in the life of a child, especially in their early years."* (James T. Morris, Executive Director)
- ◆ **ILO:** Exhorting action against the shocking new statistics on child labour, *"This is the test of our intergenerational solidarity."* (Juan Somavia, Director-General)
- ◆ **UNHCHR:** *"The Convention on the Rights of the Child is nearly universally ratified. Our task now is to bring these standards home – home to every school, hospital, law court, work place, and family in the world".* (Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights)
- ◆ **UNAIDS:** *"The tools to protect children from AIDS are known. Applying them requires action in three ways: meeting global targets already set; enforcing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and delivering full-scale programmes to mothers, orphans and adolescents."*(Peter Piot, Executive Director)
- ◆ **UN Habitat:** The Habitat Agenda *"recognizes that reducing the vulnerability of the child's environment is a key to sustainable development."* (Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Executive Director)
- ◆ **ECOSOC:** The Special Session is *"an important link in the chain of major conferences and summits intended to create a set of internationally agreed norms"*, citing the outcomes of the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey Conference. (Croatian Ambassador Dr. Ivan Simonovic, president of ECOSOC)
- ◆ **FAO:** With some 300 million children in developing countries undernourished, *"Promoting healthy nutrition must, therefore, be an integral part of multi-sectoral initiatives to advance child welfare."* (Mr. Howard Hjort, former Deputy Director General)
- ◆ **UNIDO:** UNIDO's work on energy for sustainable development, on strengthening corporate responsibilities, and on enhancing food security contributes to the achievement of several key Millennium Decade goals that are of prime importance to children. (Dr. Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl, Special Representative and Assistant Director General for UN Affairs)
- ◆ **IMF:** *"Good macroeconomic policies are critical for sustained growth, which in turn is a necessary condition for poverty reduction."* (Mr. Sanjiv Gupta, Assistant Director of Fiscal Affairs Department)
- ◆ **World Bank:** *"We need to work together to further reduce poverty and diseases among families and children, to eliminate harmful child labour, to provide effective and sustainable means of social protection.....The World Bank joins with others in reaffirming a commitment to the goals of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children."* (Ms. Mamphelwe Ramphelwe, Managing Director)
- ◆ **UNEP:** Environmental degradation is *"a powerful contributor to many of today's most pressing global health threats"*, with approximately two thirds of the global burden of environment-related disease borne by children. The realization of children's rights and the management of environmental challenges are fundamentally mutually reinforcing goals. (Mr. Adnan Z. Amin, Director, NY Office)

- ◆ **UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention :** Drug abuse affects the health and development rights of children. “*For maximum effectiveness, ODCCP links its drug abuse prevention activities to the development programmes of governments, other UN organizations, NGOs and private sector organizations.*” (Mr. Vincent McClean, Representative)
- ◆ **UNFPA:** On the need for appropriate reproductive health information and services for adolescents: “*The young people are counting on us, their parents and adults and leaders in their communities: we cannot let them down. Our children should not have to die because we could not decide what to tell them.*” (Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director)
- ◆ **UNDP :** Setting the Special Session within the continuum of UN conferences stretching from the Millennium Summit to the Monterrey Conference and beyond to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg: “*There can be no more urgent priority for the world than meeting the needs of all our children*” (Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator)
- ◆ **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:** The Special Session is “*a very crucial contribution to the progressive implementation of the CRC*” , noting that “*If we want a world fit for children, we should first and above all respect their rights.*” (Professor Jaap E. Doek, Chairperson)
- ◆ **UN Committee on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women:** Stressing the complementarity between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women: “*the situation of children, and of girls in particular, cannot be improved unless the human rights of women are respected and promoted...*” (Regina Tavares da Silva, member)
- ◆ **World Tourism Organization:** “*Protecting children from sexual exploitation is indeed a challenge of enormous magnitude and we are only just beginning to realize how complex the issue is.*” (Marina Diotallevi, Coordinator, Task Force to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation in Tourism)

Observers and inter-governmental entities

In addition to government delegates, NGOs and UN system partners, a number of observer delegations, non-member States and inter-governmental entities addressed the plenary and the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole. *The Occupied Palestinian Territories* spoke out against the systematic denial and violation of the rights of Palestinian children and called for urgent international action. The *League of Arab States* welcomed the accession of all Arab states to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Somalia signing during the Special Session) and stressed the importance of family in bringing up children. The *Organization of the Islamic Conference*, noting that Islam accorded particular care to children, raised issues of debt, armed conflict and the plight of Palestinian children.

The *European Community* recalled its pledge at the Monterrey Conference to increase its contribution to ODA (currently over half of all ODA), with a focus on poverty eradication and the mainstreaming of gender and human rights, urging enhanced cooperation in the provision of humanitarian aid to children in armed conflict. The *Council of Europe*, referring to the universality of standards and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, highlighted its decision to establish a group of specialists on the protection of children against sexual exploitation; and its current work on the development of alternatives to institutional care for children. The *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)*, stating that peace and security could not be envisaged without upholding human rights, and referring to provisions of the 1999 Charter for European Security , drew attention to the need to combat violence, sexual exploitation and all forms of trafficking of children as well as to protect children in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

The *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*, noting the rightful significance accorded to the protection of children in armed conflict in the Special Session’s declaration and plan of action, outlined some of its own efforts to ensure security and provide assistance to children and civilians caught up in war, with particular emphasis on family reunification, standard-setting, and psychological and social rehabilitation. The *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* said that children were not only the very fragile beneficiaries of their movement – they exemplified the fundamental principles that characterized it through their volunteer work throughout the world. The *Inter-Parliamentary Union Council*, recalling the comprehensive resolution for the protection and care of children adopted as the blueprint for action by parliamentarians everywhere, highlighted in particular its proposals for governments to adopt a child rights perspective on legislation and national budgets and to report annually to Parliaments on policies, programmes and action for children. The *International Organization for Migration* highlighted the particularly dramatic plight of children victims of armed conflict and trafficking, outlining its programmes on their behalf.

The *International Organization of Francophonie* referred to the common policy for children it had adopted in 1993 with a particular focus on support for education and technical training as an investment for the future. The *Sovereign Military Order of Malta* stressed the need for broad cooperation among a wide range of partners, including UN agencies, national governments and civil society. The *Holy See* reaffirmed its belief that the rights of children and the rights of the family should be articulated together, highlighting the need to recognize the fundamental right to life as well as the need for the protection of children from all forms of exploitation and abuse. *Switzerland* pledged to deepen its commitment to

eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development and human security, doing everything possible to ensure better protection for children. *Puerto Rico* stressed that promoting human development, including the transmission of values, represented a solid investment, calling on the joint responsibilities of States and families.

The power of partnerships: key constituency events and commitments

A number of supporting events provided a platform for major constituencies to make specific commitments towards implementation of "A World Fit for Children". These were organized through a series of high-profile workshops and dialogues bringing together religious leaders, mayors, paediatricians, women's leaders, corporate CEOs and other key partners with major roles to play in building a Global Movement for Children. Celebrating the power of partnerships, the UN Secretary-General also hosted a luncheon for participating heads of State and/or Government and their spouses, as well as representatives of civil society, private sector, UN and UNICEF goodwill ambassadors and other eminent personalities. Key speakers included Nelson Mandela and Bill Gates Jr, with Harry Belafonte as Master of Ceremony.

Two meetings of religious leaders, including a symposium on the *Commitment of the World's Religions to Children* were convened over the two days prior to the Special Session by the World Conference on Religions and Peace (WCRP). These meeting gathered together leaders of the world's major religions to discuss the role of religion in the

The gatherings of religious leaders at the Special Session called to mind the themes and commitments of the 1989 Conference of World Religions for Children held in Princeton, New Jersey, in preparation for the 1990 World Summit for Children.

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lives of young people and the need for collaboration and partnerships within and across all faiths. The participating clergy also officiated at an inter-faith service on the eve of the Special Session, during which young people called for united action by religious communities in support of children's rights.

Throughout the Symposium, religious leaders affirmed the support of their own faiths for the dignity and human rights of children, calling on members of their communities to build an inter-faith partnership with civil society organizations and UN agencies to ensure that every child is loved, protected and respected. Symposium participants adopted a joint declaration and plan of action representing the commitment of the world's religions to the global movement for children. A Global Network of Religions for Children, inaugurated in 2000 also pledged commitments for follow-up to the Special Session on Children.

The first *Global Meeting of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children* was facilitated by UNICEF to stimulate discussion and agreement on how such institutions can strengthen their work in promoting, protecting and monitoring the human rights of children.

Participants identified the contributions they have made to positive changes for children, including promotion of child-sensitive legal reform, strengthening awareness of and action on children's rights; ensuring that children's voices are heard by government at all levels; preparing alternative reports to the

"We cannot tolerate another decade of non compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. ... We commit ourselves to working with children, with governments and parliaments, with child-led groups, with other international human rights organizations and with non-governmental organizations to hold international agencies and governments accountable for their obligations under international law." (from Statement by First Global Meeting of Independent Human Rights Institutions for Children)

CRC Committee and monitoring actions of Parliament. They also identified challenges to their work, including financial, technical, political, and in terms of public awareness. In their Statement to the General Assembly, they called on governments and the UN system to fully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child; urged the establishment of independent human rights institutions in all countries (building on the 1993 Paris Principles on the status of national human rights institutions); and pledged to help promote and monitor progress in their respective countries towards the goals of the Special Session . They also called on the UN system to give formal recognition to independent human rights institutions to enable them to be active participants in all UN proceedings. *"Children should never be an appendix. They should be the starting point. Without Children's rights there are no Human Rights."* (Trond Waage, Children's Ombudsperson, Norway)

At a *Parliamentary Forum* co-sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNICEF, some 250 parliamentarians from 75 countries met together with NGOs, children, and other participants to discuss ways of encouraging countries to protect and enhance child rights and participation. Priority issues of discussion focused on the mobilization of resources – including through poverty reduction actions and the 20/20 initiative; and the involvement of young people in decision-making. A

"No more why's – only more how's! We must child-proof our legislation".
Glenys Kinnock, Co-President of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly of African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the European Union (ACP-EU)

number of key commitments and initiatives were proposed by the Parliamentarians. These included measures to enshrine the Convention on the Rights of the Child in national constitutions; establishment of ombudspersons for children and other mechanisms to increase accountability and reporting to parliaments on children's issues; introduction of 'child impact analyses' preceding all legislative action; integration of children's issues into budgetary decisions at all levels; and establishment of youth parliaments and other means of fostering children's participation.

At the **Forum on Women's Leadership for Children**, some 50 First Spouses and 32 other distinguished guests joined Mrs. Nane Annan in an informal exchange of views on key challenges for children, sharing best practices and lessons learned. The Forum also explored the potential for further action by First Spouses as part of the Global Movement for Children and follow-up to the Special Session. Topics of discussion were organized around the key themes of the

- ◆ "It is not possible to change the world for children unless we change the world for women". (Sra. Adriana Pulido, Venezuela)
- ◆ "Without women...the goals we put for ourselves will never be met" (Mrs. Suzanne Mubarek, Egypt)
- ◆ "the link between the rights of the child and women's rights should be given a central place in our efforts" (Mrs. Pentii Arajavi, Finland)

rallying cry of the GMC. The event was moderated by Mme. Sadako Ogata and Dr. Nafis Sadik, with three young people – from Canada, Romania and South Africa – sharing some of the major concerns from the Children's Forum. "We are taking our step to the middle and extending our hands

to you," said one. "Our question is, will you meet us halfway?" Female leadership at all levels was deemed critical to the advancement of goals for children, with the link between the rights of children and the rights of women underscored by many of the participants. The special role and responsibility of women in key posts in government and spouses of heads of state was also stressed, with mobilization as "change-makers" to continue – including through the upcoming XI Conference of Spouses of Heads of States and Governments.

A panel on **Child-Friendly Cities** brought together mayors, NGOs, UN representatives and children to highlight good practices in urban areas and identify strategies for local governments to advance the Global Movement for Children. The panel was moderated by Marta Santos Pais, Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) in Florence where the Child Friendly Cities Secretariat is located. Mayors from cities in the Philippines, Mauritania and Bangladesh shared perspectives on the common problems confronting urban families and children, highlighting the multi-sectoral approaches taken to address them. Common elements of successful approaches include city-level agendas for children; municipal legal frameworks for implementing the CRC; child impact assessments of all programmes; appropriate budgetary allocations; and monitoring mechanisms to measure progress. Mayors reaffirmed their commitment to serve as active spokespersons for children's rights, calling for the development of action plans by mayors and local authorities for cities to become child-friendly and the promotion of the participation of children among other actions. UNICEF – particularly through the Child-Friendly Cities Secretariat in Florence – UN-HABITAT and other partners were called upon to continue to support such efforts.

Paediatricians of the **International Paediatrics Association (IPA)** issued a Call to Action to their 500,000-strong membership, including a pledge to establish Child Watch committees at country level to monitor child health, to provide data for regional and global advocacy, and to facilitate achievement of child health goals of the World Fit for Children and the Millennium Development Goals. The more than 200 participants who met during this event - organized under the rubric of 'Healthy Children for a Healthy World' - affirmed the importance of focusing on the whole child to ensure a healthy body, a healthy mind, and a healthy environment. Key points in the commitment adopted by the paediatricians embraced the value of partnerships, accelerated actions against HIV/AIDS; promotion of high quality and equitable basic health care for all children; care of mothers and newborns; and advocacy for needed resources and high prioritization of child health and development.

"We have the knowledge", said Jane Schaller, President of the IPA. "What is required is to translate this knowledge into action."

A **Public-private partnership dialogue** was organized by the core partners of the Global Movement for Children, bringing together heads of State, UN officials, corporate leaders, NGOs and media to discuss ways of enhancing ways of

Participants in the Public-Private partnership Dialogue

- ◆ **United Nations officials:** Kofi Annan, Secretary-General; Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General; Carol Bellamy, Executive Director, UNICEF.
- ◆ **Business leaders (including media):** Bill Gates, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Rolf Dorig, Chairman Switzerland, Credit Suisse Group; Eduardo Gonzalez, President, Bancafe; Steve Hilton, Conrad Hilton Foundation; John Moridge, Chairman, Cisco Systems; John Pepper, Chairman, Procter and Gamble; Azim Premji, Chairman and CEO, WIPRO; Tim Wirth, President, United Nations Foundation; Riz Khan, Riz Khan Productions; Mark Byford, Director, BBC World Services.
- ◆ **Heads of State:** President Fox, Mexico; President Halonen, Finland; President Museveni, Uganda; President Toledo, Peru.
- ◆ **NGO leaders:** Dean Hirsch, President, World Vision International; Michael Aaronson, Save the Children Alliance; Peter Bell, CARE; John Greensmith, Plan International; Charles Lyons, U.S. Fund for UNICEF; David Morrison, NetAid; David Toycen, World Vision, Canada.

working together to build a world fit for children. The event was moderated by TV anchor Riz Khan. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reminded participants of the commitment of members of the Global Compact to building a more inclusive and equitable global marketplace and urged continued advocacy by civil society organizations. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy termed the public-private dialogue in the framework of the Special Session a huge step forward and credited such collaboration since the World Summit for Children with success in bringing about major reductions in iodine deficiency disorders and the near eradication of polio. Bill Gates III, co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Chairman of Microsoft, stressed the need to draw on each other's strength and expertise, highlighting two successful examples of effective public-private collaboration: GAVI – the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (see below) and GAIN – the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition – launched as a new initiative during the Special Session to eliminate the vitamin and mineral deficiencies threatening the lives of millions of children. Representatives of the five sectors involved in the dialogue issued a public statement of commitments to further the agenda for children, summarized below.

Commitments of partners from all sectors

- ◆ **Governments will:** provide for child rights in national legislation; ensure national development budgets and ODA responsive to the interests of children; prioritize policies and programmes to reduce child poverty and promote child development, particularly basic education and health.
- ◆ **Private sector will:** recognize the social and environmental impact of their activities on children; work to eliminate commercial sexual exploitation of children; work actively on behalf of children and their rights; promote child development through innovative associations; promote a faire market-place that builds healthy communities.
- ◆ **NGOs will:** continue to raise awareness of child rights; work with all actors to advance the rights and well-being of children; maintain vigilance against abuses of children and work with all sectors of society on solutions to end such practices.
- ◆ **The UN will:** continue to promote and safe-guard international conventions that promote and protect children's rights and well-being – particularly the CRC; uphold commitments of major UN conferences and summits, particularly the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of *A World Fit for Children*; promote partnerships to implement those goals; and work to ensure that children are at the core of development policy.
- ◆ **The global media will:** use its power to focus attention of the state of the world's children and the impact of appropriate policies and actions on their lives; continue to play a prominent role in building a Global Movement for Children, through promotion of children's right to participate in debates that affect them.
- ◆ **Jointly the five sectors will:** work to increase and expand focus and concern for the world's children and engage partners in the same; and take this dialogue forward over the next year to build concrete actions for children.

Recognizing that bold global promises must be matched with the funds needed to achieve them, the topic of resources arose in nearly every panel, workshop and discussion throughout the Special Session. In a key event organized on *Financing a World Fit for Children*, high level national and international officials offered their perspectives and experiences in a serious, frank and well-grounded discussion about what needs to be done, how it can be done, and what

The SSC caught the wave of the Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction Strategies and the International Conference on Financing for Development, arguing that increases in overseas development must be focused on children, the primary victims of poverty worldwide. The consensus emerging from the SSC was that children are the best investment for sustainable human development.

(UNICEF SSC report)

stands in the way: comments by children participating in the event brought home to all the issue of why mobilization of resources is so urgently

needed. Participants agreed that basic social services should have the highest priority in development funding, with an emphasis on education. But, as UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown pointed out, progress on the hoped-for goal of 20/20 was lagging behind. As Katele Kalumba, Zambia's Minister of Foreign Affairs put it, "*Children are nice, but they won't balance the budget*", summing up an all-too-common attitude among government ministers. Drawing on the successful example of education reform in Brazil, described by Brazilian Minister of Education Paulo Renato Souza, participants agreed that governments must be accountable and stakeholders must have confidence in and be part of national processes. Accountability is enhanced by clear monitoring of progress towards the goals, with information and indicators used to create momentum behind investment and – in turn – fueling debate and demand. Norway's Minister for Development Cooperation, Hildefra Johnson, proposed the formation of a watchdog body to monitor ODA flows in light of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, and suggested the creation of a new alliance of donors called the "G.07 group" made up of those who have reached the agreed target of 0.7% of GNP allocated to ODA.

Addressing key challenges for the future: priority theme events

Over 80 other supporting events were organized around the major themes of the outcome document, with the key objective of sharing best practices in promoting the well-being of children. These events were organized by Governments, NGOs, entities of the UN system, and other participants in a collaborative manner.

Promoting healthy lives

Recognizing the urgent need to complete the ‘unfinished agenda’ of the World Summit for Children, six panel meetings conferred on key issues for safeguarding children’s survival and development. These focused on protecting the interlinked dyad of mother and newborn; guaranteeing a healthy environment; completing the ‘last mile’ towards the eradication of polio; following through on initiatives of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization; ensuring a ‘smart start’ for children by eliminating iodine deficiency; and combating malaria – still among the chief killers of children in Africa. Among the key messages, issues and commitments:

“Is the world going to take care of its children? That is the question we came here to answer. While many important issues will be discussed at this historic Special Session, it’s my belief that improving health is the best way to start improving the future for our children”. He went on to outline three crucial steps to: raise visibility; demonstrate effective, affordable solutions; and exercise political leadership”.

(Bill Gates, of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Microsoft)

- ◆ **Healthy mothers, healthy babies.** Newborn health worldwide continues to be appalling, with 40% of deaths before five occurring in the first 28 days of life. Maternal and newborn health are inextricably linked but fall too often

“A child is born and begins her journey through life. Her parents live on less than \$2 per day. Like other children in the poor half of our world, there is a one in five risk that she will have died before she is five. She, and millions of others like her, have no choice. They march into life like soldiers into killing fields” (Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General, WHO)

between the cracks in existing public health programmes that have yet to remedy the dearth of skilled birth attendants and effective referral services for emergency obstetric care, especially in rural areas. The best nutrition and health outcomes result from supporting the mother/child dyad for at least three years, notably by promotion of sound breastfeeding practices. Participants cited examples from Bolivia, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Uganda, and Africa generally to illustrate these issues.

- ◆ **The last mile to end polio:** It is estimated that 3 million children are able to walk today because of a campaign begun in 1988 to vaccinate all the world’s children against polio. At the time, polio paralyzed more than 1,000 children a day; the global campaign to eradicate polio has brought that figure down to fewer than 500 cases a year. Remaining challenges include sustaining political commitment to complete ‘the last mile’; immunizing all children – including those in conflict-affected areas; and making up the resource shortfall. At a brief ceremony on 8 May, leaders of the campaign from the US Department for Health and Human Services, WHO, UNICEF, Rotary International, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pledged to end polio once and for all by 2005. With UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Roger Moore and two 16-year old polio activities from Nigeria and Pakistan looking on, Chairman Luis Vicente Giay of Rotary International announced the launch of a new drive to raise an additional \$80 million for the campaign, and Dr. Dave Fleming, Acting Director of US CDC announced that “The theft of human potential is about to come to an end”.
- ◆ **The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI):** Nearly 3 million people die each year from diseases preventable by immunization, and most are children under five. If current conditions remain unchanged, 26 out of every 100 children born in 2000 will not be immunized against any disease. GAVI was created in 1999 at a time when immunization levels were faltering in many countries and some preventable diseases were making a comeback. An innovative partnership of governments, international organizations, major philanthropists, research institutions and the private sector, the Alliance has so far committed more the \$850 million to 55 nations where per capita income is below \$1,000. At the panel meeting on GAVI, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO cited GAVI as an excellent example of public/private partnerships; *“Initiatives like GAVI are bringing serious investments into the health sector, helping to reverse the trend of stagnating or deteriorating immunization.”* Other participants echoed such praise; Mozambique cited its use of quadrivalent vaccine made available through GAVI; China announced an impending agreement with GAVI for Hepatitis B; and USAID pledged an additional \$53 million to GAVI and the Vaccine Fund during the coming year.
- ◆ **Eliminating iodine deficiency:** Iodine deficiency - a threat wherever iodine is missing from the soil - is the world’s leading cause of preventable brain damage and mental retardation. The tragic effects on each child or adult who suffers from it are compounded by the undermining of economic progress for society as a whole: iodine deficiency can lower the average IQ of a population by as much as 10 to 15 points. But iodization of salt is an effective, economical reality. Since 1990, the percentage of households consuming iodized salt from has risen from 20% to

70%, thus protecting annually some 91 million newborns from significant losses in learning ability. Dr. Brundtland of WHO opened the meeting on a 'smart start' for children by announcing the launch of the Network for the Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiency – a unique partnership of the salt industry with national and international organizations that pledges to build on and extend success achieved over the decade in order to end IDD forever by 2005. The new Network will assist in the formation of national coalitions in all countries to complete the unfinished agenda of the 1990s. National leaders from Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tanzania; and China reported on progress in their countries. Salt industry leaders spoke on behalf of salt producers in North America (represented by Morton Salt) and Europe (Akso Nobel Salt). Kiwanis International, a key partner in the network, outlined its experiences in advocacy and fund-raising; and donor governments (Canada; US; Netherlands) expressed commitment to further action. A highlight of the meeting was the announcement of chess champion Anatony Karpov as Goodwill Ambassador for eliminating iodine deficiency from the CEE/CIS and Baltic States region, where he described iodine deficiency as a matter of 'national security'.

- ◆ **Reducing the impact of malaria on child health:** The world's malaria burden is estimated at more the 300 million acute illnesses and 1 million deaths a year - 90% of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Wherever malaria occurs, the burden falls mainly on young children and pregnant women. But malaria is both preventable and curable, with participants at the meeting discussing the effectiveness of bednets treated with insecticide and home management of malaria. Extending these to those still in need requires political commitment, increased domestic investment, and increased flows of international aid.. Roll Back Malaria, founded in 1998 by WHO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank, aims to half the burden by 2010. Meeting in Abuja (Nigeria) in April 2000, the leaders of 44 African nations adopted the Abuja Declaration endorsing the goal. This commitment was reaffirmed at the panel discussion by keynote speaker President Mathieu Kerekou of Benin, who noted that 17 countries so far have made treated bednets more affordable through reduced tariffs. Dr. Brundtland of WHO called for Roll Back Malaria partnerships to be strengthened and national programmes scaled up, with funding to be provided by the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. USAID announced a dramatic increase in its support for malaria programmes to \$65 million for 2002, more than 5 times the allotment in 1997. The new allocation is to scale up national programmes focusing on children and pregnant women.

Children in the New Millennium: Environmental Impact on Health

Environmental degradation is claiming large numbers of young people as its victims. Every day 5,500 children die from diseases caused by consuming water or food contaminated with harmful bacteria or toxic waste, according to a new report jointly released by UNEP, WHO and UNICEF to coincide with the UN Special Session.

The report, *Children in the New Millennium: Environmental Impact on Health*, provides extensive evidence of the threats to children. "People are most vulnerable in their youngest years. This means that children must be at the centre of our response to unhealthy environments" said WHO Director-General Gro Harlem Brundtland. "I am convinced that we need to elevate children's environmental health issues on the international agenda, both through the General Assembly's Special Session on Children and then the World Summit on Sustainable Development," said Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme.

Children in the New Millennium calls for increased national investment in early childhood care, including focusing on the immediate environments of children – homes, schools and communities. Governments and NGOs should build on past successes such as the transition to unleaded fuel, and direct programme support towards addressing environmental challenges to the wellbeing of children and adolescents.

In 'A World Fit for Us', the message from the Children's Forum to the UN Special Session, "conservation and rescue of natural resources" and "awareness of the need to live in environments that are healthy and favourable to our development" were highlighted by children as essential features of the world they are seeking.

Achieving education for all

The World Summit goal of universal access to basic education was reaffirmed at the EFA Forum in Dakar, which set the goal of quality basic education for all by 2015. Education of every child was accorded the highest priority by the majority of 95 million people who voted in the *Say Yes* campaign. This was, in turn, taken up as a core objective at the Special Session, and features as a key priority in the outcome document, *A World Fit for Children*. Commitment to this goal was clearly reflected at the Special Session, with attendance of up to 300 delegates at panel meetings on improving the quality of education, achieving gender parity, and strengthening early childhood care and development. Consensus

has grown that the Dakar goal is feasible despite the challenges. According to UNESCO estimates, some 113 million children of primary school age are not in school – nearly 60% of them girls. Of 155 developing countries, 36 have achieved universal primary education; on current trends, 31 nations are considered likely to reach the goal by 2015, but 88 nations are unlikely to ensure all children the five years of schooling considered essential for basic literacy and numeracy. Both in panel discussion and in NGO meetings, delegates repeatedly stressed the importance of closing the financial gap, especially for the poorest nations. Means must also be found to abolish the user fees for textbooks, uniforms and other school expenses that currently stand as obstacles to education for millions of children, especially in Africa.

- ◆ **Improving the quality of education :** The discussion of quality issues started from the premise that access without quality is tantamount to no access at all, with former senator Dr. Saisuree Chutikul of Thailand pointing out that quality education is a right laid down in the CRC. As children themselves have said, there is little point in going to school if it does not equip them with learning skills and skills for life. The investment in education therefore goes to waste. USAID shared best practices learned from its experience in a number of countries, and the Association of Volunteers in International Service, USA, Inc., presented the AVSI experience working with teachers and communities in Albania and Uganda. Key points emerging from the discussion carry implications for action:

- ◆ Quality is non-negotiable for all stakeholders, including governments, donors and teachers. As noted by Education International, teachers are pivotal to achievement in the classroom.
- ◆ Perceptions of quality vary. A broader definition should be adopted that would encompass the learners' contribution, the content, processes, environments and outcomes.
- ◆ Quality is critical for establishing gender parity and influencing parents to send their daughters to school.
- ◆ Three recommendations by the Global Campaign for Education would rapidly improve quality, especially for girls. First, ensure that schools are safe, a concern also voiced by UNICEF Global Ambassador Mia Farrow. Second, make education more responsive to the needs of girls. And third, ensure that costs are not an impediment. Donors must be ready to finance recurrent costs as well as capital costs.
- ◆ Donor support for improving quality should focus on national leadership and ownership, funding requirements, teacher quality, and a relevant curriculum. Children should be consulted to define what they view as relevant.

A separate panel meeting on child labour as an obstacle to Education for All placed similar emphasis on quality as paramount. The high drop-out rates from inadequate education systems draw children into the labour market, whereas quality schooling answering their needs can serve as a magnet to pull them back to the classroom.

- ◆ **Achieving gender parity:** Mrs. Nane Annan opened the discussion by speaking of the importance of girls' education from her own personal experience. Too many girls face cultural and other barriers that keep them out of school or prevent them from learning properly. Redressing the gender imbalance – the goal set for 2005 – is an urgent priority requiring effective strategies and sustained commitment. Recent field experience has shown that targeted actions for girls are necessary for eliminating gender disparities; that all education must be quality education if gains are to be sustained; and that education sensitive to girls is also good for boys. Successful national examples of boosting girls' enrolment were presented from India and Egypt. The Netherlands Minister of Development Cooperation outlined various practical measures required of the international community if the global goals for education are to be met. The World Bank urged a compact or partnership between the industrialized and developing countries, between national governments and local communities, while WFP Global Ambassador on Hunger George McGovern commented that malnutrition limits schoolchildren's ability to learn. Speakers, panelists and child delegates called on governments and the international community to take a number of actions:

- ◆ Governments to abolish school fees and address the other opportunity costs of schooling for girls
- ◆ Gender stereotypes to be eliminated from textbooks; gender equality to be promoted in schools and teacher training
- ◆ Detailed costings of gender equality in education to be conducted, including costs of achievement and non-achievement
- ◆ All countries to strengthen partnerships with all actors at all levels under the Girls' Education Initiative
- ◆ Countries to introduce specific actions benefiting girls, and to strive always for quality education
- ◆ All partners to work to overcome cultural barriers to girls' schooling
- ◆ Every child to receive a nutritious school meal each day.

- ◆ **Early child care and development:** Early childhood is the period when what we do for children will count the most, both for them as individuals and for their nation's economic development. But investments are often low. Nevertheless, Dr. Fraser Mustard, founding president of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, observed that brain development is most dynamic in the early years and that even the poorest parents can enhance it by close

interaction with their child. All agreed that the family is key, warranting investment to enable parents to be the warm, responsive, informed caregivers they wish to be. President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal told how his background as an economist had convinced him that the early years are critical. Accordingly he created a ministry for early childhood, and a number of villages are now home to child care centres that combine the best modern expertise with the traditional wisdom of Senegal's cultural heritage. Subsequent presenters offered other notable examples of services to backstop the family, ranging from child care centres in Canada and the Philippines to the work of adapting the Sesame Street television programme in 20 nations. Topics raised in discussion included the importance of fully integrating programmes for early child care; ensuring that the promotion of breastfeeding receives due attention; and enlisting the corporate sector as a valuable partner and resource. It was widely acknowledged that early childhood programmes improve achievement at school and a nation's productivity. But it was also noted that they can help foster peace in the world; UNICEF Ambassador for Sports Johann Koss was one of several speakers who made the point that children learn tolerance -- or intolerance -- at a very young age.

Protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence

Numerous side events during the Special Session focussed on the right of all children to be protected against all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation and abuse. These events made it clear that complex and politically sensitive protection issues are more solidly on the world's agenda today than they were at the time of the World Summit for Children. Over the past decade, in the framework of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, outrage has grown in tandem with awareness and knowledge about gross violations of the rights of millions of vulnerable children and young people in the shadows of the criminal underworld, in the privacy of homes, in work places, zones of conflict and the streets of cities worldwide. The Special Session side events on protection issues heard from former victims of exploitation and abuse, researchers and activists working to protect children, leaders of well-organized and outspoken networks, government officials committed to change.

- ◆ **Children affected by armed conflict:** Several events, including a *special meeting of the Security Council on children and armed conflict* and *3 panel discussions* highlighted the key importance of this issue and the determination of the international community to take action on it. The renewed energy and seriousness that children

"We see an end to war: world leaders resolving conflict through peaceful dialogue instead of force; child refugees and child victims of war protected in every way and having the same opportunities as all other children; disarmament, elimination of the arms trade and an end to the use of child soldiers" from "A World Fit for Us"

and young people brought to the Special Session was also particularly powerful at these events, where they participated with determination, passion, and clear thinking about the impact

of conflict on children. ***Special meeting of the Security Council:*** A day before the Special Session, on 7 May, the UN Security Council held a session on children and armed conflict. Under the Presidency of the Permanent Representative of Singapore, interventions were made by the UN Secretary-General; his Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict,

Olara Otunnu; the former Education Minister of Mozambique and UN expert on

"The Security Council has again set a high standard for leadership – in this case by promoting the rights of children to express themselves freely and to participate in matters that affect them" (Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director)

children and armed conflict Graça Machel; and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy. Three children from Bosnia and Herzegovina, East Timor and Liberia conveyed to the Council their personal experiences in conflicts that affected these countries and made a strong appeal to the UN Security Council to do everything in their power to end wars and to protect children from their consequences. "What we need from you is to help keep our peace and unity so that all children in East Timor can get an education and live in a peaceful country." (Jose Cabral, East Timor); "Please don't forget Liberia." (Wilmot Wunugo, age 16 Liberia); "The best thing you can do is stop and prevent war. That is something the Council has the power to do. The real question is – is that power used?" (Eliza Kantardic, age 17, Bosnia and Herzegovina) Since 1998, the Security Council has held four debates on children affected by armed conflict and adopted three resolutions (1261; 1314; and 1379) which address a broad range of issues including protection, impunity, abuse, refugees, and promotion of a culture of peace. The meeting of the Council on the eve of the Special Session built on its previous work and reaffirmed its commitment to integrating child protection concerns into its work. Speakers called upon the Security Council to explicitly incorporate child protection within their mandates for Peacekeeping Operations; to ensure that norms, obligations, resolutions and commitments are translated into realities on the ground; and to provide children with an opportunity to become advocates on their own behalf. The Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement, underlining its

commitment to protect children affected by armed conflict as an essential component of its work to promote and maintain international peace and security.

Protecting boys and girls during armed conflict: This highly interactive question and answer event called for immediate country-level implementation of treaties and resolutions to protect children in conflict situations. The panel called for improvements in monitoring and reporting on child rights violations and a long-term commitment to the disarmament, demobilization and especially reintegration of former child soldiers. *“Without job opportunities and training, these children become easy targets for re-recruitment,”* said the Minister of Gender and Development for Liberia. Government ministers, NGOs, experts and young people posed challenging and thoughtful questions to a distinguished panel that was moderated by Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy of the Secretary General for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Panelists pointed to signs of progress: the Optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict; efforts around landmines; integration of child protection into the mandates of peacekeeping operations; heightened activity by civil society organizations and NGOs. But enormous challenges remain. As noted by Graca Machel, author of the pivotal 1996 report on the impact of armed conflict on children, children continue to bear the brunt of war because governments do not place enough importance on their needs and rights. Moreover, humanitarian assistance remains unevenly apportioned: *“A child in Sierra Leone is not assisted in the same way as a child in Kosovo”*. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict suggested practical strategies to *“shift the energy”* from the global level to the ground and to translate international treaties and Security Council resolutions into concrete actions, including through better monitoring and reporting on child rights violations. Other key issues addressed during the session included the need for more attention to the psychosocial well-being of children affected by armed conflict; the prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation of refugee children and the role of business in perpetuating conflict. A youth from the Middle East summed up the prevailing desire to move from words to action: *“You have spoken about so many solutions to help us. What are you waiting for to do something?”*

“We may have improved international standards and we may have put children on the international agenda, but locally, at the field level, very little has changed” (Graca Machel)

“Children are our future. To accept the use of child soldiers in conflict is to accept the destruction of our future, and we must fight for this future one child at a time. We must reclaim them, every one of them” (UN Secretary General Kofi Annan)

Reclaiming our children: the UN responds to the situation of child soldiers: Panelists and participants in this event examined both the

causes and effects of the exploitation of children as combatants during times of conflict. Forcible abductions, the sway of radical ideologies, lack of more viable opportunities for survival, and other social pressure all contribute to the problem, with children recruited as soldiers because they are more easily controlled and manipulated. The physical and psychological effects of soldiering on children are long-term and devastating: loss of limbs, exposure to HIV infection, emotional damage, and reprisal or rejection by their families and communities should they attempt to return. These effects pose a challenge not only to war-affected communities, but to the international community as a whole, in seeking to achieve viable peace and development in post-conflict situations. After a film which graphically presented particular dimensions of the problem, moving and eloquent testimony to the horrors of participation in conflict was given by two youth panelists. China, from Northern Uganda, suggested that being a child combatant may be worse for girls than for boys, due to the sexual abuse and exploitation they suffer: *“Girls not only fight with a gun, but also fight to keep their souls the leaders try to take away”*. Ismael, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone, spoke of the *“incredible strength of spirit that the world must recognize”* in child soldiers, who are capable of overcoming their experiences and becoming full and active members and even leaders of their communities. The Secretary-General called on the international community to join together in putting an end to the recruitment of children, upholding minimum norms and standards of conduct in time of war, and holding those who violate such norms accountable for their actions.

Refugee and internally displaced children: Some ten million children under the age of 18 constitute over half of the total refugee population of the world, was the stark declaration of the panel, organized by UNHCR, the Women’s Commission on Refugee Women and Children and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The international community has come a long way in establishing policies and programmes for refugees

“How is it possible that we still fiddle on the margins regarding the use of children in war, as shields, as killers, as slaves, stealers, and mine detectors in mine fields? We are mortgaging humanity, we are mortgaging the future (General Dallaire, former Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda)

over the past 20 years, but their real safety is still in question. Panelists noted that the two groups of refugee children who are most vulnerable are unaccompanied children and adolescent boys and girls – both of whom may be exposed to violence and exploitation in the rupture of family ties and support structures caused by displacement. Such vulnerability may be heightened due to the ‘hidden nature’ of the situation of many of these children who are often not systematically identified or reached with assistance. At the same time, panelists recognized that young people have the potential to act as major forces for change and peace-building in their communities, with examples from around the world of children and young people as leaders in camps, in transition points, in reintegration facilities. For these strengths to be harnessed as a force for peace, children need support, guidance, and a secure environment which nurtures the establishment of trusting relationships. The importance of education and vocational training was also highlighted, as a means of building skills and a sense of purpose and planning for the future.

- ◆ **Child labour – an obstacle to education for all:** This event highlighted the critical connection between the goals of eradicating child labour and achieving education for all. Youth and high-level representatives of UN agencies –

“In the last decade, we have moved from denial to awareness. We must now move from consciousness to awareness” (Juan Somavia, Director-General of ILO)

including UNIESCO (which moderated the session), ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank

– as well as government, trade union and NGO delegates explored the issue with the guidance of questions raised by former child labourers. Working children are losing the childhood to which they are entitled, as well as the chance to develop their potential, to find decent work as adults, and to help build decent societies. This was the message repeated by numerous children –many of them former labourers - who attended the session. Shocking new statistics from ILO on the magnitude of the problem indicated that some 246 million children were currently working around the world – 180 million of them engaged in the worst forms of labour. Participants were urged to consider the elimination of child labour a shared responsibility among numerous actors and stakeholder – not only governments and UN agencies, but trade unions, consumers, voters, parents and communities. All must participate in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment, and child labour. Education has emerged as one of the most effective approaches to combat child labour – in terms of both prevention and protection, with a successful example presented from Brazil. By expanding our focus from ‘child-friendly schools’ to ‘child-seeking schools’, good education must serve as the magnet to pull children into schools and out of labour, with special programmes developed to respond to the needs of former child labourers. Participants also proposed the establishment of ‘Child Labour Free’ zones at community and national level, with promotion of South-South dialogue and collaboration to ensure replication of good practices, and mobilization of resources to fill funding gaps. In this regard, it was considered essential to monitor commitments made at the G8 conference in June 2002 focusing on education. Parallel to this event, the Global March against Child Labour and Kids Meeting Kids organized a march for children’s rights and a rally near the UN, with participation by several hundred children and adults calling for better enforcement of the CRC.

- ◆ **Beyond Yokohama: Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:** This panel meeting was convened to highlight the outcome of the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Yokohama, Japan in December 2001, and to draw attention to follow-up actions. It also aimed to inspire governments, civil society and donors to do more to combat

“I am personally convinced that one of our greatest enemies in this work is our reluctance to acknowledge the problem fully” (HRH Queen Silvia of Sweden)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The session was hosted jointly by the Government of Japan and UNICEF. In describing the global dimensions of the problem, the child sex industry was identified as a multi-million dollar business. Trafficking of children for sexual purposes has rapidly increased in several regions of the world. Growth in internet usage has also lead to a huge proliferation of child pornography. Ms Carmen Madrinan, the Executive Director of ECPAT International, noted that without demand there would be no need for a supply of children to exploit, and that local demand constitutes the overwhelming share of the market. The meeting highlighted positive initiatives taken to combat the problem, including the development of national plans of action, enactment of protective legislation, and efforts to strengthen law enforcement. But participants also acknowledged that significant challenges remained, stressing that future progress will depend on strengthened collaboration among all stakeholders – governments, religious leaders, researchers, NGOs, police, communities, the private sector, and children themselves. Children’s participation was highlighted as particularly crucial by a number of participants, including Queen Silvia of Sweden, Makiko Arima, personal representative of the Prime Minister of Japan, and Naira Khan, of the NGO Group on the Rights of the Child. Cross-border networking and regional collaboration are also essential. The event closed with two appeals – to break the silence surrounding CSEC, and to increase leadership in partnership with children to combat the problem. Among the commitments from participants were

personal pledges from the mayors of Yokohama, Mauritania, and Manila to do all in their power to eliminate the problem in their cities.

- ◆ **Countering child trafficking: a united response to a global problem:** Panelists representing the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the ILO, IOM and UNICEF, and the All-China Women's Federation, as well as a young person from Nepal, described in dreadful detail the situation of children who had been trafficked. The session also explored rescue, rehabilitation and prevention efforts for children in such danger. All recommended that both principles –preventative and curative–be adopted in efforts to combat this problem, since both strategies appear to have had an impact. Poverty was identified as a major causal factor for trafficking. This is exacerbated by

“Children are change-makers. We are not crawling insects, but butterflies. We are birds of freedom”. (Sanjog Thakuri, age 16, Nepal)

political and economic instability, the prevalence of armed conflict in some countries, and most importantly, by

lack of knowledge of the families, the youth and children of the risks that are involved in trafficking. It is estimated that in Asia alone, over the past 30 years, 30 million women and children have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. The 16-year old participant from Nepal challenged the international community to wipe out the lucrative business of child trafficking through the involvement of children, pointing to the advocacy work undertaken by his children's group. ILO representative Frans Roselaers described trafficking as *“a double violation of human rights”* both in the trafficking itself and in the gateway it opens to other forms of exploitation. Mrs. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, pointed to specific guidelines and principles on trafficking which urge special care for young victims, noting that *“We haven't yet begun to tackle this problem. It's time for us to take action”*. President I. Iliescu of Romania called for 'zero tolerance' on child trafficking, while government representatives from Finland, the Philippines and Togo called for increased prevention and coordination efforts nationally, regionally, and globally. Panelists recommended a number of concerted actions to combat child trafficking:

- ◆ promote community mobilization and vigilance;
- ◆ strengthen multi-sectoral alliances ;
- ◆ undertake time-bound measures linked to national development goals;
- ◆ mobilize international co-operation and support;
- ◆ strengthen and enforce existing laws, including ILO Convention 182 and the Optional Protocols;
- ◆ raise awareness, including among children and within families and schools.

- ◆ **Preventing discrimination against children:** This event provided an opportunity for global dialogue on the issue of discrimination against and inclusion for children. It outlined key issues and proposed future action on discrimination - with perspectives on disability, gender and ethno-racial diversity. Representatives of a variety of NGOs and youth groups, as well as delegates from

“The UN Special Session has provided a great opportunity to hear the views from diverse groups of people on this very important issue of inclusion of all children.” (Senator Landon Pearson, Canada)

the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability, deliberated particularly on ways to take up the messages on discrimination against children and to draw up specific action plans, especially at national level. Disability was a particular focus of concern. It was noted that nearly 150 million disabled children in the world suffer violations of basic human rights, with discrimination perpetuated through social prejudices compounded by government neglect and negative images in the media. Juan Angel de Gouveia, a child participant from Venezuela, used highly expressive sign language to describe discrimination suffered as a result of his deafness, proposing a 7-point plan of action to improve the quality of life and equality of opportunity for children with disabilities. Many speakers invoked the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the framework for progress in promoting the rights of disabled children. Gender discrimination was also an issue of discussion, with Jennifer Jadwero, a 14-year old girl from Kenya, describing successful efforts at promoting gender equality in her youth group. The session identified a number of concrete steps for future action:

- ◆ promote an action-oriented vision for inclusion, with particular care to ensure that national plans of action fulfil commitments to disabled children;
- ◆ engage in meaningful policy dialogue and legislative reform;
- ◆ create a global knowledge network and strengthen civil society in support of inclusion;
- ◆ implement a coherent strategy to monitor progress and outcomes;
- ◆ ensure that the hostility experienced by disabled children is fully addressed in the forthcoming UN study on violence.

- ◆ **Protecting children from violence:** The UN has called for a study of all forms of violence against children, to be completed by 2004 and modeled on the landmark study by Graca Machel on children affected by

“I am still taken aback at the extent and range and types of violence against children”. (Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner on Human Rights)

armed conflict. The UN Commission on Human Rights, UNICEF and WHO have agreed to jointly support such a study to ensure its success. Further thinking on the issues involved was advanced in a meeting co-sponsored by the government of Sweden and Save the Children, Sweden, with participants including Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other UN and youth delegates. Thomas Hammarberg of Sweden, serving as moderator, observed that children themselves were calling for a halt to violence against them as a key priority. Mary Robinson pointed to issues raised during two days of discussion on violence sponsored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These had brought out the range of environments where children suffer violence, including – too often – those places where children should most expect protection, such as the home and school. Minister Ingela Thalen of Sweden shared her country’s successful experience in the legal prohibition of corporal punishment, while UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Andre Roberfroid highlighted the obligation we all have to do more to combat violence against children. Two youth participants from South Africa (Abeda Kagee, 13 and Monique Anthony, 12) pointed to the reality of violence in children’s lives and explained how children can be empowered as advocates against violence. Wide-ranging comments from other participants added to the richness of the discussions.

- ◆ **Juvenile justice; children deprived of their liberty; and children in residential care:** The issues of children in residential care and children deprived of their liberty were explored in this session, which was supported by the governments of the Netherlands and Romania. The best practices of different groups and countries were discussed.

The gathering was moderated by Professor Jaap Doek, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and was attended by the

“One of the tested methods for moving things forward is learning from each other’s experiences, good or bad, and making samples of best practices available for reasoned adaptation and assimilation” (President I. Iliescu of Romania)

President of Romania, UN officials and various NGO representatives. The format of the session was meant to approximate a juvenile court hearing. Human Rights Watch raised the issues of death penalty, torture during interrogation, abuse in juvenile facilities, illegal and arbitrary proceedings, incarceration of children with adults, and the dreadful conditions prevailing in detention centres, often leading to abuse. The Netherlands, lobbying

“We children living in orphanages, on the street, in refugee camps, we are too often forgotten, please do not forget us, the future is in our hands.” (Misbulhaa, age 14, Afghanistan)

against the death penalty for children under 18, highlighted the important role of the donor community in providing assistance for human rights-based juvenile justice. The Philippines noted its reform of juvenile justice in accordance

with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards. Romania highlighted the reform of its child protection system, reducing considerably the number of institutionalized children. Many country representatives emphasized the importance of a holistic approach in dealing with juvenile-related issues. All speakers recognized that too many children world-wide live in residential care, or are deprived of liberty. They agreed on the need for doing a better job of guaranteeing that children can, as much as possible, grow up in a family environment. They noted that the deprivation of liberty should be a measure of last resort and should last for the shortest time possible. Many participants agreed on the following recommendations for action:

- ◆ include issues of violence and abuse by law enforcement officials in the global study on violence against children;
- ◆ initiate a global campaign against children in prisons
- ◆ mobilize all possible efforts - at national, regional and international levels - to reduce by 50% the number of children in residential care and detention by the year 2010.

Combating HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS estimated that in 2001, a total of 580,000 children under 15 died of HIV/AIDS, 500,000 of them in sub-Saharan Africa. In that same year 800,000 children contracted the infection; 90 % of these children – roughly 2,000 a day – were infants who acquired it from mother-to-child transmission. By 2001, AIDS had killed the mother or both parents of 10.4 million children under the age of 15, orphaning some 2.3 million children in 2000 alone. Every day, over 6,000 children continue to be orphaned by AIDS, a third of them under five. Overall, life-prolonging AIDS drugs go to only 5% of the population that needs them. In the countries worst affected, only three out of five young people know how to protect themselves against the virus. And last year a million African schoolchildren lost their teacher to AIDS.

These bleak statistics and others like them formed the backdrop to four panel meetings on AIDS at the Special Session – preventing mother-to-child transmission of AIDS; HIV prevention among the young; orphans and other children affected by AIDS; and strategies to combat HIV/AIDS through education.

- ◆ **Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV:** In a meeting chaired by J. Phumaphi, Botswana Minister of Health, panelists from WHO, UNICEF and the Government of Brazil reviewed the devastating impact of mother-to-child HIV transmission on children’s survival and outlined strategies to bring down the toll. WHO outlined a four-point strategy to reverse the current trend by: preventing HIV in women of child-bearing age; preventing unintended pregnancies in HIV-infected women; preventing transmission from mother to child; and providing care and support for HIV-infected women, their infants and their families. Voluntary and confidential counseling and testing can play a key role in identifying the women to benefit from appropriate services: transmission from mother to child can be reduced by antiretroviral drugs during the pregnancy, elective Caesarean section, and replacement feeding in lieu of breastfeeding. These scientifically proven interventions are beset by problems, however – including poor access to antenatal clinics and poor infrastructure for care; limited access to counseling and testing, which may also be poorly accepted; continued transmission through breastfeeding; and lack of follow-up care. The ways forward would include upgrading health services and especially antenatal clinics, rapid testing with same-day results followed by sound counseling, effective communication, and better links to follow-up support.
- ◆ **Preventing HIV among young people:** UNICEF and UNAIDS hosted a discussion on HIV prevention for the young that combined adolescents and experts as panelists. The group gave their personal views of the impact of AIDS on the young and assigned a key role to adolescents as part of the solution. Participants discussed the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS and how this affects prospects for preventing the disease, including through the perpetuation of silence around the issue. The myth that sexual education encourages promiscuity was flagged as a key obstacle to the empowerment of young people with the knowledge necessary to protect themselves from the disease. Peer education combined with other forms of education and communication are essential. Panelists from Haiti and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia shared positive experiences of the UNICEF-supported ‘Right to Know’ projects which emphasize youth participation and have helped improve communication between parents and teenagers. Panelists including Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, urged media to move beyond a negative portrayal of the HIV positive as ‘victims’ into a more positive focus. A final issue of discussion was the role of the Church in combating AIDS and the stigma associated with it, with an example given from Trinidad and Tobago.
- ◆ **Orphans and other children affected by HIV/AIDS:** Mrs. Nane Annan, opened the meeting with an account of the impressive young people she has met around the world who are living in the shadow of AIDS. She singled out three key points concerning AIDS orphans: millions of children have been orphaned by AIDS and the numbers are rising; protecting the rights of orphans is a long-term commitment; and families and communities are responding with great courage. Peter McDermott of USAID provided a brief overview of the current and projected situation of children affected by HIV/AIDS, noting that children orphaned by other causes as well as AIDS add to the total numbers. He outlined five key strategies for responding to the crisis for AIDS orphans:

- ◆ Strengthen the caring and coping capacities of families
- ◆ Mobilize and strengthen community-based responses
- ◆ Strengthen the capacity of children to meet their own needs
- ◆ Ensure that governments protect the most vulnerable
- ◆ Create an enabling environment for affected children and families.

Samantha Mundeta of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of Zimbabwe, shared her experience as a young person living in a country where HIV/AIDS has had enormous and multiple impacts on the young, who are “*growing up before their time*”. She also outlined the efforts being made to improve lives of such children, including through rent subsidies, peer education programmes, and volunteer follow-up to child-headed households. Wisdom of Malawi spoke as one of his country’s more than 40,000 AIDS orphans, emphasizing the importance of free schooling and young people’s participation in decision-making concerning them. He praised his nation’s task force and policy on AIDS orphans, but reminded everyone that what is most needed is visible action. Subsequent discussions raised concerns about the exploitation of AIDS orphans for child labour, and suggestions for a more active role for the private sector. Participants also discussed the extent to which religious organizations had risen to the challenge of AIDS orphans.

- ◆ **Education as a key strategy to combat HIV/AIDS:** Riz Khan of CNN International adopted an interactive question and answer format to host a dialogue on the role of education in the fight against HIV/AIDS, inviting the audience to engage with panelists in discussions. The AIDS pandemic is proving destructive to education systems, stated Donald Bundy of the World Bank, making it difficult, if not impossible to reach the goal of education for all by 2015. At the same time, education has a key role to play in ensuring that schoolchildren remain uninfected. Examples from Gambia, Brazil and Namibia were discussed. In Gambia, a comprehensive and structured approach is followed, with information provided through the formal school system supplemented with interactive health education by peers. In Brazil, where antiretroviral drugs are provided free of charge to all who are HIV-positive, treatment of HIV-positive teachers and pupils is recommended as an important strategy for support the education system. In Namibia, schools are considered a valuable weapon in the fight against HIV/AIDS, but they cannot work in isolation. They must be supported by the larger community, including religious and cultural institutions, which must be open enough to encourage children to learn about HIV/AIDS, and by NGOs which need to reach the out-of-school children who are often most at risk. Participants acknowledged that many more complex challenges remain, including the problem of teacher-to-pupil transmission. A multifaceted response was recommended to the two key challenges of preventing HIV/AIDS and addressing its devastating impact on education systems:

- ◆ Keep up EFA momentum, ensuring that schools and teachers are there and that all children go to school, with a particular focus on groups who are increasingly marginalized, notably children orphaned and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ Use the school system to deliver education to prevent HIV/AIDS in formal and informal ways that are responsive and effective.
- ◆ Work with the broader community – religious leaders, NGOs, informal groups – to help raise children from an early age with the values to protect themselves.

NGOs at the Special Session

NGOs played a vital role in both the preparatory processes of the Special Session and the event itself, gaining in strength and numbers and influence in the two years leading up to the session (*see chapter 8*). This influence was acknowledged – even celebrated – in the statements of numerous government leaders and representatives, many of whom committed themselves to working more closely with civil society in the development and implementation of National Plans of Action and other forms of follow-up. NGOs also made clear their interest in cooperating with governments, even as they push for better policies, stronger laws, higher budgets and improved services for children.

NGO participation in the Special Session was unprecedented in a number of ways. First was the record attendance -- for a child rights event -- of **over 1,700 NGO representatives from 88 countries and 696 NGOs**. This was vastly more than the 235 attending the first prepcom, double the number attending prepcom 3 -- and well beyond all expectations. Second, NGOs included not only those accredited by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as is customary at UN conferences, but also national partners of UNICEF. This meant that grassroots NGOs who would not normally have a voice in the UN were able to offer their experiences and provide a "reality check" regarding what works and does not work on the ground. *"You are the NGOs who really know what you are talking about,"* said Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, in her informal welcome statement at the NGO reception. Third, with an unprecedented number of NGOs involved in the preparatory process from the outset, their views and contributions had been taken into account in the crafting of the Outcome Document. And fourth, NGO participation included over 400 children a young people – a first as well as a record.

"This General Assembly Special Session is different. The United Nations has recognized the important role that civil society organizations play. The presence and participation of children also made a substantial difference and affirmed the CRC call for children's participation. In partnership with governments, UN agencies and others, NGOs provide vital services – including health care, education, and protection. Perhaps even more importantly, NGOs are critical to monitoring and advocacy for social and legal reforms promoting equality, freedom and justice" (Mary Diaz, Co-Chair, NGO Group on UNICEF, Steering Group on the SSC)

As the NGO Secretariat for the Special Session, the Steering Group of the NGO Committee on UNICEF took responsibility for the organization and facilitation of all NGO events at the Special Session. The Steering

Group worked closely with the Child Rights Caucus, an NGO grouping formed in early 2000 during preparations for the Special Session. The daily NGO newspaper, *"On the Record"*, which was inaugurated during the second prepcom, continued to serve as the public voice for NGOs during the Special Session, with lively, informative, and hard-hitting coverage of issues and activities. From the outset, OTR encouraged the full participation of young journalists.

In all, 80 workshops and side events were organized by the NGOs, in addition to a number of other important activities: an orientation session and very lively gala reception on the eve of the Special Session opening; three lunchtime plenaries and daily NGO briefings where NGOs heard updates from the Bureau, UNICEF and the NGO Committee on UNICEF and were given the opportunity to express their views. The NGO Steering Committee also coordinated nine daily regional caucuses, and organized a “living”, up-to-the-minute Commitment Chart to track pledges of governments, NGOs and other participants as they were announced at the Special Session. NGOs also presented fifteen oral statements before the General Assembly and the Committee of the Whole. Representing both international, national and community-based NGOs, the speakers shared a wide variety of experiences and lessons learned, chronicling ongoing struggles and emitting strong appeals to bring balance to a world that is “*unjustly tilted against children*” as one activist characterized it. The speakers included two young women under 18. The statements covered a range of issues, including education, child labour, children deprived of family care, and juvenile justice. But two themes dominated. The first was the importance of child rights and the CRC as the “*cornerstone for all follow-up action from the Special Session*”; and the second was the daily pervasive and crushing impact of all forms of violence on the lives of children.

In addition to organizing their own side events, NGOs participated actively in events organized by UN agencies, governments and other constituencies. They made contacts, networked and gained and exchanged information, always among the most valuable outcomes of UN meetings. NGOs coalesced around specific issues, including girls, early childhood education, HIV/AIDS, child and youth participation, children in armed conflict and of course child rights. The CRC was, in fact, the most central and unifying theme among most NGOs. It entered nearly every discussion in the NGO plenaries and other events and throughout the strong, if not always successful, mobilizing work of the Child Rights Caucus. Many NGOs expressed a degree of frustration over their lack of access to the government negotiating process and disappointment over the final content of the Outcome Document which, from their perspective, failed to confirm the Convention on the Rights of the Child as “the” global standard for children’s rights and the logical starting point and centrepiece of any international plan of action for children. Other weaknesses, from their point of view, pertained to adolescent and reproductive health and services and juvenile justice. Nevertheless, these concerns did not prevent the vast majority of NGO participants from celebrating the Special Session and its outcome as a major step forward in the long struggle for children’s rights.

“*When the Special Session is over,*” the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan told NGOs, “*The UN will look to NGOs to act as watchdogs and monitor promises made. You must keep us on our toes.*” NGOs say they intend to take the counsel of the Secretary General seriously. The Global March against Child Labour; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers; Global Health Council; Global Movement for Children; NGO Group on the CRC; Child Rights Caucus; Child Rights Information Network; and Global Network of Religions for Children – among others – are all examples of NGO initiatives to link with others and provide leaderships on important children’s issues. Throughout the Session NGOs recognized their responsibility and unique position in helping to elaborate National Programmes of Action and to develop tools and guidelines for a monitoring process linked to monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As governments returned home to develop their National Plans of Actions, NGOs were certain not to be far behind, drawing strength from Paragraph 59 of the outcome document urging the inclusion of civil society in such processes.

CHAPTER 10: TOWARDS A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

Introduction

“Let every national leader gathered in this august forum depart with a determination to transform fine rhetoric into resolute action; to translate the universal consensus into early and effective action within our sovereign borders.” (Prime Minister P.J. Patterson. Jamaica: address to the GA at the Special Session on Children)

The Special Session on Children was designed not as a ‘talk fest’ or platform for pretty words, but as an occasion to take stock of how far the world had come in honouring its commitments to children and to renew such commitments through the articulation of a shared vision of a world fit for children and the identification of the partnerships, leadership, resources, and actions needed to build such a world. *“Our gathering here today is not to pay lip service to the world’s children,”* stressed Hajia Aisha Ismail, Minister of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Nigeria, during the plenary debates, *“but to chart a new course of action that will lift them out of the web of poverty.”* *“In solving the urgent issues that afflict children,”* said President Vicente Fox Quesada of Mexico in his address to the General Assembly, *“I urge you not to wait another decade and, instead, to assume today the commitment to mobilize conscience, will and resources to benefit those who represent the future of our nations.”*

With a final stretch that saw delegates negotiating text for close to 24 hours straight, the outcome document of the Special Session, entitled *“A World Fit for Children”*, was finalized and adopted by the General Assembly close to midnight on the final day of the Session. The document, which was adopted without a vote, contains a Declaration and a Plan of Action, which together aim to chart a course for a global movement that will strengthen international actions for the promotion of children’s rights in the twenty-first century and beyond. In concluding remarks following the adoption of the text, General Assembly President Han Seung-soo applauded the work of government leaders, civil society and children themselves. Noting that the Declaration and Plan of Action described very clearly the steps to be taken in building a new world fit for children, he stressed that significant national efforts, including the mobilization of human, financial and material resources, were needed to achieve the agreed targets. *“In this regard,”* he said, *“The Special Session should not be seen as an end in itself. It is a milestone in a long journey that began in 1990 with the World Summit for Children, that gathered momentum during the 1990s and that has brought us all here to plan our course for the future....The real work of creating a world fit for children has only just begun.”*

As Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session reminded all stakeholders, *“‘A World Fit for Children’ is not just the name of the outcome document. It is our vision. It is a vision that sees every child free from poverty, discrimination, abuse, exploitation and neglect. It is a vision of a world in which every child can grow and develop in a safe and stable environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. With the adoption of the outcome document, we have contributed to translating a grass-roots endeavour - over 90 million voices from the Say Yes for Children campaign - into a rapidly growing global movement involving people from all walks of life.”* She pointed to the rigorous follow-up actions that are called for in order to keep such a movement alive and to realize this vision for children. These include the creation of national and regional action plans, strengthened national statistical capacity, increased cooperation with civil society, and investment in children as a prerequisite for reducing global poverty and inequity.

This chapter will outline the key provisions, goals and strategies of *A World Fit for Children*⁵⁸ as well as its provisions for follow-up. It will then outline UNICEF’s planned contributions to building such a world, as articulated in its medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for the period 2002-2005.⁵⁹ In helping to achieve WFFC goals and targets, it is foreseen that the priority actions of the MTSP will contribute synergistically as well to the attainment of key Millennium Development Goals, as UNICEF continues to build and work through partnerships for and with children. The chapter concludes with a look ahead, as the voices of children and young people suggest how we might work together to build a world fit for children.

A World Fit for Children: key goals and strategic approaches

A World Fit for Children aspires to a world in which all girls and boys can enjoy childhood – a time of play and learning, in which they are loved, respected and cherished, their rights are promoted and protected, without discrimination of any kind, where their safety and well-being are paramount, and where they can develop in health,

⁵⁸ *A World Fit for children* (A/S-27/19/Rev.1), 2002; drawing on summary of main points in the UNICEF SSC report.

⁵⁹ UNICEF *Medium-term strategic plan for the period 2002-2005* (E/ICEF/2001/13), 7 November 2001.

peace and dignity. The Declaration commits leaders to completing the unfinished agenda of the World Summit for Children and to addressing other emerging issues vital to the achievement of the longer-term goals and objectives, in particular those of the UN Millennium Declaration. It reaffirms leaders' obligation to promote and protect the rights of each child, acknowledging the legal standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. All of society is called upon to join a global movement for children and to uphold its ten-point rallying call, embodied as the core of the "Say Yes for Children" campaign.

The first part of the Plan of Action sets out three necessary outcomes: the best possible start in life for children, access to a quality basic education, including free and compulsory primary education, and ample opportunity for children, including adolescents, to develop their individual capacities. There are strong calls to support families; to eliminate discrimination; and to tackle poverty. A wide range of actors and partners are called upon to take action, including children themselves; parents, families and other caregivers; local governments; parliamentarians; NGOs; the private sector; religious, spiritual, cultural and indigenous leaders; the mass media; regional and international organizations; and people who work with children.

The second part of the Plan of Action reaffirms previous goals and targets relevant to children endorsed by world summits and conferences, including the UN Millennium Summit. It lists 21 goals in four priority areas of action: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

To achieve these goals and targets, the document calls for the mobilization and allocation of new and additional resources at both national and international levels. This includes the pursuit of agreed global targets and actions, such as the 20/20 approach and the allocation by developed countries of 0.7 per cent of their GNP for overall development assistance, as well as local partnerships. The document concludes with a section on Follow-up Actions and Assessment to facilitate implementation and to ensure monitoring, periodic reviews and reporting. UNICEF is requested to prepare and disseminate information on progress made.

Promoting health lives

Because of poverty and lack of access to basic social services, more than 10 million children under five years of age die every year of preventable disease and malnutrition. Complications related to pregnancy, maternal anaemia and malnutrition kill more than half a million women and adolescents each year, and injure and disable many more. Around 150 million children under five years of age are malnourished. More than one billion people do not have access to safe drinking water and more than two billion people lack adequate sanitation.

The *World Fit for Children* pledges to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and poor health by providing a safe and healthy start in life for all children. This includes providing access to effective, equitable, sustained and sustainable primary health care systems in all communities, ensuring access to information and referral services; providing adequate water and sanitation services; and promoting healthy lifestyles. Specific goals for the decade 2000-2010 and beyond are as follows:

- ◆ Reduction in the infant and under-five mortality rate by at least one third, rising to two thirds for the period 1990-2015.
- ◆ Reduction in the maternal mortality rate by at least one third, rising to three-quarters for the period 1990-2015.
- ◆ Reduction of child malnutrition among children under five years of age by at least one third, with special attention to children under two years of age, and reduction in the rate of low birth weight by at least one third of the current rate.
- ◆ Reduction in the proportion of households without access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable safe drinking water by at least one third.
- ◆ Development and implementation of national early childhood development policies and programmes to ensure the enhancement of children's physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive development.
- ◆ Development and implementation of national health policies and programmes for adolescents, including goals, to promote their physical and mental health.
- ◆ Access through the primary health-care system to reproductive health for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than 2015.

Strategic approaches build upon the many cost-effective interventions that have demonstrated their value in the fight against disease and malnutrition, including immunization, vitamin A supplementation and salt iodization. The impact of these low-cost, high impact interventions will be enhanced by measures to protect and promote breastfeeding, strengthen early childhood development and ensure access to safe water and adequate sanitation. In addition, further efforts are needed to reduce disparities in access to affordable, good quality health care. The health risks that threaten

children and young people must also be met with measures to promote healthy lifestyles, so that children and young people can protect themselves from and prevent sickness and long-term ill health.

Providing quality education

Some 120 million children of primary school age – the majority of them girls – are not in school. Millions more are taught by untrained, underpaid teachers in overcrowded, unhealthy and poorly equipped classrooms. One third of all children do not complete the five years of schooling that are the minimum required for basic literacy. The *World Fit for Children* pledges to ensure that all children will have access to, and complete, a primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality by the year 2015 and leaders have also promised support to the progressive provision of secondary education. Specific goals include the following:

- ◆ Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, for girls and boys, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- ◆ Reduce the number of primary school-age children who are out of school by 50 % and increase net primary school enrolment or participation in alternative, good quality primary education programmes to at least 90 % by 2010;
- ◆ Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- ◆ Improve all aspects of the quality of education so that children and young people achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in numeracy, literacy and essential life skills;
- ◆ Ensure that the learning needs of all young people are met through access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- ◆ Improve adult literacy levels by 50% by 2015, especially for women.

Strategic approaches must be broad-based and inclusive to ensure that every child is ready to benefit from schooling and has access to affordable, good quality education that will prepare them for adult life. Programmes for early childhood care and education, for example, give children the head start they need to make the most of their schooling. The provision of Education for All requires intensive effort to find and reintegrate children who are not in school and to eliminate disparities in educational access. Education must be of good quality if it is to retain children – effective, dynamic, responsive and child-centred. Effective measures include initiatives to enhance the status of teachers, to create child-friendly learning environments, and to prepare children for a healthy and productive adult life.

Protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence

Social and economic pressures are undermining the role of parents, families and communities in raising their children. Millions of children have died as a result of armed conflict and many more are permanently disabled or seriously injured. Millions of children are internally displaced or have been driven from their countries as refugees. More than 100 million children are trapped in the worst forms of child labour, including as victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Domestic violence against women and children is a serious problem in every country. In the *World Fit for Children*, leaders have reaffirmed the right of every child to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. Every society is called upon to eliminate all forms of violence against children. Specific goals are as follows:

- ◆ Protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.
- ◆ Protect children from the impact of armed conflict and forced displacement, and ensure compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.
- ◆ Protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation, including paedophilia and trafficking.
- ◆ Take immediate and effective measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, as defined in ILO Convention 182, and elaborate and implement strategies for the elimination of child labour that is contrary to accepted international standards.
- ◆ Improve the plight of millions of children who live under especially difficult circumstances.

Among the strategic approaches identified, the following are key. Effective laws, policies, programmes and education and advocacy are needed to create a climate of protection, safeguarding children from abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination. Protection measures must aim to reach every child, including those children who are particularly vulnerable, such as orphans. They should aim to protect children from such harmful practices as early marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as the dangers of the drugs trade and armed conflict. Specific approaches could include effective systems of birth registration, the creation of child-specific justice systems and measures to end the use of child soldiers and ensure that children take no part in hostilities. Immediate action is needed to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. And cooperation is needed at every level to end the trafficking of children and their sexual exploitation and abuse, ensure the safety and protection of victims and assist their recovery and reintegration.

Combating HIV/AIDS

An estimated 13 million children have been orphaned by AIDS, and nearly 600,000 infants are infected every year through mother-to-child transmission. Millions of HIV-positive young people are living with the stigma of HIV but without access to adequate counselling, care and support. In the *World Fit for Children*, leaders pledged: urgent and aggressive action on HIV/AIDS, aiming to reach the goals agreed at the UN General Assembly Special Session on this issue in 2001. These are as follows:

- ◆ By 2003, establish national targets to reach the internationally agreed prevention goals. By 2005, ensure a 25% reduction of HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15-24 in the most affected countries, rising to 25% globally by 2010.
- ◆ Reduce the proportion of infants infected with HIV by 20% by 2005 and by 50% by 2010, by ensuring that 80% of pregnant women reached by antenatal care have access to HIV prevention services. Increase the availability of services to reduce mother-to-child transmission, ensuring that HIV-infected women and babies have access to such services. Offer effective interventions for HIV-infected women, including counselling, access to treatment and, where appropriate, breast milk substitutes and a continuum of care.
- ◆ Develop by 2003, and implement by 2005, national policies and strategies to build and strengthen governmental, family and community capacity to provide a supportive environment for children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Offer appropriate counselling and psychosocial support, enrolment in school and access to shelter, good nutrition and basic social services on an equal basis with their peers. Protect orphans and vulnerable children from all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, trafficking and loss of inheritance.

The main strategies and their timeframes have already been agreed by the international community. By 2003, for example, each country is expected to create multisectoral strategies and comprehensive financing plans for the fight against HIV/AIDS – rights-based strategies that confront stigma and eliminate discrimination, ensure effective information, education and counselling and promote the partnerships with civil society, and the public and private sectors to halt the epidemic and manage its consequences. By 2005, at least 90% of those aged 15 to 24 should have the information and life skills they need to protect themselves against HIV infection; family and community-based care and health care systems should be strengthened to provide care to people, including children, living with HIV/AIDS and multisectoral strategies should also be under way. Other strategic approaches are intended to be continuous and ongoing, including international support to back the efforts of developing countries against HIV/AIDS.

Mobilizing resources

No investment gives a greater return than investment in children. Such investment lays the foundation for just societies, strong economies and a world free of poverty. But effective investment in children requires a vision that goes beyond the purely financial. Building a world fit for children requires greater leadership, broader partnerships and renewed commitment to children's well-being. The goals set out in the Plan of Action are achievable and affordable, if the will is there to reach them. The main responsibility for implementing the Plan of Action – and finding the resources to do so – will rest with each individual country. However, it was agreed that new and additional resources will also be required at the international level, and the Plan of Action will require greater international cooperation on economic and social development.

World leaders commended the developed countries that had reached the internationally agreed target of 0.7% of GNP for overall official development aid and urged every developed country to strive to reach this target. They also pledged to spare no effort to reverse the general decline in overall ODA and to meet the targets of up to 0.20% of GNP as ODA to the least developed countries. They also pledged immediate action on debt, including the full implementation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative and support for schemes to use debt savings to finance programmes to eradicate poverty – particularly child poverty. Greater support was urged for approaches that address debt in a comprehensive and sustainable way.

It is essential to mobilize new and additional resources for social development at national and international levels to reduce disparities within and between countries and ensure the best possible use of existing resources. For example, the 20/20 Initiative should be implemented in full to ensure universal access to basic social services. New ways to generate financial resources should be explored, including reductions in military expenditure. Above all, social expenditures to benefit children should be protected at all times. Resource allocation should prioritize the needs of disadvantaged children in particularly vulnerable areas, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries, and countries with transitional economies.

Technical cooperation between countries is needed to ensure the sharing of positive experiences on the implementation of the Plan of Action and new partnerships are needed with civil society, including non-governmental organizations and

the private sector. Corporate social responsibility, for example, can contribute to the well-being of children by increasing awareness of the links between social development and economic growth. The private sector should also ensure that all children share in the benefits of progress in areas such as health, science, and mass communication. Finally, the full implementation of the Plan of Action will require greater policy coherence and cooperation among the United Nations, its agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as other multilateral bodies and civil society.

Monitoring progress

The UN General Assembly Special Session on Children has re-affirmed the global commitment to a world fit for children – a world built on the achievements of the last decade, guided by the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and founded on a series of time-bound and achievable goals and on sustainable strategies to do the job. World leaders have pledged their support to follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, like the ones that follow, which will be crucial to the achievement of the overall goals for children.

- **Action Plans.** National and, where appropriate, regional, action plans will be created with time-bound, measurable goals based on the Plan of Action of the Special Session and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, tailored to national realities.
- **Regular monitoring.** Regular monitoring of progress towards the goals will be carried out at national, regional and global level. This will require the strengthening of national data collection and analysis, with enhanced international cooperation to support statistical capacity building.
- **Periodic review.** Periodic reviews of progress will be carried out at national and sub-national level to address obstacles and accelerate action. Such reviews will be used at regional level to share best practices, strengthen partnerships and accelerate progress.

In addition: countries that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child should include information on their progress on implementation of the Plan of Action in their submissions to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF is invited to prepare and disseminate, on a periodic basis, information on the progress of individual countries and the international community towards the objectives of the Plan of Action. The Secretary-General is requested to present regular reports on progress to the UN General Assembly

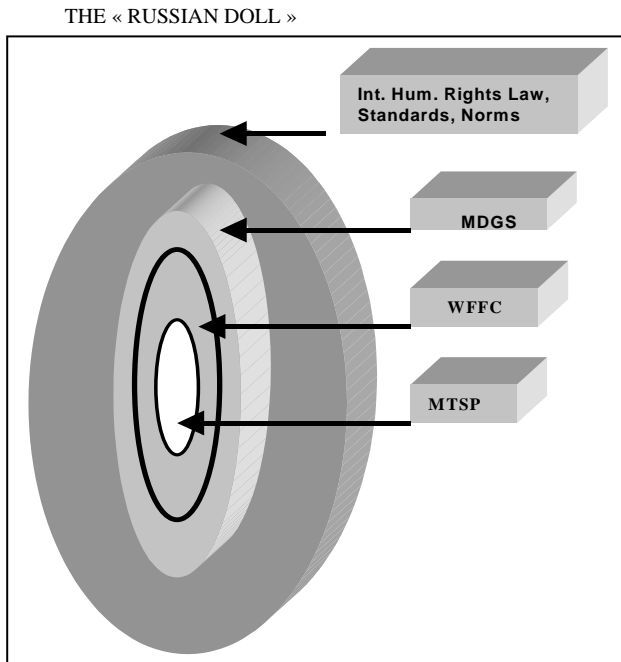
UNICEF's medium term strategic plan (2002-2005)

UNICEF's medium term strategic plan (MTSP) for the period 2002-2005 is rooted in the principle that results must be measured by sustained fulfillment of the rights of children and women.⁶⁰ It thus combines results-based management with a human rights-based approach to programming, guided by the CRC and CEDAW which it views as complementary. In adopting results-based management, it will guard against the potential pitfall of favoring pursuit of visible short-term results to the exclusion of attention to longer-term issues of participation, consensus-building and sustainability. The facilitation of participation will continue to be an essential component of country programme strategies. Building on lessons learned from implementation of the previous plan, it seeks to sharpen organizational priorities, more clearly define objectives and indicators, and make more strategic use of monitoring and evaluation. Cross-cutting concerns in programmes that are aimed at making a difference for children include a focus on disparity reduction; gender equity; peace-building and poverty reduction that begins with children and women. The strategies through which UNICEF plans to implement its programmes include overall programme excellence (rights based programming and results-based management); effective country programmes of cooperation as the core of UNICEF work (with country programmes broadly reflecting organizational priorities, while responding to specific issues affecting children in the country); strengthened alliances and partnerships for shared success; influential information, communication and advocacy to ensure that children are at the heart of national and international agendas; and improved internal management.

The MTSP, developed through widespread consultative processes, provides the unified framework for UNICEF activities in programmes, partnerships, alliances, advocacy and internal operations at headquarters and in regional and country offices. It serves as a tool of accountability for UNICEF to all its stakeholders, and identifies UNICEF's contribution to collective efforts to create a *World Fit for Children*, as embodied in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Special Session for Children. Bearing in mind as well the Millennium Summit Declaration and Development Goals, the MTSP sets out the dual role of UNICEF as both catalytic – influencing the actions of others through alliances, partnerships, advocacy, monitoring, research and policy analysis at all levels – and operational – contributing directly to results for children through service delivery, capacity-building and empowerment at the country level. The analogy of a 'Russian doll' has been evoked to depict the relationship between UNICEF's programmatic goals, as

⁶⁰ (E/ICEF/2001/13), 7 November 2001

embodied in its MTSP and its contribution to the goals of the World Fit for Children, the Millennium Development Goals and Declaration, and the wider body of international human rights law, norms and standards. (see box)



Consistent with the 1996 Mission Statement inspired by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the MTSP sets forth a vision of the world where all sectors of society are mobilized in broad-based partnerships with and for children; where the principles of the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, the participation of children, and their survival and full development guide all actions and form the hallmark of good governance; where families are assisted in their central role as teachers and protectors of their children; and where the rights, equality and empowerment of women are promoted. In the MTSP, UNICEF pledges to use its global presence, its country programme capacity, its voice, and its capacity to mobilize resources to help change the world with children so that this vision is realized, pursuing its priorities in both 'loud' and 'silent'; emergencies, and seeking effective ways to ensure that children's voices are heard and their participation is fostered in the processes undertaken.

Consistent with the rights-based approach, UNICEF will identify key issues of exclusion and disparity as central concerns for advocacy and policy dialogue. UNICEF interventions will focus on disadvantaged populations and children and adolescents at risk and gender concerns will be mainstreamed throughout the country programmes, with a focus on activities to empower girls and women. In addition, UNICEF will advocate for legal reforms and adoption of policies and programmes that will raise the status of girls and women both in the family and in society.

The priorities of the MTSP were identified on the basis of the key issues for children arising from the end-decade review which related both to the unfinished agenda of the WSC and to emerging concerns, and were informed by the life cycle perspective and the three key outcomes it promotes. The MTSP identifies five inter-linking organizational priorities whose benefits are seen to span the life cycle and whose realization offers potential to leverage even greater results in terms of other rights and outcomes. The selection of priorities is also based strategically on UNICEF's own comparative advantages which arise from its global presence and field-based operations; from its mandate as the world's premier organization for children, and from its years of experience and accumulated expertise. While the priorities are global, different country situations will demand different responses from UNICEF, and different regions will have particular emphases both within the organizational priorities and in components that lie outside the priorities. The achievement of all priorities will depend on successful mobilization of and collaboration with partners. It will also depend on having all functions within UNICEF (i.e. supply, resources, communications, partnerships, programmes, research and data collection, etc) come together in their support.⁶¹ The priorities, the rationale for their selection, and a summary of core interventions are as follows

Girls' education:

Education is a right of all children. Girls' education is seen as central to the fulfillment of developmental outcomes for present and future generations of children. The social benefits of girls' education include lower infant and maternal mortality, better nourished and healthier children, increased family incomes, later age of marriage, reduced fertility, greater opportunities and life choices for women (including empowerment to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS), and greater participation of women in political, social and economic decision-making. UNICEF sees investment in girls' education as a way of achieving education for all children, early childhood care and education and adolescent well being. It is also a key strategy for poverty reduction.

⁶¹ In other words, immunization cannot just be considered a programme concern, but must be treated as a priority for supplies, communications, partnerships, etc.

Weaving together interventions that address access with those that address quality, UNICEF's programmes of cooperation will help fulfill the need to find excluded and at-risk children, especially girls; to get them into school and keep them there, and to ensure that they acquire fundamental skills and knowledge in a safe and supportive environment, with learning achievements measured against nationally pre-determined outcomes. UNICEF will build on progress and lessons learned from its previous programmes of support for girls' education and will help to mobilize partners and commitment, including through the UN African Girls Education Initiative, for which it is the designated lead agency. UNESCO will be a key partner.

Integrated early childhood development (ECD)

A good start to life is the foundation for ensuring children's rights, and investment in young children will bring long-term social change, with a well-established body of evidence showing that interventions in the earliest years of childhood have a long-lasting influence on the progress of individual children, and on the wider progress of nations. Quality care and protection in these years are key to avoiding death, disease, stunted growth, trauma, malnutrition and developmental delays, while ensuring healthy growth, self-esteem, the ability to learn, and readiness for school. These in turn are central to children's future potential to contribute as parents, economic actors and citizens. The quality of family care, effective access by families to good quality basic services and to adequate livelihoods, and the wider community and policy environment that supports these are three critical factors for survival, growth and development in early childhood. Positive outcomes are also strongly linked to the survival, health, education and well-being of women, as well as to their age at childbirth and their nutritional status prior to pregnancy. A particular focus of ECD will be on children under three, which is the most critical period for brain development and the time of greatest risks.

UNICEF's core interventions and strategies for integrated ECD will build on its well-established strengths in supporting the access of families and communities to information and services which benefit young children, while at the same time extending support for more comprehensive approaches to policy formulation and institutional development. Key components of ECD will focus on the care of the child and mother, including health and nutrition; effective access to basic services; water and environmental sanitation, including hygiene improvement; psychosocial care and early learning; and child protection. The exact content of the programmes will be defined at local or national levels, based on needs and capacities. Existing initiatives such as '*Facts for Life*' as a tool for information dissemination; the "Triple-A" process of assessment/analysis/action; the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) and the Bamako Initiative will be drawn on and applied as appropriate.

Immunization "plus"

This refers to the delivery of a set of essential and cost-effective maternal and child health interventions which include, as a minimum, safe immunization with all available cost-effective vaccines, and vitamin A capsule supplementation. As the experience of the past decade proves, these are achievable, high-impact public health interventions which can be 'piggy-backed' onto each other, and contribute significantly to the goals for reducing child deaths and illness. Immunization 'plus' is a key intervention to ensure realization of a child's right to survival and to the best possible standard of health care. With a focus on sustainability, immunization "plus" emphasizes the strengthening of health systems to support regular routine vaccinations and sector-wide planning and coordination, with immunization campaigns seen as supplementary activities to control disease outbreaks. Immunization "plus" also links with community-based activities for ECD; interventions in nutrition and malaria control (including the Roll Back Malaria Initiative) and birth registration.

UNICEF programmes will be coordinated at global, regional and country levels with partners in the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and the Vitamin A Initiative, with particularly strong partnership with WHO. The core interventions of country programmes aim to support safe, sustainable, and equitable service delivery as part of the overall commitment to strengthen primary health care systems; and to accelerate disease control to reduce child mortality through supplementary activities aimed at the eradication of polio, the elimination of neonatal tetanus; reduction of measles mortality; and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunization and vitamin A supplementation is also one of the core commitments of UNICEF during emergencies.

Fighting HIV-AIDS

HIV-AIDS has emerged as the single most important threat to the fulfilment of children's and women's rights in sub-Saharan Africa and, increasingly, in other regions of the world. The pandemic exacerbates many of the interlocking problems that affect children, including poverty, malnutrition, discrimination, inadequate access to basic social services, armed conflict, gender inequities, and the sexual exploitation of girls and women. It also depletes and stretches capacity

at all levels – within government services, communities and families – which are key to ensuring the protection and fulfillment of children’s rights. The challenge in the medium term is to mobilize the leadership, commitment, popular participation and resources needed to halt the epidemic and provide care, protection and support for those affected.

Contributing to the achievement of the commitments agreed at the UN Special Session on AIDS, the medium-term aim of UNICEF is to “support and strengthen the capacities of individuals, families, communities and nations to prevent HIV infection and ensure protection and care for children and young people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS”. More specifically, UNICEF will support actions to a) prevent new infections among young people; b) prevent parent-to-child transmission of the HIV virus; c) expand access to care and support for children and their families living with HIV and AIDS; and d) expand care, protection and support for children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. Core interventions focus on intensifying programming in those four key areas. Reduction of vulnerability and risk of infection among young people will form the core of the UNICEF global response to the AIDS pandemic, with interventions in the other areas a particular concern in regions and countries where HIV prevalence is already high.

Improved protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination

Violence, abuse and neglect, exploitation and discrimination are a threat throughout the life cycle of children and an obstacle to their growth and development. They also represent a serious violation of children’s rights. In the past, UNICEF country programmes of cooperation have tended to respond to child protection issues through programmes that reached a relatively small number of children. The challenge now is to develop programme interventions that can be taken to scale, including advocacy for legal and social policy reform. This will have implications for the way UNICEF plans and designs child protection programmes. It is recognized that UNICEF needs to build its own capacity to deal with child protection issues and to mainstream them within each programme area.

The main areas of focus are on children affected by violence and abuse (including physical, sexual and psychological violence against children within the family, in schools, in communities and in state gender-related violence and female genital mutilation; and children affected by armed conflict); child labour (with a focus on the worst forms including forced labour, trafficking, recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, hazardous work and illicit activities like drug trafficking); children without primary caregivers (including those orphaned by HIV/AIDS and other causes; separated children in unstable environments; and institutionalized children, including children in detention). Discrimination of all sorts is a cross-cutting theme for this and other priorities. Core interventions aim to support a solid knowledge base to break the silence on these issues and inform programme interventions; the development and implementation of protection laws, policies and programmes; and both the prevention and elimination of violence and abuse, along with recovery and reintegration for those affected.

On partnerships and alliances:

UNICEF recognizes that it can achieve greatest advances by working closely and effectively with partners. Partnerships allow UNICEF to gain greater leverage from the resources entrusted to it, and thus facilitate progress towards the five organizational priorities. With its partners in the Global Movement for Children, UNICEF will work to create a world where every child’s right to dignity, security and self-fulfillment is achieved. UNICEF will work to broaden partnerships and deepen its cooperation with national and international organizations, UN agencies, bilateral agencies, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, local authorities, the private sector, cultural and opinion leaders, the media, communities – and children and young people themselves – as agents of change.

In industrialized countries, the 37 national committees are to take the lead in developing partnerships with the private sector and civil society, acting as the voice of UNICEF, and working alongside other child rights organizations, governments and the media to raise awareness of children’s issues and to campaign on important areas of concern. Their mandate is to support UNICEF policies and programmes through advocacy, development education and fund-raising.

In programme countries, UNICEF will build partnerships through the country programme of cooperation to achieve results for children. UNICEF will promote analysis and support goals relating to the rights of children and women within the CCA and UNDAF processes, and continue its engagement in sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) and in policy discussions through such national development frameworks as PRSPs.

Both globally and at country level, UNICEF will collaborate with governments and partners in the country through:

- ◆ Development of alliances capitalizing on the comparative advantages of individual partners so that the partnership has influence and achieves results far beyond the capabilities of the individual partners

- ◆ Promotion of cost-effective interventions for scaling up that are related to MTSP priorities, for example, advocating for increased capacities in the private sector for food fortification and commercialization of insecticide-impregnated bed nets;
- ◆ Joint advocacy with UNICEF natcoms and others to advance common objectives within a broad agenda for children and to raise the profile of children's rights
- ◆ Public and private sector partnerships to generate resources for children and to create understanding and cooperation within the private sector to address its social responsibilities.

At the global level, UNICEF will strengthen partnerships broadly to raise the profile of children's rights, influence global development discussions and raise resources for children. UNICEF will maintain its capacity to provide world-class, impartial analysis of social and economic policies and trends and to provide advice on the development of child-friendly social and economic policies, in order to build a world fit for children. Partnerships will increasingly be with children themselves, in line with their evolving capacities and with the GMC's emphasis on changing the world with children. Participation by children, especially adolescents, will form an important part of programming.

Influential information

UNICEF will document and share its extensive experience in the implementation of policies, programmes and projects related to the five organizational priorities, and will keep abreast of the latest advances in development and policy. UNICEF will continue to support situation analyses for children's and women's rights as a core contribution to national efforts, and as a common basis for discussions of plans of action and programmes of cooperation. The focus will be on the national situation with respect to the five organizational priorities, plus any other locally relevant variables. The situation analyses will also provide an in-depth, specialist contribution to CCAs, SWAPs, PRSPs and reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, thus creating mutually reinforcing processes for monitoring and advancing the fulfillment of the rights of children and women.

UNICEF will support the development of indicators and data collection tools to allow consistent and comparable ongoing monitoring of the situation of children and women. UNICEF will support refinements to multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) modules and related capacity-building activities, and will assist countries to undertake MICS during 2004 and 2005 for reporting in 2005 and 2006 on progress towards the targets of the MTSP, the WFFC, the Millennium Declaration goals, and International Development Targets related to children and women. UNICEF will ALSO support initiatives to create global access to data on the situation of children and women. A particular focus in data collection and analysis will be on disparities and discrimination, by including data disaggregated by gender, geographic location, poverty status, culture/ethnicity and other locally relevant categories, building on regional and global experience.

Communication

UNICEF will shape a corporate communication strategy built around the five organizational priorities, continue to build strong partnerships in the mass media, and set and monitor communication standards for the organization. It will develop an outreach strategy to encourage respect for and promote and protect children's and women's rights through a variety of media, and will manage crisis communication to report to the public on UNICEF efforts and results for children, in order to build a broader support base and further strengthen the position of UNICEF as the world's leading children's rights organization.

UNICEF will develop integrated communication campaigns based on and in support of the five organizational priorities. These will position the issues of children and child rights in the public domain and help enlarge the constituency of support for child rights and the Global Movement for Children. UNICEF communication efforts will enhance the visibility and credibility of UNICEF, thereby creating a favourable climate for fund-raising, especially for regular resources. Increased attention will be devoted to audience research for more effective media. Programme communication to promote behavioural change – both to promote positive and reduce harmful behaviour, will continue to be at the core of UNICEF programme and communication work. UNICEF research and advocacy on the problems faced by children in industrialized countries will focus on education for the excluded, ecd, and child protection, with a regional focus on lifestyle problems, especially for adolescents (substance abuse, mental health, teen suicide, eating disorders, alienation)

Advocacy

UNICEF will advocate that all actors respect, protect and fulfil children's and women's rights, based primarily on the five organizational priorities of the MTSP. Advocacy will be directed to many levels and take place through a number

of forms, including targeted communication and international and national meetings and forums. UNICEF will provide a rights-based and economic rationale for why specific policies should be adopted for children and women, and evidence-based advice on how they can be carried out. In pursuit of the five organizational priorities, UNICEF will argue that poverty reduction starts with children and will advocate via such processes and forums as PRSPs, CCS/UNDAF, CSDs, HIPC, and SWAPs for improved investments in children via strengthened basic social services for all.

UNICEF will continue to raise national and international awareness of children's and women's rights, promote their advancement in national and subnational legal reforms, and help promote better enforcement of laws to protect children and women. UNICEF will use its voice to confront discrimination and expose disparities, and advocate for children's voices to be heard and taken into account. In order to support UNICEF assessments of legal, social and economic trends and provide an evidence-based rationale for policy, the capacity for legal, economic and social policy analysis will be maintained at headquarters and regional levels, and enhanced where resources allow. Particular attention will be devoted to strengthening linkages between programme activities, research, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy and communication. Focus will be on evidence-based advocacy.

Looking ahead: to change the world with children

Two side events organized during the Special Session on Children focused on the development and implementation of effective national plans of action (NPAs) as a means of carrying forward the goals and commitments of *A World Fit for Children*. These were to be set within the context of other integrated national and subnational development programmes and policies, including poverty eradication strategies, and other relevant development plans. It was agreed that to achieve viable plans and sustainable processes, governments must work in co-operation with civil society, including NGOs, as well as with children and their families, and that without the participation of young people, NPAs would be of limited utility. Each event therefore included discussion and an exchange of views on how children could be most effectively involved in the planning and follow-up processes, with young people themselves offering suggestions on the way forward.

Why should children under the age of 18 be involved in national action planning anyway? At the Under-18 Participation Task Force event, Santiago Garcia, 15, from Uruguay, had the answer, "*We have to be consulted because we live our problems and we are the ones who know the solutions*". Bogdan Alexendru Rosu, 16 years old, from Romania, offered practical steps to promote children's involvement in community and national life, such as creating forums for children to meet with one another, establishing a connection between the government and children, training the media to be more child-friendly and providing children with information on the latest laws and adapting this information to varying age groups. Sanjoz Thakuri, 16, from Nepal saw NGOs as an important link between children and the government. She felt that "*children can act as a pressure group to the government*." Guatemalan children called attention to the need for the elimination of discrimination based on ethnicity, culture or language, taking matters into their own hands by drafting a "Mayan Children's Declaration." As Maria Olandina Lopez, 15 years old, stressed, "*we want the government to pay attention to the declaration by Mayan children and expect that it will be included in the National Plan of Action*."

An open discussion generated all sorts of ideas about how to improve children's participation in national planning across the world. Abigail Fabrigas 16, from the Philippines spoke of children's own power: "*We must have the chance to react to every national plan of action, and not only through adult channels. We as children must be the vanguard of our own rights!*" Practicality was also an issue. Children brought up the need to back up lofty plans with financial support, as well as the necessity of media coverage for all child-related events, and the importance of working with governments to make use of its already-established position. Successful approaches were shared, such as the establishment of a Children's Committee in Lesotho to advise on the development of their country's Child Protection Act. Some children cautioned their peers about the slow pace of change and the need to reframe adult attitudes about children's capabilities. Alexendru of Romania had more words of wisdom for the session: "*Let us remember that children's participation is a peaceful process. I believe that we can talk our way into it. We haven't overthrown any governments to get to the Special Session and we are all here now!*"

As Ambassador Patricia Durrant concluded in her message to the Special Session:

"We look to the young people who participated in the Special Session and its preparatory process to hold us to our commitments. They are resourceful citizens capable of building a better future for us all, and they will be the ones to reconvene here in 10 years to judge progress towards the goals."
(from UNICEF SSC report)