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Notes

Preparatory & Reference Documentation on the World Summit for Children: this reference book contains background & preparation material for the World Summit in Five Chapters: 1-The Planning Committee; 2-Schedule & Program of the World Summit for Children; 3-draft Declaration of the World Summit for Children and draft Plan of Action; 4-Report of Meetings; 5-UNICEF Executive Board

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JOHN MANFREDI

John Manfredi

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29-30 September 1990
United Nations • New York

World Summit for Children • Sommet Mondial pour les Enfants • Cumbre Mundial en favor de la Infancia

مؤتمر القمة العالمي من أجل الطفل • Всемирная встреча на высшем уровне в интересах детей • 世界儿童问题首脑会议

1st Meeting of the Working Group on the Declaration

New York - 2 April 1990

SUMMARY RECORD OF DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS

The Chairman opened the meeting by citing the purposes of the World Summit for Children as stated in the Secretary-General's letter of invitation to Heads of State and Government. The letter specified three major purposes:

1. to bring attention and promote commitment, at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children as key elements in the socio-economic development of all countries, and to accelerate the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. to mobilise multiple sectors of government and society to achieve dramatic progress that is now achievable in reducing child mortality and improving child health and well-being.
3. to consider the growing impact on children of several critical global problems - notably war and violence, poverty, debt, drugs and the degradation of the environment, and to identify possible measures to relieve that impact.

The Secretariat had summarised inputs from some 17 governments and 15 international organisations on possible themes and topics suggested for the Summit Declaration as of 28 March 1990. Members of the Working Group found these inputs extremely helpful as a basis for further work on the draft Declaration. It was agreed that as work on the draft Declaration must start quickly, the suggestions received so far and the latest summary prepared by the Secretariat were sufficient for the initial work of the Working Group. While there was no cut-off date for receiving further inputs, the Group advised the Secretariat that it need not further update its summary papers. Nevertheless, the Secretariat would bring to the attention of the Working Group any particularly new and original ideas submitted to it at a later date.

World Summit for Children

It was suggested that some mechanism should be found to provide feedback to those U.N. agencies which have suggested various themes and topics as their inputs, and to associate them in the process of commenting on the Declaration and related Plan of Action. The possibility of the agencies being invited to join the Working Group as observers was discussed. It was instead agreed that at some point in the future the Working Group might wish to consult with the principal agencies on the draft Plan of Action. It was agreed that the Secretariat would provide regular feedback to the agencies on the progress of work in drafting the Declaration and Plan of Action. The agencies will also have an opportunity to present their views and reactions to inputs of others at the forthcoming session of the UNICEF Executive Board. The Executive Director also advised that he has undertaken consultations with many agencies, and that several agencies have been involved in various international meetings and processes which are contributing collectively to the Summit process.

Members felt that, in general, the matrix presented in Secretariat Paper "C" on Suggested Themes and Topics for the Summit provided a good list of topics to be covered in the Summit Declaration and Plan of Action. Commenting on this, some members suggested that the Declaration focus on issues widely shared by a large number of countries and agencies, leaving aside topics that are peculiar to just a few countries. Among the topics to be emphasised, it was suggested that debt relief for children, adjustment with a human face, the principle of first call for children, the needs of the least developed countries and the importance of not only reaching certain goals but sustaining the progress achieved, needed particular attention.

On the question of debt relief, it was the considered view that the Summit should recognise the urgency of dealing with the problem of debt which has had a major negative impact on development and on the well-being of children in many countries. General debt relief schemes could seek to ensure that the proposed relief measures would be designed in such a way as to enhance programmes benefitting children. More specifically, UNICEF has devised several proposals for debt relief for children which, while not intended to solve the larger debt problem, provide a way for creatively applying certain debt relief measures for the benefit of children and investment in social development.

It was agreed that debt, the environment and other global issues would be addressed in the Summit documentation as important issues that require action in the appropriate forums. The Summit itself might identify opportunities for specific actions in these areas which can contribute to the well-being of children.

On the final Declaration of the Summit, there was general agreement that there should be:

- a. a short, eloquent political Declaration of commitment for action; and
- b. a Plan of Action that will elaborate specific child-related goals and strategies for the 1990s.

The desirability of writing the Declaration in a language and style that would be easily understood by all the public, especially children, was explored. While there were merits in this proposal, it was agreed that the Declaration must be a political statement of commitment by Heads of State and Government which would not necessarily lend itself to language that would be appropriate for a child audience. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the Declaration must be written in a clear, crisp and eloquent manner that avoids the complicated jargon typical of many international declarations. Such a document could later be communicated in different forms, written as well as audio-visual, that would cater to different audiences, including children. This would often be best done at the national level.

As for the Plan of Action, it was agreed that the topics and themes listed in the Secretariat papers summarising the inputs of Governments and international agencies provided a good list of issues which might be covered. There will hopefully be other concrete suggestions emerging from the discussion of development goals and strategies for children in the 1990s at the forthcoming UNICEF Executive Board.

It was suggested that besides proposing specific goals and strategies, the Plan of Action should also deal with the need for mobilising additional resources, enhancing international cooperation and national action for programmes benefitting children. As for the specific goals, they must be adapted to the needs and capacity of countries. The Plan of Action should encourage Governments to formulate national Plans of Action. It should also specify a mechanism for the follow-up of the implementation of the Summit Declaration and the Plan of Action.

It was suggested that the phrase "Plan of Action" itself might be replaced with another less-abused term.

The following schedule was agreed upon for the work of the Working Group on the Declaration:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 2 April | <u>Declaration Working Group meeting</u> |
| 16-27 April | UNICEF Executive Board (regular session) |
| 15 May | <u>Declaration Working Group meeting</u> |
| by 21 May | preparation of 1st draft of the Declaration/annex |
| 7-8 June | circulation of 1st draft of the Declaration/annex |
| 11 June | 3rd meeting of the Planning Committee |
| by 18 June | <u>Declaration Working Group meeting</u> |
| by 20 July | preparation of 2nd draft of the Declaration/annex |
| 26 July | circulation of 2nd draft of the Declaration/annex |
| by 6 August | reactions to 2nd draft of the Declaration/annex |
| 6-7 Sept | <u>Declaration Working Group meeting</u> |
| 10 September | preparation of 3rd draft of the Declaration/annex |
| 13 September | circulation of 3rd draft of the Declaration/annex to members of the Planning Committee and the UNICEF Board |
| | UNICEF Executive Board (special session) |
| | <u>Declaration Working Group meeting</u> |
| | preparation of penultimate draft of the Declaration |
| | circulation of penultimate draft of the Declaration |

The Chairman of the Working Group was requested and agreed to prepare the initial draft of the Declaration and its annex in time for the next meeting of the Working Group on 15 May 1990. In this, he would be assisted by interested members who were asked to contact him through the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations. The Summit Secretariat would, of course, provide whatever assistance the Chairman needed in this task.

There was some suggestion as to whether the initial draft of the Declaration and its annex could not be made available at the time of the UNICEF Executive Board. It was decided, however, that the initial draft itself needed to take account of the deliberations of the Board concerning the development goals and strategies for children in the 1990s, which the Board would be considering. The initial draft would therefore be best prepared immediately following the Executive Board. The secretariat will, of course, prepare a status report on the preparatory activities to date - including a brief progress report on the themes and topics suggested for the Declaration - for information and discussion at the Board.

On the question of whether the Working Group should have a smaller "core membership" for the actual task of drafting, it was agreed that this was not necessary. The Working Group also agreed that there was no need to define a working quorum, in view of the modalities agreed upon for preparing the draft documents, as described above.