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RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**Written statement* submitted by the federation of cuban women, a non-governmental
organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 January 2005]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

ISSUE 13: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Today's world is more globalized and their consequences of exclusion drag millions of human beings to poverty and marginality. The main victims of this drama are boys and girls.

Fifteen years have passed since the Convention of Children's Rights was adopted. The goals that were set up to be fulfilled towards the year 2000 are still an unreachable dream for millions of children and their families who continue waiting for changes that benefit and allow them to glimpse a perspective of happiness and a dignified life.

It is a shame to talk about advancements, developments, positive impacts of scientific and technological developments when a thousand of millions of children in our planet are not able to enjoy their rights due to the lack of at least one or more of goods or basic services to survive, grow up and develop.

How to grow up in a "*protected environment*" when thousands of boys and girls daily die as a consequence of diseases that can be prevented, when many others die as a result of bombing, murders and armed conflicts, victims of abuse and foreign occupation, if the poverty and hunger accompany an important part of the humanity every day, if the HIV/AIDS scourge millions of people and many of them are girls and boys who suffer it directly or the consequences of the deprivation of parents this pandemy generates?

The reality children live in the world is difficult, it is not that one many generations and people have fought for considering them "the hope of the world". It is enough to mention some facts that explain this:

- . Every day 29,000 boys and girls die in the world as a result of preventable diseases and it amounts to 10, 6 millions of children who die every year.
- Approximately 121 millions of children, most of them girls, do not attend schools; they do not enjoy this inalienable right.
- . More than 2 millions of children under 15 years old are infected with the HIV. It is afraid that in the 2010, this figure, just in Sub-Saharan African countries will be over 18 millions.
- More than 500 millions of children in developing countries are lacking of minimum sanitation conditions.
- Armed conflicts continue representing a cause of poverty, deaths and helplessness for children. Since 1990 conflicts have caused 3,6 millions of deaths, of which 45% correspond to boys and girls, victims of the use of power, arms and conflicts.
- More than 1,000 millions of boys and girls suffer from deprivations in terms of nutrition, water, sanitation installations and access to basic health services, housing,

education and information.

□ Around 270 millions of boys and girls, a little bit more than 14% of the whole children population in developing countries, have no access to health services.

□ More than 140 millions of boys and girls, just in developing countries-13% between 13-18 years old – have never attended school, so they are unable to read nor to write. 16% suffer from severe malnutrition.

□ Thousands of boys and girls are exposed to the trafficking and sexual commerce, around 1,2 millions are victims of trafficking, 2 millions are forced to the commercial and sexual exploitation, to the sex industry.

□ More than 200 millions of boys and girls in the world, since very early ages are obliged to join the child labor market. Street children saunter in the streets looking for a piece of bread, without any other alternative, but the beggary, marginality and exclusion.

Childhood is seriously threaten and meanwhile these atrocities happen, just one country- the United States of America – has spent thousand of millions of dollars in wars and destruction, that would have been used for saving millions of children's lives. That country also tries to surrender all countries that oppose to the USA will using military and physical force, economic domination and by means of the asphyxiation of its coercive measures.

Cuba has been one of the victims of its cruel and inhuman policies that has suffered the consequences of the economic, commercial and finance blockade, unilaterally imposed for more than 45 years, against the international law and the will of 179 countries that voted in the General Assembly at the United Nations, in favor of putting and end to this hostile policy.

Mr. Bush has demonstrated that he is unaware of many things, that he has a limited cultural background, including political culture, so that he does not know that Cuba is one of the countries in the world where the free vaccination against 13 preventable diseases is guaranteed for 100% of its children population, and in spite of the shortages of economic resources the country has, it has attained indicators that place it in the vanguard of developing countries, particularly in the fields of health and education, as a result of a real political will and the conscious social participation of the whole people.

In our country, free and universal education of boys and girls is guaranteed at all levels of the educational system without any distinction and under equal conditions. Thanks to many efforts made by the country for many years, UNESCO awarded the Sejong King Honorific Award, Literacy Prize, in 2003.

Most of the goals set forth by the World Summit on Children have been reached or surpassed in Cuba. The reduction of infant mortality to 5,8 per 1,000 live births, the lowest in our history, places Cuba in the 2nd position in the Americas and it is one of the first places in the world, 99% of all deliveries are in health institutions, and maternal mortality is 33 per 100,000 live births.

The new social programs that have been put in practice in Cuba constitute a real revolution in the spheres of education, health and culture and have substantially benefited children and adolescents, as a demonstration of a political will and the capacity of a small country of making an effective use of their resources, and that even in conditions of a low level of development, it is possible to create a just and equitable society. With the construction of new classrooms and schools it has been able to reduce to the amount of 20 students per teacher in primary schools, and to 15 students per professor in secondary schools. Special attention is provided to disabled people through special schools and institutions all over the country, children with nutritional deficit, also receive special attention.

The world we live in is unsustainable if the ratiocination and the will of governments do not prevail, in order to grow up our children in a better world where they are going to enjoy the inalienable right to a dignified life, to education, to health and to a just and fair development.

We are convinced that a better world is possible with a peaceful and respectful environment, a world free of wars, poverty, selective bombings and conflicts, where the development would be a real alternative, and not a fictitious one.

Long live the Solidarity and Peace!
