



## CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 26: International Year of the Child: plans and action to improve the situation of children in the world, particularly in the developing countries ( <i>continued</i> ) .....	735

**President: Mr. Salim Ahmed SALIM**  
(United Republic of Tanzania)

## AGENDA ITEM 26

**International Year of the Child: plans and action to improve the situation of children in the world, particularly in the developing countries (*continued*)**

1. The PRESIDENT: Before calling on the first speaker I should like to draw attention to the draft resolution that has been circulated in document A/34/L.4. I now call the first speaker in the debate this morning, the representative of the United Kingdom.

2. Lady SOAMES (United Kingdom): I address the Assembly today not only as a representative of the British Government, but also as the Chairman of the United Kingdom Association for the International Year of the Child.

3. We in the United Kingdom do not have a national commission for the International Year of the Child as such. For many years British voluntary organizations have been at the forefront of concern for the welfare of children, both in the United Kingdom and in the developing world.

4. It was therefore in keeping with this tradition that my Government decided, as a matter of policy, to entrust arrangements for the International Year of the Child to the voluntary organizations. The Government provided offices and funds to meet administrative costs, but has left the voluntary organizations free to organize the Year as they saw fit.

5. I venture to say that this approach has been extremely successful, and my presence here today is testimony to the close relationship that exists between the British Government and the voluntary non-governmental organizations.

6. The United Kingdom Association for the International Year of the Child was formed as a registered charity in July 1978, under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen. We are deeply appreciative of Her

Majesty's support and encouragement for the work that we have undertaken this year. About 800 organizations are members of the Association. They range from large national non-governmental organizations to small societies, local community groups, churches, trade unions, youth organizations, professional associations and pressure groups. Every aspect of the welfare of children is represented.

7. We in Britain have always been conscious of the plight of children in the poorer parts of the world. I regard it as one of the more important achievements of our work in connexion with the International Year of the Child that it has further awakened the British public to the problems of children in the developing countries.

8. Of the topics we in the United Kingdom Association chose to highlight in our programme for the Year, the theme of "Children in developing countries" was one of those which received priority attention. The emphasis in the projects we have adopted has been on the eradication of disease, the provision of education, and the fulfilment of the basic needs of children. I shall give a few examples only. The Association is backing a project to combat blindness caused by malnutrition in the Indian subcontinent. It is also seeking to provide tuberculosis vaccination for children in Nepal, and to stamp out polio in Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland.

9. Many of the organizations that make up our national Association are concerned primarily with these problems. I mention in particular the energetic programme of the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF and OXFAM—formerly known as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief—which have joined together to promote a campaign appropriately called "Together for children", and also the work of the Save the Children Fund in its Diamond Jubilee Year.

10. It is a matter of some pride to us that one of our member organizations, OXFAM, has been among the first to get urgently needed supplies through to the tragically afflicted people of Kampuchea.

11. As a consequence of activities undertaken in connexion with the Year, organizations concerned with aid to the third world have been able to make themselves much better known. I believe that as a result they will be able to generate, not only in this Year but also in the future, greater contributions from the public, and hence increase help from Britain to children in need throughout the world.

12. At the governmental level also, we place particular importance on the needs of the children of the third world. Our overseas aid policies lay special stress on programmes likely to be of benefit to children, and many of the projects that the Government sponsors and finances are directly concerned with children's welfare.

Apart from these specific aspects, we feel that the British aid programme as a whole, aimed as it is at the most disadvantaged sectors of the community in developing countries, fits in well with the aims of the International Year of the Child.

13. Of course, a substantial proportion of the British Government's assistance to developing countries is channelled through the international agencies, and in particular through UNICEF. We have consistently supported UNICEF and our financial contributions to that organization have steadily increased over the years. Our last year's contribution, worth over \$12 million at current rates, makes us one of UNICEF's major contributors.

14. I should like at this point to pay a tribute to UNICEF for the work it has done in its role as the lead agency for the International Year of the Child and to the many other agencies of the United Nations system which have co-operated in this venture. I would also like to thank the International Year of the Child secretariat, both in New York and Geneva, whose efforts have made such an important contribution to the success of the Year.

15. I have spoken so far of efforts directed towards the welfare of children in the developing world. But even in relatively advanced countries such as the United Kingdom, there is much still to be done. I should like to say something of what we are doing on the home front.

16. Government responsibility for children in Britain, as in most countries, is split between a number of Ministries. Each of these Ministries has taken the opportunity offered by the International Year of the Child to promote a number of initiatives designed to improve the condition of British children. These include special programmes to reduce pre-natal and infant mortality, a conference on the treatment of young offenders, action to reduce inappropriate admission of mentally handicapped children to hospital for long-term care and programmes on the special problems of one-parent families.

17. I now turn to the activities of the United Kingdom Association. Our member organizations too have adopted special programmes to mark the International Year of the Child. But they have also, in response to the unique challenge of this Year, come together to work on joint programmes of agreed priorities for action.

18. The Association's working groups have been concerned with children's rights and responsibilities and, in particular, the rights of children in care, the special needs of children in hospital, the rights of children of ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom and the problems faced by the most materially disadvantaged children in our society.

19. The Association is devoting attention to the problem of "latch-key" children. They are the children of working parents who are left alone in the school holidays and have to look after themselves when they come home from school. This is a problem we share with other Western industrialized countries, and it is at the root of much juvenile delinquency. A working group is studying this problem, and our Association is to fund pilot schemes which will combine the efforts of

local authorities, community groups, social workers and parents.

20. In a more specialized area, the Association seeks community-based facilities as an alternative to custody for young people who commit acts of violence.

21. We have concentrated on the problems of handicapped children and with the co-operation of seven member organizations a Holiday Adventure Centre for handicapped children and their families is already started. This new venture recognizes the enormous and wearying burden that the families that have a handicapped child have to bear year in and year out, and it seeks to make happy carefree holiday time available to them as family groups. Through the publication of our *Guidebook for Handicapped Adolescents* we have emphasized the plight of these young people, and we aim not only to help them to understand the services which are available to them but also to highlight the serious lack of provision for this vulnerable group of young people at a particularly difficult period of their already difficult lives.

22. In our policies and planning for children, both the Government and the Association lay emphasis on the prime importance of the family as the basis on which our national life should continue to be built. The Association is concerned, for instance, how best to prepare young people—both boys and girls equally—for the responsibilities of parenthood.

23. As this Year emphasizes the creative potential of children, we have started work on a long-term project to establish an International Children's Arts Centre. That Centre will be used to train teachers from our country and, more especially, from countries of the third world to work in children's art with children and for children.

24. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland attention continues to be concentrated on helping children in the third world and assisting children at home, for example, through a study of services for children in Wales and a parents' advice centre in Northern Ireland. In Scotland one of the themes of their Year's work is "Listen to children" through which they seek to find out what young people themselves think about their lives and their future.

25. The Association has found that in the United Kingdom statistics on children though copious are difficult to find and assemble in a useful form for advocacy or action. We have therefore begun work on a statistical compilation, called "The condition of children", which will present to a wider public a clear description of the condition of children in Britain.

26. One of our most important subjects is the establishment of a Children's Legal Centre, which will act as a national resource unit on all matters relating to the child and the law and which will aim, through education, research and advocacy, to clarify and protect the legal position of children and, where necessary, to promote new legislation.

27. Although the British Government has not made a review of all legislation directly or indirectly affecting children, the Association has been active in encouraging a legislative review, and member organizations are cam-

paiging for the implementation of statutes and for legislative reform.

28. The Association is reviewing all government reports concerning children published during the last 20 years and analysing the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented.

29. Specific changes in legislation are recommended in some of the Association's reports, for example, on corporal punishment, on ways of helping our most materially disadvantaged children and on the adoption of a code to protect children affected by our immigration laws.

30. But not all the Association's recommendations necessarily require legislative change or additional resources; some rather call for a re-evaluation of our policy. For example, the Association is urging the Government to ban under existing provisions the use of lead additives in petrol, from which young children can suffer so greatly, and in the field of child care to review the balance between residential care, foster care and the adoption services, so that more children placed in care are given the opportunity of growing up within a family context.

31. The Association acts as a catalyst in the International Year of the Child to increase awareness of the rights and needs of children. Member organizations have seized the opportunity of the Year to reconsider their concern for children. Organizations not directly dealing with children are also taking part, for example, a voluntary organization concerned with elderly people has organized a conference on the rights of grandparents and children. Our members' programmes have received good publicity and the response of the mass media to the International Year has been very encouraging and helpful. Local groups for the International Year of the Child have sprung up in different parts of the country. Carnivals, exhibitions, festivals and even municipal flower-beds have taken the Year as their theme, and some traditional folk customs have been adapted in this year to include it.

32. We are much encouraged by the public's response to fund-raising efforts both great and small. Individual donations for the Year pour into the Association's office, and with donations from industry, together with grants from the British Government and from charitable trusts, we are confident that our projects will continue well beyond this year and be a living testimony to the effectiveness of joint action for children.

33. The United Kingdom Association hopes to continue its work into the autumn of 1980, and we await the decision of the British Government. The permanent legacy of the Year will be our projects and the work of our members. There is a burning sense in the United Kingdom that the work and impetus of the Year should not be lost and, in particular, that we should build on the special characteristic of the Year in our country—the working together of organizations, at both the national and the local level, for children. There has been growing scepticism about the value of international years. But the International Year of the Child has been taken up with great enthusiasm in Britain and all around the world. We feel that this has been in part due to the do-it-yourself approach adopted with regard to the

Year. Primary responsibility for the Year was delegated by this Assembly to the national level, rather than to an international conference or institution. Because of this, it has been possible to make the Year more relevant to local communities and thus to achieve a high degree of commitment from among them.

34. Finally, I should like to emphasize the importance of the participation of children during this Year. The Association has involved young people in some of its work—in one of its working groups and in a number of special events to mark the Year. Next week, in the two days following United Nations Day, young people from all over the United Kingdom will come to London to attend a Young People's Parliament, which will be opened by our Prime Minister. The members of this Parliament will debate the motion that "This House believes in the continued need to strive for the principles contained in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child".

35. That the Year has fired the imagination and interest of young people is vividly highlighted by the number of donations received in sums varying from a few pounds to several hundreds raised by the efforts of children themselves either in their schools or local communities.

36. The Year of the Child has provided us all with a stimulus and a focus on children, on their needs and welfare. But as this precious Year draws to its close, we are keenly aware of how much remains to be done in terms of children's needs and we realize that every year should be the Year of the Child and that the most fruitful legacy of 1979 would be the determination to continue unabated our efforts until the rights of the child become a reality for all the children of the world.

37. The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the First Lady of Mexico, President of the National Committee of the International Year of the Child, Vice-President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Chairman of the Board for the National System for Integral Family Development of Mexico, Her Excellency Mrs. Carmen Romano de López Portillo.

38. Mrs. ROMANO de LÓPEZ PORTILLO (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As I appear before this international forum which will discuss the various situations confronting today's societies, I am encouraged by the fact that the representatives of the Member States firmly defend the freedom of the individual and the sovereignty of nations in deciding their own destinies. These are the prerequisites without which no man can understand the world or transform his condition.

39. Our children, regardless of race or creed, are faced with the need to trust in our ability, since we are now taking decisions that will affect their present and future lives. They must believe in our determination to leave them a just world in which peace and well-being will not be delusions but rather a daily reality that all can fully enjoy.

40. If we do not measure up to this historic challenge, or if we fail to meet it, we shall deserve the severest judgement of tomorrow's men and women.

41. We say this because we are aware of the problems — their origins, causes, and consequences — and we are absolutely determined to abolish the inequities which exist among the millions of people who are struggling to survive, a struggle that sometimes appears to be endless.
42. The concerns and uncertainties that beset mankind are now assuming new and various forms, with the spectres of hunger, disease, poverty and what we can call marginalization. We must therefore redouble our efforts to do away with the negative influences by overcoming ideological antagonisms, the egocentricity of the great economic Powers, and the ruinous arms race.
43. Nations have been called upon to reflect on each and every one of these phenomena. Recommendations have been drawn up and proposed urging us to abandon the selfishness that removes us from the collective reality of the world community. War has been condemned and, in the name of peace, which is our most cherished aspiration, we have become familiar with these concepts, although sometimes we tend to forget their human content.
44. The face of a child in any country reflects our contradictions with more feeling and helplessness than does any other face. In spite of everything, the child emerges from the innocence of his inner life with a voice of hope and with the response that he has to give to the disturbed and violent world that then faces him. He must be able to do this without permitting it to destroy his spirit or his love of life.
45. I do not intend to repeat here what others have said so cogently, but I wish to stress that Mexico considers its children to be its most valuable resource for achieving full development.
46. Health, education, employment, productive training, and individual and collective well-being are all objectives indicating the level of civilization and culture reached by the human race. They are also objectives that are promoted by peoples who adopt constructive principles.
47. We are by no means engulfed in total darkness, although we are certainly living in critical times. It is indeed adversity that has taught individuals to join together in the pursuit of common goals, trusting in the creative ability of vigorous imagination, discipline, science, technology and culture as a means of rebuilding their societies.
48. The widely diversified alternatives that are before us range all the way from despair to the most Utopian concepts. Fortunately, however, there exists a progressive current that postulates a rational attitude in assessing events accurately without precluding objective analysis of the crisis or persisting in partial solutions. This attitude seeks comprehensive solutions that are universally acceptable.
49. We have learned from our mistakes, which have provided us with much experience. Those who cling to such obsolete concepts as obscurantism, colonialism and hegemony are persisting in past errors. There are unmistakable signs that the most conservative attitudes are slowly being discarded and are now being replaced by concerns that are not alarmist in nature, concerns that offer at every social level the maturity and serenity we require to maintain, enhance, and enrich the fundamental principles and values that have kept this planet of ours habitable. Primitive violence and destruction are losing ground daily, and that ground will never be regained. The most convincing proof of this is the International Year of the Child.
50. Mexico, in its policy of social justice, has found a source of doctrinal concepts that enable it to quantify the components and the status of social demands.
51. The approach we have taken has been unified and integrated. It has enabled us to adopt an expanded model of minimum welfare standards which, in recognition of its importance, includes the right to work. By including employment in this model, we have transformed it into a self-generating mechanism for development.
52. In redefining the problem of the child and the family in this manner, all the elements I have mentioned become components of the quality of individual and collective life; and this approach allows us to gauge the extent of social differences and to decide whether it is acceptable or unacceptable.
53. The case of Mexico requires special attention between now and the end of this century. This does not imply that we are seeking to evade our present responsibilities, since reaching the goals we have set for the future depends on the solutions that we find for the present. The will to change is the product of a social agreement deriving from the awareness of the people.
54. The principal objective of the revolutionary movement that began in 1910 was to achieve development with social justice so that all Mexicans would be able to enjoy equal opportunities and security, and would be assured of creative participation and incorporation into the nation's productive activities.
55. For this reason, in modern Mexico children are given priority as the result of the decision of a sovereign country in which self-determination, internal harmony, and international relations based on liberty, respect, law, justice and reason prevail.
56. Specialized institutional activities in the field of child care were initiated in Mexico 50 years ago. A process has been under way since 1929 under the auspices of the Federal Government and has culminated in the establishment of the National System for Integral Family Development, an institution that has in turn evolved in response to the needs and requirements of society, and in accordance with the circumstances that have prevailed at each different stage; it is aimed essentially at providing care for the child within his own family and community setting.
57. The fundamental purpose underlying the United Nations decision to establish a special Year in 1979 to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child [*resolution 1386 (XIV)*] also expresses our conviction that we must reflect seriously upon the present situation and on the conditions in which the first stage in the life of every human being originates and develops, in an effort to eradicate those conditions that prevent or limit proper development.

58. In this connexion, my country enthusiastically supported the General Assembly resolution declaring 1979 the International Year of the Child [resolution 31/169], and the President of Mexico, Mr. José López Portillo, established a National Committee to carry out the aims of that resolution.
59. The executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Government are represented on the National Committee, which also enjoys the support of state governments, private groups and the citizens of our country.
60. The National Committee's main objectives are to promote and co-ordinate national child welfare activities as an integral part of the country's economic and social development plans. Such activities are based on a training programme employing a methodology drawing on broad-based participation which has resulted in a programme structure consisting of 9 areas, 27 programmes and more than 90 projects. These are the results of concerted interinstitutional and intersectoral action aimed at ensuring that the programmes of each of the participating bodies will continue beyond 1979.
61. With the completion of the first part of a study on the Mexican child, we have a document that diagnoses the present situation of the child, and this makes it possible for us to assign priorities to activities in rural and urban areas. The bases for a Children's Information System have also been established, in order to keep an up-to-date record of the effectiveness of measures taken.
62. Various studies have been undertaken and documents published in connexion with the International Year of the Child, all based on the rights of the child.
63. In accordance with the General Assembly resolution, a special commemorative stamp has been issued.
64. With respect to legislation and law, an in-depth study has been made of existing legislation and will soon give rise to proposals for strengthening the legal framework for child and family care.
65. In the area of health and nutrition, a national vaccination card has been devised to help teach the importance of immunization as a preventive measure.
66. Projects are now under way to extend coverage of services for maternal and child care, and these include the preparation of a series of cards dealing with nutrition and paediatric care. The findings of the National Seminar on Nutrition are being applied throughout Mexico, and the National Mental Health Institute has been established to carry out scientific research on the care of the children afflicted with such disorders.
67. In the field of culture and recreation, we have actively promoted our national assets, embodied in the art works of the various periods of our history, which comprise the store of culture that gives us our national consciousness and identity. At the same time, we have disseminated the artistic achievements of other countries which, together with our own, enrich and further the trend towards universal culture. As the common patrimony of all peoples, works of art help to cultivate a spirit of progress in present generations and to stimulate the potential intellectual ability inherent in every human being.
68. With regard to the environment, programmes to provide basic services have been strengthened and expanded, and children have been active participants in the national reforestation programme.
69. Under the auspices of our Government, a Special Meeting on Children in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Mexico City from 16 to 18 May 1979. Following it, a document entitled Declaration of Mexico<sup>1</sup> was issued which stated that the responsibility for improving the well-being of children and families was no less important than that of advancing the social and economic development of countries. It follows, therefore, that there is a need to give greater impetus to the institutional, methodological and operational aspects of national—and particularly social—planning so as to permit the formulation of new social, global and sectoral policies for promoting the welfare of children.
70. The other meeting held this year was that of the Executive Board of UNICEF. This meeting was attended by welfare planning experts and other distinguished officials from international agencies and from child-care institutions in their respective countries, all of whom were interested in taking field trips to learn how the Mexican welfare model functioned. Both meetings provided an opportunity for the members and directors of UNICEF, whom we admire for their efforts on behalf of one of the noblest causes of humanity, to engage in dynamic discussion, thereby creating a feedback that enriched our welfare models.
71. We are now exchanging information on current techniques and procedures, not only with directors and specialists in various areas, but also with representatives of the national committees of other countries, with whom we are in constant communication.
72. Although the International Year of the Child is now drawing to a close, the policies and programmes to enhance the well-being of children will continue, reinforced as they have been by this action to ensure their permanence and implementation through our institutional structure. This confirms the importance of caring for the child as an integral part of the family and of society.
73. We believe that no effort is more important or far-reaching than that which is aimed at the ever-increasing improvement of the coming generations of Mexicans. We are sure that the conviction that motivated the Member States of the United Nations will radically change the present situation of children everywhere and will create a feeling of international solidarity so as to achieve a better future conducive to understanding among all the peoples of the world.
74. Principles derive from awareness of problems; objectives derive from those principles. Design derives from reason and the content of a legal determination is defined in terms of the commitment implicit in consent and opinion. The legally expressed will regulates the method, which is translated into a plan and broken down into programmes. The plan as strategy and the programmes as method and procedure must be assisted

<sup>1</sup> Declaration on attention to children in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the text, see *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1979, Supplement No. 11, annex I.*



by instruments appropriate for dealing with the problems before us.

75. The International Year of the Child has alerted the whole of the human race to the situation. This meeting is a demonstration of our political determination to take care of the child. We have made renewed and reasoned efforts to find solutions.

76. These are only the beginnings of a new design which we imagined would be formidable and which we have undertaken because we feel we have the capacity to do so. This is the enormous task to be completed during the third development decade, for the problems of the year 2000 cannot be overcome unless we begin to deal with them today.

77. While this Assembly recognizes the importance of asking ourselves what kind of world we are leaving to our children and what kind of world we want them to have, it is not enough simply to denounce and condemn violence, which in all its forms is an assault on human dignity. It is also imperative that we work together for peace, offering children everywhere a solidly based inner life that can serve as the indestructible pillar of a world and society that will not be prey to such adversities as abandonment, poverty, disease, war, hunger and ignorance. Let us continue the battle to ensure that today's children will not have their creativity and will to succeed destroyed. In this battle there will be neither victors nor vanquished, but only men and women brought up in liberty, who will hold justice and reason as their guiding principles.

78. Mr. SOKALSKI (Poland): For the first time in the history of this Organization, an international year, in view of its importance, is being considered by the General Assembly in plenary meetings. Hardly any other international project of the kind so far has awakened as widespread and as nearly unanimous a response and support as has the International Year of the Child. Already at this stage of the observances of the International Year of the Child we can safely conclude that the Year has been a success in generating a promising momentum which can and indeed should be harnessed in continuous service for the sake of the youngest generation of our globe.

79. The child is the factor that works most for the integration of the family. The family is the basic unit of society. A healthy, moral and industrious society is the most precious safeguard of a country's future. Society has created man's morality—argued Stanislaw Staszic, one of the giants of Poland's age of enlightenment. A happy child thus symbolizes a happy nation; and vice versa, man as an individual, his personality and social posture, can be shaped only within a society, through his participation in its life.

80. The historic Declaration of the Rights of the Child [*resolution 1386 (XIV)*], the adoption of which 20 years ago Poland had the honour to advocate, proclaims that "mankind owes to the child the best it has to give".

81. What then can be a more cherished treasure for mankind to harbour than the treasure of childhood? However obvious the rhetorical overtones of this question, the hard realities of life remain only too evident: malnutrition and undernourishment are still haunting

the world's children; millions of them have no access to adequate health services; millions are discriminated against on racial grounds, deprived of most elementary amenities of life and missing their educational opportunities. Much is being done, on different planes, to alleviate those and other hardships, but unless the efforts are all-embracing and unless they rest upon a solid foundation of a wide spectrum of social reforms, there is little hope that mankind can really give the child the best it has. This last also takes on special relevance nowadays, when we are nearing the end of both the International Year of the Child and the United Nations Disarmament Decade. For it is socio-economic reforms and global disarmament that in the longer run can bring about truly effective progress in satisfying the needs of entire societies and their children. We attribute similar pertinence to the results of the current Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, particularly with a view to improving the lot of children suffering under racism and *apartheid*.

82. My delegation has asked to speak in this debate to report to the Assembly that in Poland the general objectives of the International Year of the Child, under relevant resolutions, have been diligently pursued and successfully accomplished.

83. The International Year of the Child in my country has coincided with two momentous national anniversaries—the fortieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, started by Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland, and the thirty-fifth of the new socialist Poland, which has ensured its people the longest uninterrupted period of peaceful life in its modern history. While the first of the two events practically robbed my generation of its childhood, the second has given us all we possess; it brought us into the family of free nations. Full realization of the meaning of these two anniversaries is also indispensable to a proper comprehension of why we regard a happy child as the most valuable possession a nation can have.

84. I am glad to state that in pursuance of the objectives of the International Year, programmes for children form an integral part of Poland's economic and social development plans. Concern for children is fully reflected in the Polish Constitution. In the basic law of the Polish People's Republic the special needs and protection of children have been inseparably linked with the safeguarding of marriage, motherhood and the family. The relevant provisions of the Constitution have been further developed in Poland's Family Code. A special law passed by Parliament in 1973 makes it legally incumbent upon the State to provide various forms of assistance to the family and to encourage the strengthening of the role of parents in bringing up children and performing their parental duties.

85. A number of other legal instruments, notably the Labour and Civil Codes, contain specific provisions with a view to protecting children and enhancing the awareness of their special needs. A new important Government organ, the Council for Family Affairs, was established last year and is now functioning under the auspices of the Council of Ministers.

86. The objectives of the International Year of the Child have become a subject of direct interest and constant concern to Poland's highest authorities, decision-makers and the public at large. The National Committee

for the International Year of the Child is headed by the President of the Council of State, Mr. Henryk Jablonski. Its energetic activities, supported by 49 regional offices, have decisively contributed to bringing the lofty ideas of the Year to the most remote corners of the country. The motto of Polish observances of the Year—"All children are ours"—has indeed assumed special and invigorating content.

87. Consequently, 1979 in Poland has seen a gigantic effort at undertaking more sustained activities for the benefit of children. In terms of strengthening services and programmes, we have taken up, *inter alia*: a further improvement of the legal status of the child, particularly with respect to adoption, foster families and homes for children, and the preparation of a number of draft laws to be passed by Parliament concerning children; comprehensive measures to effect improved integration within society of disabled and handicapped children, including the establishment of a number of training schools for them and special summer activities; the introduction of an educational reform which in 1979 encompassed the first grades of the primary school level; intensified activities with a view to increasing the number of rest and recreation centres for children; the solution of specific problems, like those of road safety and transportation to and from school; increasing the role of children in decision-making with respect to different facets of their lives as an important aspect of their preparation for the future duties of their adult state; competitions for children and adults in arts, music, photography and writing, and special books and publications, exhibitions, films, posters and stamps; scholarly and scientific conferences and seminars on social care, health, rehabilitation, education and the development of a sense of pedagogic thinking; and the preparation by industry of new, attractive designs for products for children, including tools, foods, furniture, educational instruments and toys. Last but not least, International Year of the Child activities at our national level have released untiring energies, popular initiative and enthusiasm on the part of central and local authorities, civic and non-governmental organizations as well as gifted individuals. A well-deserved tribute is due to numerous Polish non-governmental organizations, associated within the National Unity Front, particularly women's, children's and youth organizations, for their most active involvement in the Year.

88. I take great pleasure in informing you, Mr. President, and the States Members of the United Nations, that, in honour of the proclamation by the General Assembly of 1979 as the International Year of the Child, and the present debate on the Year, the Polish artistic and artisan community is presenting to this Assembly, on behalf of the people of Poland, a unique work of art—a stained glass window, depicting a sleeping child, as drawn by one of the world's most famous painters of children's faces, Stanislaw Wyspianski. This outstanding piece of art, which is now displayed in the hall between the chambers of the Security and Trusteeship Councils, is the result of voluntary work by a group of the most prominent artists and artisans. We trust that, on account of its extremely symbolic and timely nature, the gift will be received as a contribution highlighting the unique role which this Organization has played in attracting world-wide response to the noble objectives of the Year.

89. Focused as they are on activities on the national level, observances of the Year in Poland cannot but also

have their distinct international dimension, be it only because the success of any venture of world-wide magnitude is first and foremost conditioned by the chances for achieving and consolidating world peace. A war against hunger, fear, racial discrimination and lack of education among children, against all kinds of abuses and oppression, can be ultimately won only if mankind proves victorious in its war on war itself. But, as India's Mahatma Gandhi once said: "If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to wage real war against war, we shall have to begin with children". That was precisely one of the basic preoccupations which a year ago, on Poland's initiative, guided the General Assembly to adopt the Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace [resolution 33/73], a document of unprecedented significance for the shaping of attitudes of genuine understanding and friendship among nations.

90. Inspired by the very same ideas which prompted us to seek international support for the Declaration, the people of Poland are solemnly observing the year of Dr. Janusz Korczak, which has been recognized by UNESCO as one of the anniversaries of great personalities and events, in commemoration of an eminent thinker, moralist, educator and writer, who devoted himself—and, indeed, ultimately gave his life—to the cause of children, and died for that cause, together with a group of his young friends, in a Nazi gas chamber.

91. It is in memory of the youngest victims of wars, more than 2 million of whom were the children of Poland, killed or ruthlessly murdered during the Second World War, that we honoured the International Year of the Child by erecting, out of voluntary contributions, a modern Memorial Hospital—the Child's Health Centre—to serve the youngest patients from all over the world. In his moving message on the occasion of the inauguration of the Hospital last June, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said of this lasting symbol of the victory of life over death:

"The Child's Health Centre is also a memorial, a reminder of the horrors of the last war and its toll of young lives. It is furthermore a tribute to the energies of the people of Poland and those who joined them from other nations in this impressive venture. It is a symbol of the hope that we will be able to enter the twenty-first century as partners in one enterprise, the enterprise of a world without war, a world in which our children can grow up healthy, happy and productive, partaking freely yet wisely of all this earth has to offer and enriching it by their gifts of enthusiasm, creativity and love".

To underline this ever valid theme, the first Polish cosmonaut, Miroslaw Hermaszewski, on his voyage into outer space, carried a special gold plaque engraved with the symbol of the International Year of the Child and of the Child's Health Centre.

92. Once we succeed in instilling in the mind of man the lasting conviction of the unavailability of peace, it will no doubt be also easier to pursue the parallel objective of globally enhancing the physical and moral well-being of the child. Poland, in fact, has never been absent from efforts in that direction. Years ago, we contributed our well-known share to the establishment of UNICEF; we helped to bring about the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

93. Today, as the international community has reached yet another milestone in its development, there is a need for new approaches and more effective forms of international co-operation in order to steadily improve the situation of children. Our response to that need was contained in the proposal to adopt an international convention on the rights of the child. We are pleased to note that the work on the preparation of the text of that convention has moved to the phase of drafting. What is most important in that respect, however, is not so much the degree of difficulty likely to be encountered in the final drafting process, a difficulty which, after all, has characterized all negotiations on momentous international documents. What really counts is that by adopting a convention on the rights of the child, the world community will be able to pass from purely declaratory statements to legally binding and universally sanctioned programmes for the benefit of children. By stimulating such action, the convention is bound to intensify international co-operation, particularly in the context of assistance, and an improved exchange of information on subjects and programmes related to children, among and between developing and industrialized countries. We wish to thank very warmly all Governments and their respective delegations to numerous United Nations organs, which have given the proposed convention their continued and valuable support. Efforts like theirs also deserve the profound gratitude of children.

94. The highest reward which an adult can receive from a child is probably a happy smile, at least one like that bestowed by Polish children, along with their renowned "Order of the Smile", which—thanks to the International Year of the Child—is now becoming an international distinction conferred upon people who have merited it for their support of the cause of children and their well-being. It was only fitting that the selected group of the eminent recipients of the Order this year included Mr. Kurt Waldheim and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Henry Labouisse.

95. Preparations for the Year, as well as the Year itself, have offered all of us a wealth of experience, both on a national and on an international plane. One of the practical conclusions which have followed from the observances of the Year in Poland is that all the conditions are there to transform the National Committee on the International Year of the Child into a body to oversee the implementation of long-term actions for the benefit of children, notably actions inaugurated in 1979.

96. On the international plane the situation is different, since the Year was focused primarily on a national level. Yet there, too, certain changes would seem to be unavoidable, in view of the implications which national experiences with the Year will have for the overall international effort. Following those experiences, UNICEF should, in our opinion, now make a comprehensive review of the situation of children in the world and, based upon the results, the organization should be adapted according to the new circumstances. UNICEF ought to become a future-oriented, more universal organization called upon to serve all the children of the world in all countries without exception, and it should function as the primary agency for child-related issues in the United Nations system. We should like to see a still more active involvement of UNICEF in the defence of the rights of the child and the principles of social progress spelled out in the Declaration on

Social Progress and Development [resolution 2542 (XXIV)].

97. We believe, though, that any future organizational or structural decision should also proceed from considerations of economy. We should therefore be inclined to favour the continued functioning of the Inter-Agency Advisory Group of the Year, provided that that would not involve extra-budgetary spending.

98. In conclusion, permit me to take this opportunity to put on record Poland's profound appreciation of all the work contributed by the agencies, departments and persons responsible for the co-ordinated international effort. We commend the role of UNICEF in discharging the responsibilities of lead agency entrusted to it by the General Assembly. We should like to assure the other United Nations agencies of our appreciation of their fruitful supportive actions which, we trust, will be followed by a rising level of resources for services benefiting children. We should like to assure the Special Representative for International Year of the Child, Mrs. Aldaba-Lim, and her team on the secretariat of the Year, that we have followed their work with all the interest and attention it deserves. Through their activities, the United Nations has acquired new experience in promoting important purposes and principles of the Charter. We are assured and, indeed, pledge appropriate action on the part of Poland that the impetus of the Year—determination to meet children's needs and to secure all their fundamental rights—will not cease in the years to come. For unless the Year generates a lasting follow-up in the form of concrete and vigorous action the hopes it has so far engendered will soon have to recede. Let us not permit that to happen.

99. The PRESIDENT: I should like to take this opportunity to thank the representative of Poland for the gift of his country to our Organization on the occasion of the International Year of the Child. I am confident that this valued gift will serve as eloquent testimony to and a symbol of Poland's contribution to the objectives and activities of the International Year of the Child. I also share the views of the representative of Poland that his country's timely gift will serve to underscore the unique role of the United Nations in mobilizing the efforts of the international community towards the great objectives of the Year.

100. The next speaker is the First Lady of Costa Rica, Her Excellency Mrs. Estrella Zeledón de Carazo.

101. Mrs. ZELEDÓN de CARAZO (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I bring from the Government of Costa Rica, and especially from Costa Rican children, a very respectful greeting to all the representatives of sovereign States here in this General Assembly, where views are put forward and efforts are made to find solutions to the major problems which affect mankind.

102. I am also transmitting to you the results of the efforts made by the Government and people of Costa Rica during 1979, the International Year of the Child, to give proper attention to the problems of childhood as part of an approach more in keeping with the theoretic and technical resources of our day and as a national work which has required the participation of all our people.



103. Not only have we dealt with the problems of children themselves, but we have also viewed the child as part of the family nucleus, where a whole complex of physical, social, moral and intellectual problems exists—problems deriving from our national economic structure. All of this effort is made in the framework of the democracy, peace and freedom which characterize the actions of my country because there is a clear awareness that if we care for the child of today, we are training the individual of the future who will meet the challenge of the coming decades and guarantee a lasting peace by making relations among Governments and peoples more humane.
104. While it is true that for Costa Ricans the International Year of the Child has not been an exceptional event, it has had a special significance.
105. This is so because, owing to the democratic tradition of our people and Government, attention to children has always been given pride of place among the activities of our citizens and their constitutionally elected official representatives.
106. The achievements of our country during this Year are not isolated ones, but rather a response to a constant concern to give our children protection and encouragement. They are the result of the enthusiasm with which we participated in this commemorative event. Among the main achievements of our country I should like to emphasize the ones I feel are the most important.
107. In the field of consciousness-raising, one very important achievement has been the wide-ranging participation of public and private agencies in giving publicity to the rights of children and to the responsibilities of parents and of people in general in the harmonious development of children.
108. In this connexion the communications media in my country have made a very valuable contribution and have demonstrated their sensitivity to children's needs. Another important accomplishment is the surmounting of the many problems which up to the present had prevented the necessary co-ordination among child and family care agencies owing to the trend towards self-sufficiency in each agency working in its own sphere of activity.
109. It is important to point out that in the area of recreation, an area that is often neglected in our countries, we have made one significant achievement because, as part of the International Year of the Child, a complete programme of playgrounds and recreational centres has been set up and has already had very encouraging results. This programme is still encouraging the community to create, maintain and operate recreational centres as well as fostering greater integration of the family, the child and the community. It is also training individuals who can be community recreational leaders.
110. While in our country there has been for many years legislation for the protection of the child and the family, this year a commission of eminent jurists was established with the task of reviewing that legislation, including the already existing Family Code, so that possible amendments could be proposed, and then discussed and adopted by the appropriate legal body. The work of these professionals has been very thorough and very serious.
111. A Commission has been designated in the Legislative Assembly which is working on the formulation of a family procedures code and the establishment of family courts. In the Supreme Court, the possibility of giving a new orientation to juvenile courts is being studied.
112. In the field of national planning and economic policy, I feel that the greatest achievement has been the preparation of a policy that focuses on children and that has been established for the first time in our country's history as part of the national development plan for 1979-1982. This policy is embodied in the National System for Family Care, a system that is responsible for promoting the integral development of the Costa Rican family unit so that it can fulfil its proper function in our present society.
113. In the National System for Family Care, inter-institutional resources and efforts for family care are co-ordinated so that the solutions found to family problems and to the problems of childhood can be co-ordinated and made effective and human and economic resources may be used to the utmost. It is a system that, without denying the autonomy of the institutions and without involving excessive bureaucracy, makes possible an operative system for planning, co-ordinating and implementing activities so as to respond efficiently to the aspirations of our Government to protect the family. This system will function within the administrative structure of our country, giving priority to two specialized areas—comprehensive attention to the child and to the aged within the care of a family unit.
114. In order to ensure the continuity of the plans initiated, different measures have been taken. First of all, as I have already mentioned, we have the National System for Family Care as part of the national development plan.
115. Secondly, also as part of the national development plan, the clear political decision has been reached to strengthen economically all programmes geared towards care for children, both those who show signs of "social pathology", such as abandoned children, youthful offenders, drug addicts, retarded children and so forth, and those who are normally integrated in their families but who require adequate nutrition, care and education.
116. Clearly, the experience that we have gained this year will make it possible for us to evaluate and adapt existing programmes to the genuine needs of our children.
117. Using the research study sponsored by UNICEF on the situation of the child in Central America and the guidelines provided by our National System for Family Care, we expect in the very near future to prepare a scale of priorities in order to allocate budgetary resources for the coming years in accordance with the strict criteria of our national planning.
118. On the occasion of the commemoration of the International Year of the Child, the regional office of UNICEF for Central America and Panama sponsored a research project concerning the situation of children in Central America.
119. I believe, and I can tell the Assembly enthusiastically and optimistically, that this study, which is

now almost complete, has been very valuable for the countries of our area.

120. First of all, it was initiated by a Latin American expert who has experience of and is familiar with the characteristics of our own world. It was also conducted by Central American professionals, who demonstrated their great technical skills and thorough understanding of the situation that they were studying.

121. We feel that this alone gives greater validity to the study.

122. We feel that the most important aspect of this research has been that it has been carried out, not so that the world can come to know us, but rather so that we can come to know ourselves; so that we can discover not only our own problems but also our own potential; so that we can guide our own destiny and freely decide on programmes and projects that truly correspond to our own situation.

123. Therefore, I believe that UNICEF's sphere of action should be strengthened and widened, especially in the area of economic support for research. This should be done by professionals who are connected with our part of the world and who identify with it.

124. We have dedicated this Year to the child and in this respect I wonder about the outcome of this world effort. Each and every country has carried out a set of activities and adopted decisions for the benefit of the child. What will be the final result? Among so many decisions and activities, what do we want the ultimate and all-encompassing decision to be, the decision that will demonstrate the sincerity of our words and promises?

125. We have all discussed the rights of children — their right to health, education, housing, a family, food and security.

126. Children have material rights and spiritual rights. Both of these require a vital atmosphere that is a prerequisite without which they cannot be fulfilled. That prerequisite is peace. Peace is one of the basic rights of the child and therefore peace is the primary obligation of adults towards children.

127. In this context I recall the words of love and wisdom as spoken by His Holiness Pope John Paul II just two weeks ago in the General Assembly [17th meeting].

128. On behalf of the children of the world, on behalf of the women of the world, on behalf of the civilized men of the world, let us make a promise: that the most precious result of this International Year of the Child should be peace for our children; for the children of today and children of the future; for the children who are today shocked at the arms race and threats of war and for the children who will be the victims of those preparations for war; for the children who today are suffering the loss of their parents, suffering from hunger, despair and abandonment because of war—war organized by adults; and for the children who in the future will succumb to even more effective and sophisticated weapons.

129. I invite all representatives to examine their consciences. What will be the value of designating 365 days

as the International Year of the Child if we do not guarantee that the children of today's world have peace, and if peace is not the nourishment and the way of life of people in years to come. Here I repeat the words of my husband, the President of Costa Rica who said: "Peace is a right of the human species . . . and the twenty-first century shall be peaceful or it shall not be at all".<sup>2</sup>

130. The United Nations, the Governments and all the institutions created by men acquire their full meaning and importance in the light of the interests and rights of children. Development is imbued with grandeur when it is geared to children. May the child be the centre of attention, the supreme idea and the primary concern of the United Nations. May the concrete, sublime image of the child be inseparable from the idea of peace.

131. Inspired by these principles, the Government of Costa Rica last year introduced the proposal for a university for peace,<sup>3</sup> not as a routine traditional institution but rather as an agency and organization guided and illuminated by the central idea of education for peace. Peace should not be a mere subject for contemplation, analysis and concern but rather the object of education. The people of our world must be trained from childhood to have an awareness of and dedication to peace. This is the essence of Costa Rica's project for the establishment of a university for peace—a project which is being discussed at the United Nations.

132. The best tribute that the United Nations could pay to the child is the affirmation of peace—the promise of a strong, permanent peace coupled with the creation of a centre of higher culture dedicated to education for peace which can indelibly record in the minds of statesmen, politicians and intellectuals the idea that the individual of today must be educated for peace and that peace is not the absence of war or preparation for another war; rather it is part of everyday life, a daily conquest, and a dynamic activity in all countries in the world. It is a concept that should begin in the school-rooms with the child's first words, when, with the child's innocent and penetrating gaze, he first enters the stage of history—his own history and that of mankind.

133. As a tribute to the child let us convert all the educational systems throughout the world into instruments for peace. Peace can be achieved, not through war as the ancient principle states, but rather through education. Because of this I venture to request the support of all countries for the creation of the university for peace—an institution which, under the auspices of the United Nations university system, could permanently devote itself to educating people to be spokesmen, messengers and creators of peace.

134. Let us give our children—the children of the whole world—food, shelter and security. Above all let us give them peace so that there may be food, shelter and security.

135. Let us give our children love but let us convert love in the home into peace, which is the sublime form of universal love.

<sup>2</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-third Session, Plenary Meetings, 11th meeting, paras. 111-112.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 106-122.

136. War is the creation of adults, of those who today so enthusiastically proclaim children's rights. Peace can also be the creation of adults. As the President of Costa Rica said a year ago, let us rally to peace. Let us together solemnly pledge to convert the International Year of the Child into the beginning of a peaceful world for the benefit of all the children of the world.

137. Mr. AN Zhiyuan (China) (*translation from Chinese*): A resolution was adopted at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly in 1976 proclaiming 1979 the International Year of the Child. This resolution has received a wide response all over the world. The Chinese Government attaches great importance to this proposal. Speaking on the International Year of the Child on 6 August this year Ye Jianying, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, pointed out: "This is a significant proposal. It will affect the children of today and the future of mankind." Addressing the meeting to mark International Children's Day in Beijing on 1 June this year, Sung Quingling, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, said: "We extend warm support and assistance to this excellent initiative and the very significant activities connected with it."

138. Children are the future of mankind. They will carry on the cause of human progress and see to its development. The bringing up of the new generation is an important task that affects the future of every State and nation. The activities of the International Year of the Child have deepened our understanding of the importance of the work for children, encouraged Governments and people from all walks of life to attach greater significance to this work, so that more effective measures can be adopted to care for and protect the new generation, enabling them to grow up into healthier human beings. In this respect the proposal for the International Year of the Child is a worthy one.

139. The Chinese Government and people have since the founding of new China always attached great importance to the work for children, for in our eyes they are the successors to the revolutionary cause, they are veritably "the flowers of our nation", and we have lavished loving care upon them. The protection of the interests of children is specifically enshrined in China's Constitution. Government departments and people from all walks of life have adopted various measures for children's education, welfare and health, and through their active efforts have completely changed the situation which existed in the old China, where children suffered miserably. It is in pursuance of this policy that the Chinese Government and people gave warm support and approval to the proposal for the International Year of the Child and entrusted the Chinese People's National Committee for the Protection of Children with the task of supervising the International Year of the Child activities in China.

140. In the last months of this year, together with the departments of education, health, culture and art, science and technology as well as social welfare, the Chinese People's National Committee for the Protection of Children has done a tremendous amount of work. A steering committee for children's health care was set up within the framework of the International Year of the Child; special funds were provided by the Government to enable 20 to 30 per cent of pre-school

children to have medical examinations and treatment. Mass media and films were used, taking into account regional differences, to disseminate knowledge of scientific child care and to teach children hygienic practices. At the moment, the Health Department is studying and analysing the results of the nation-wide children's health examination programme, in order to improve health care for children. In the field of pre-school education, a national conference was held last July and August on the work of the nursery schools and kindergartens, so as to pool experience, improve and strengthen pre-school education. Within the framework of the activities of the International Year of the Child, close co-ordination between the family, school and society in the education of children was emphasized. A great number of outstanding child-care workers were commended and given awards, and meetings took place to give parents a chance to exchange experience in the upbringing of children. Within the framework of the Year, more than 800 new titles have been published; a national committee for awards to outstanding children's literature was formed to encourage writing for children; films about children have been produced and children's film weeks were organized.

141. In the celebration of International Children's Day on 1 June, a programme of activities under the title "We love science" was carried out and in some places "Do a good deed for children" campaigns were mounted. By means of all these activities, much was achieved in children's health and welfare work; these activities enriched children's cultural and intellectual life and at the same time taught the people from various walks of life to show greater concern for children and attribute more importance to children's welfare. The principles and objectives of the International Year of the Child have been widely publicized and have aroused great interest.

142. Work for children depends mainly on national efforts; nevertheless, mutual support and stimulation and exchange of experience on an international scale are also important. The International Year of the Child has promoted friendly contacts and exchanges between our children and other children and between our child-care workers and those in other parts of the world. China was a participant in various activities within the framework of the International Year of the Child, such as the International Children's Drawing Contest, the issue of stamps and coins of the International Year, and so on. China sent a delegation to the Asian and Pacific Region's Consultative Conference for the Year and acted as host to the Mission of six Asian States organized by UNICEF.

143. Here I should like to mention that it was this year, within the period of the International Year of the Child, that China established a formal relationship of co-operation with UNICEF, which in past decades has done tremendous work for children's welfare in developing countries and has made its contribution. All this is inseparable from the remarkable spirit of Mr. Labouisse, the Executive Director of UNICEF. In August this year, Madame Aldaba-Lim, the Special Representative of the International Year of the Child, paid a fruitful visit to China. Although the co-operation between China and UNICEF has but just begun, its prospects are bright.

144. Within the framework of the International Year of the Child we have done something for children and in

promoting international co-operation, but these efforts are no more than a starting-point from which we must continue to progress. China is a developing socialist country and its level of economic development is still below par. The growth of our work for children's welfare can only follow the growth of our national economy. We will further strengthen our work in children's education, health care and welfare so that our children will grow into a wholesome new generation, well developed morally, intellectually and physically. We shall see to it that the unity and friendship between Chinese children and children in other parts of the world are further strengthened.

145. Today, at this United Nations forum discussing the International Year of the Child, the Chinese delegation wants to express its deep sympathy for the children who are still suffering in tragic conditions. At this point I cannot but mention the fact that in South-East Asia there is a certain country which seeks regional hegemonism and has carried out armed aggression against a sovereign State—Democratic Kampuchea—inflicting upon this nation unprecedented catastrophe and causing the deaths of countless children. During the past year, this State persecuted and drove out by force nearly a million refugees, depriving them and their children of their homes, so that many ended their lives in the sea or died on the road. These are facts known to all. Any attempt to cover them up with lies and slander can only be futile.

146. Together with the world's people, we are ready to fight against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism and to safeguard world peace. We will strive together to create a happy future for children all over the world.

147. Mr. La ROCCA (Italy): From the very beginning, Italy has stressed the importance of the International Year of the Child, especially because it has brought to the attention of world public opinion the particular needs of children throughout the world.

148. In fact, the President of the Italian Republic emphasized the global significance of this event in the message he delivered to the nation last February, from which I should like to quote a few words. He said:

“Children need not only good words, but good deeds—proper housing, clothing, schools, health care and, most of all, love. The primary goal, however, must be to ensure to each child at least the fulfilment of his minimum vital needs. And it is a goal whose achievement involves the responsibility of each and every one of us in every part of the world”.

Referring to the actual activities of the International Year of the Child, he stressed the necessity for its ceremonies to constitute a mobilization of all the available resources of Governments, of the richest countries, of humanitarian and religious organizations, and of the United Nations within the framework of a comprehensive programme for the struggle against children's hunger in every corner of the planet.

149. I should like now to illustrate the activities being undertaken in Italy at the national level in the context of the International Year of the Child. In December 1978 my Government established a national committee to coordinate all such activities and initiatives. This committee is chaired by the Under-Secretary of State for Inter-

national Affairs and is composed of representatives of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and of the relevant Ministries, of members of Parliament, and of representatives of non-governmental organizations, trade unions and the national committees for UNICEF, UNESCO and the Red Cross.

150. Bearing in mind the goals set for the International Year of the Child by the United Nations, I wish to point out that the Italian Government is engaged in promoting a heightened awareness, among both policy-making bodies and public opinion, of the needs of children in Italy, with particular regard to improving the welfare of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In addition to this, my Government has encouraged a more widespread distribution of information on the situation of children in developing countries and has increased substantially the possibilities of assistance to them. Italy has also decided to contribute 100 million lire to the assistance programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for refugee children in South-East Asia.

151. Turning now to measures envisaged by my Government in favour of children in Italy, I should like to mention the special attention that has been granted to certain categories—among them, the very young, the disabled, those living in crowded urban areas or in isolated rural areas, migrant children, working children and orphans. Six working groups have been entrusted to study, respectively, the following issues: the protection of children's rights; the child and the family; the child and health; the child and education; the child in the social environment; and, finally, the training of personnel in education, social and health services.

152. The Italian Government has kept the mass media informed of its activities by publishing, in co-operation with the National Committee for UNICEF, a regular bulletin for press use containing news not only of International Year of the Child activities in Italy, but also of the condition of children there and throughout the world. As a matter of fact, Italian public opinion has been influenced considerably by the various initiatives undertaken in Italy on this occasion and by the press coverage such initiatives have received.

153. Although it is still too early to assess the actions taken by my Government and the various non-governmental, regional and local organizations in observance of the Year of the Child, I am pleased to say that the increased attention accorded by Government authorities and public opinion to the problems of children at the local, regional and national levels has encouraged my authorities to earmark for UNICEF a large percentage of our official development aid in 1980, which—as we have said here and in other forums—will be double that of 1979.

154. In order to summarize the relevant achievements, a national conference on the International Year of the Child will be convened in Italy in March 1980. The conference is expected to make a significant contribution by formulating recommendations for the revision of several laws in areas such as family legislation, adoption and foster care, as well as for the reform of legislation on aid to children. It will also focus on the issue of under-age workers; on the strengthening of services already included in the recently adopted national health assistance plan for the protection of mothers and

children; and on pre-school day-care, family consultants and services for children with special problems. The situation of children in third-world countries is another issue of crucial importance which will be on the conference agenda. The discussion will highlight the need to publicize the problems of those children and to increase efforts in the field of economic and technical co-operation with the developing countries.

155. In conclusion, I should like to extend our deep appreciation and thanks to the International Year of the Child secretariat, and to express our particular gratitude for the tireless and constructive efforts of the Special Representative, Mrs. Estefanía Aldaba-Lim. In regard to the follow-up of ideas and initiatives emerging from the International Year of the Child, Italy concurs with the views already expressed, that any such follow-up should be undertaken primarily at the national level by individual countries. As for the international level, Italy believes that UNICEF—an organization to which we attribute great importance by reason of its capacity to carry on the work in this field—should be designated as the lead agency of the United Nations system responsible for co-ordinating the follow-up activities in co-operation with the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation.

156. Mr. LEPRETTE (France) (*interpretation from French*): We are gathered here to celebrate the International Year of the Child, which coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The importance all countries have attached to it and the scope of the activities they have undertaken on behalf of children are very encouraging.

157. If we are to assess this Year, one observation must be made: the International Year of the Child has enabled the international community to become aware that the dividing line between industrialized and developing countries is not so sharp as might have been supposed at the outset. There exist a number of common problems, psychological problems, problems of health, nutrition and education. Nevertheless, such problems differ in degree from country to country: for the developing countries, the problems of health and child survival of course have priority. In the developed countries, the problems take different forms: attention is given above all to the psychological aspects of children's lives, as well as the existence of islands of poverty.

158. My Government attaches great importance to such difficult problems. At a time when the situation of children in the world is still all too often unacceptable and even intolerable, I think in particular of the children of Cambodia, the innocent victims of the events occurring in that country. The future of our societies depends upon the way in which we deal with these issues. France has participated fully in the Year of the Child on both the national and the international level.

159. In France, the International Year of the Child was placed under the distinguished patronage of Mrs. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. A National Commission was created under the aegis of the Minister of Health. Activities undertaken on behalf of children were not limited to the national level, however; local authorities were invited to participate fully in the Year of the Child, and numerous events were organized at the departmen-

tal and communal levels. The principal objective of the various activities undertaken was to inform and mobilize public opinion on the basis of a better understanding of the special needs of children and to promote a heightened awareness of their rightful place in our society. Towards that end, various events, seminars and information campaigns were organized.

160. It was important, however, that children actively participate in their Year, and that it not result solely in studies and colloquia that, useful as they may be, remain abstract and do not directly affect the public. To this end, many events were organized that involved the participation of children themselves: they conducted surveys of their living conditions; they took part in studying the value of their historic heritage; and, above all, they themselves organized local events that were highly successful.

161. We also took advantage of this Year to study a specific problem in greater depth: the French National Commission adopted a precise theme: "How to meet the needs of children for development, autonomy and security outside school hours". On that theme, several types of activities were undertaken: there was a school health campaign and a programme to make children more aware of the special problems of the neediest among them. Along these lines, the French Government made changes in its administration of child social welfare.

162. None the less, although many efforts were made at the national level, emphasis was placed on international solidarity with the children of the developing countries. The special role given the French Committee for UNICEF within the National Commission is evidence of this. The activity of the National Commission focused on two types of event: one was designed primarily to inform public opinion, and the other entailed a series of international congresses and seminars on specific themes.

163. With regard to the informing of public opinion, the National Commission undertook a campaign to publicize the activities of UNICEF so that its year-end fund-raising activities might be more successful. France also contributed to the costs of the UNICEF secretariat entrusted with the preparation of the International Year of the Child. In addition, an educational campaign was initiated to provide information on developing countries. This reached many schoolchildren and played a large part in expanding a field of interest too often restricted to national concerns.

164. This project was complemented by an international children's festival and a national day of solidarity. In addition, the WHO Day this year was devoted to the theme "The Health of the Child, the Future of the World", and the third international French film festival for children and young people was held concurrently.

165. Furthermore, many international events were organized and devoted to more precise issues of concern to children. Since they were numerous, I shall not mention all of them. They were centred principally on two themes. The first was the child and his family environment and in January of this year, an international con-



ference on "Family Responsibilities in Child Education" was organized, and in February there was another conference on "Respect for the Child in Social and Family Problem Situations". The second theme considered involved problems of physical and psychological health: various congresses and seminars were held, among them the International Congress for Child Psychology in July 1979, and in September a seminar on education in paediatrics in the developing countries.

166. In conclusion, I should like to express my congratulations and my gratitude to Mrs. Aldaba-Lim for her work and for her tireless devotion. The success of this Year is largely due to her sense of organization, her efficiency and her devotion.

167. None the less, momentum must be maintained, and both industrialized and developing countries must intensify their work for the benefit of children. In this connexion, it is not a question of creating new structures. In accordance with the decision of the UNICEF Executive Board, it does not seem useful, now that the initial impetus has been provided, to extend the special secretariat beyond 1980. It is up to UNICEF itself—to which I take this opportunity to pay a tribute—to be the international spokesman for the concerns of all the world's children, to carry this action forward, especially with regard to the children in developing countries, and to see to it that this Year of the Child may make its effects felt in the coming years. The next few years will be decisive ones in this regard and will enable us to discover whether the goals that we set ourselves in establishing the International Year of the Child have truly been attained.

168. Mrs. VRUBLEVSKA (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): From this lofty rostrum representatives of many countries of the world have stated very clearly a simple but very deep truth: the future of the human race lies with our children.

169. All progressive, peace-loving forces are vitally interested in ensuring that the next generation, who make up one-third of the population of the planet and who will step over the threshold and live in the twenty-first century, will have a richer spiritual life, a happier life, and will live in conditions of lasting peace.

170. "Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give": that is stated in the preamble to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted on 20 November 1959 by the General Assembly.

171. However, although over 20 years have elapsed since that Declaration was adopted, many countries still do not abide by its basic principles. This can be seen from the eloquent figures quoted here, which cannot but give us a shudder of concern. Millions and millions of children do not know that light-hearted and joyous world of childhood. In many countries their fate is a tragic one.

172. According to UNICEF statistics, more than 500 million children—that is, every third child in the world—live in want and poverty. In the developing countries, which suffer from the difficult legacy of their

many years of domination by the colonialists, every fifth child dies before reaching the age of five, before knowing the joys of life on earth.

173. In the twentieth century it is shameful that there should be such cruel exploitation, in many countries of the capitalist world, of child labour, a source of tremendous profits for the monopolies.

174. According to the ILO, over 50 million children are obliged to earn their own living. Children in the 10 to 14 age group make up 4 per cent of the labour force. That is why the authorities simply close their eyes to violations of laws limiting child labour. After leaving school, many of those children are left unemployed.

175. The World Conference on Questions of First Aid, which was held recently at Alma-Ata, once again drew attention to the fact that there are many countries in the world where even the most elementary norms of child health do not exist. According to WHO, at the present time only 20 per cent of young children in urban and rural areas have access to medical services.

176. Principle 7 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child states that: "The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory . . .". But what is the actual situation in this area? Is this provision of the Declaration applied in all countries? The facts show that the reverse is true. According to UNICEF data, almost half of the 350 million children of early school age do not go to school, despite the fact that in many countries efforts are being made to ensure that all children receive an education. In 1985, in the opinion of UNESCO, about 135 million children will never have crossed the threshold of a school.

177. In the developed capitalist countries the mass information media have a very detrimental effect on the minds and hearts of young people by propagandizing violence, sadism and pornography, which are destroying the ideals of goodness and humanism. In these countries there is an increasing dehumanization of society, so to speak. There is an increase in child crime, drug addiction, prostitution and vagrancy. This is in no way consonant with what is proclaimed in principle 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, namely, that:

"He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men."

178. As we can see, there are unfortunately still many children in the world who do not receive proper care and attention. That is why the delegation of the Ukrainian SSR considers it extremely timely and very relevant that the thirty-first session of the General Assembly declared this year to be the International Year of the Child. At that time our delegation supported resolution 31/169 on the proclamation of this year as the International Year of the Child, and we feel that celebrating it does give us an opportunity once again to draw the attention of the appropriate Governments and broad sectors of society to one of the most acute social problems of the world today: the problem of how to improve the status of children.

179. We are convinced that the future of children can be assured only if Governments take the necessary measures of an economic and social nature. The laws that are now in force, the constitutions and measures to implement them in the countries of the socialist system are full proof of this. As was noted in the statement in February of this year by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on matters relating to the International Year of the Child, Mrs. Estefanía Aldaba-Lim, in the socialist countries "national policy gives the highest priority to children, not only in theory but also in practice". She also stated that our countries have grounds for being proud of this "model participation" by Governments in the celebration of the International Year of the Child.

180. In the Ukrainian SSR, the upbringing of children and concern with their physical and moral development have become a most important State undertaking. It is referred to in our immutable laws and it has been confirmed in the Constitution of the Republic.

181. Concern for children involves many things. It covers a broad range of problems regarding the improvement of the material well-being of the people, the development of the educational system, the improvement of the system for bringing up children and young people and attention to the all-round moral health of the people who are active builders of communism.

182. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic adopted a special provision on the celebration in the Ukrainian SSR of the International Year of the Child, and we also established a Commission on holding the International Year in the Ukrainian SSR. That Commission is headed by the First Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, Grigori Vashchenko. A national report from the Ukrainian SSR on the measures taken to celebrate the Year was submitted by the Commission to the secretariat of the Year, and this gives in some detail an idea of what is being done by the Ukrainian SSR to ensure the happiness of the millions of Ukrainian children. We would like to highlight just a few points from this report.

183. In the Ukrainian SSR, we have dealt with the question of providing all-round compulsory medium-level education, which ensures the development of general and polytechnical education and vocational training, and a considerable expansion in the network of all kinds of general educational schools. Here I should just like to stress that all forms of education are free in our country.

184. A matter of particular concern to the Soviet Government is the pre-school upbringing of children. Pre-school institutions work in very close co-operation with the family, and they try to ensure the harmonic development of the child as a whole, taking care of their health, and preparing children for life at school. They also afford young mothers a proper opportunity to take an active part in the productive and social life of the Republic.

185. In 1978 alone, in kindergartens and child-care facilities, about 50 per cent of children of pre-school age

participated. Having children in these facilities was not a financial burden to the family, since almost all the costs of these centres are covered by the State.

186. The Government of our Republic increased in the last few years by tens of millions of roubles the budget for additional measures to ensure the well-being of mothers and children, the improvement of child health and the thorough completion of their upbringing and tuition.

187. In the Ukraine, we have established a far-ranging and free network of preventive medicine institutions, including consultation facilities for women, maternity homes, children's polyclinics and preventive and curative institutions for children. All working women receive attention during pregnancy and childbirth, and qualified medical aid is provided for all women before and after birth.

188. About 25,000 paediatricians and obstetricians are working in the Ukraine. Problems of mother and child care are the concern of 14 medical institutes, 4 scientific research establishments and 80 specialized university posts.

189. Child health care centres are located in the most picturesque corners of our Republic, as are pioneer camps and sanatoria, and all these are paid for out of the State budget. As a rule, trips for children are free, and virtually all children of school age have an opportunity to go to these centres during their vacations.

190. Extracurricular facilities are an important feature in the system of education for those who take part. Every year there are more and more. Today, we have about 1,700 such centres. In Pioneer Houses and Pioneer Palaces for schoolchildren, youth stations for technicians, tourists and naturalists, in sports schools for children and young people, children's parks and so forth, there are dozens of interest groups, sections, amateur societies and clubs. They afford to millions of schoolchildren the opportunity to devote themselves to interesting and useful pastimes out of school hours.

191. As you can see, the facts speak for themselves in indicating the great care and attention focused on Ukrainian children. In his statement on 15 February this year before the electorate, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR, Vladimir Shcherbitsky, stressed:

"... the world of socialism provides a model of true concern for the health of children, for their education, for their upbringing and for their harmonic development, by ensuring in practice the application of the most noble principle: all the best goes to the children. And we are quite right to be proud of this achievement of our Soviet way of life".

192. From the deliberations on this issue at this session of the General Assembly, it can be seen that work is being done in many States to improve the situation of children, and much useful work is done directly by UNICEF. However, it is also clear that a great deal still has to be done by mankind to ensure a proper and wor-

thy life for the next generation. The most important point is that we have to ensure peaceful conditions and the right to life.

193. The only way to do this is to halt the arms race and to prohibit all forms of weapons of mass destruction. Many urgent problems of the human race, and primarily of children, could be resolved if general disarmament were achieved. This is something which has been advocated by the USSR and other socialist countries, and we have to ensure that it does become a reality.

194. Just think how many schools and hospitals could be built, how many children could be given adequate nutrition, could receive adequate education, if we were to spend on these things the billions of dollars which are currently being spent on weapons which bring only death.

195. In many documents issued by the United Nations it is noted that, as a result of the policy of colonialism, racism and *apartheid* in southern Africa and many other parts of the world, women and children are the first to suffer. Children are suffering also because of this policy of flagrant and mass violation of human rights which is carried out by Fascist and dictatorial régimes.

196. World imperialism, reaction and aggressive militaristic circles are creating military conflicts and hotbeds of tension. As can be seen from a report of the Executive Director of UNICEF: "The innocent victims of these conflicts are always defenceless women and particularly children—although they were not in the front line".

197. At an international festival held by the well-known pioneer camp Artek in the Crimea, children from 108 countries of the world made this appeal to the peoples of the world:

"Do everything to ensure that never again will bombs or shells be dropped anywhere; that all children go to school; that they never experience hunger or poverty; that they never be driven out of their homelands, away from their families, losing their childhood; that the world become a better and more just place".

198. Each one of us must ensure that these beautiful hopes and dreams of the younger generation become a reality. That is why the delegation of the Ukrainian SSR has fully supported the draft proposal by the Polish People's Republic for a draft convention on the rights of children<sup>4</sup> and we hope that this important international legal instrument will soon be adopted.

199. In the view of the Ukrainian SSR, the best thing that the United Nations could do for children in this International Year of the Child would be to intensify the struggle for the consolidation of peace and the security of peoples, to take a decisive step forward towards disarmament, to consolidate and intensify the international relaxation of tension, and to take decisive steps to

eliminate the remnants of colonialism and racism and all forms of racial discrimination. We hope that these provisions will be duly reflected in the resolution that we adopt on this question.

200. Mrs. SOW (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): It is a pleasure for the delegation of the State Party of Guinea to address this plenary meeting of the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly and to state its views on a matter of such importance as that of the future of children.

201. This issue is certainly not a new one for the people of Guinea, who have made it our central focus of concern even before the General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 [*resolution 1386 (XIV)*]. Principle 1 of that document stipulates:

"Every child, without any exception whatsoever, shall be entitled to these rights, without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, whether of himself or of his family".

202. Seventeen years later, the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, in resolution 31/169 of 21 December 1976, proclaimed the year 1979 the International Year of the Child.

203. In adopting that resolution, the international community accepted the obligation of guaranteeing, strengthening and speeding up the implementation of the rights of the child, which were recognized in the 1959 Declaration.

204. The Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea, which has been constantly concerned with mother and child problems, warmly welcomed that decision by the United Nations.

205. Thus the International Year of the Child found the people of Guinea already mobilized around the objective of improving the situation of children. Among those measures, we might cite: first, the reform of education, ensuring that it is coeducational, free, compulsory, and adapted to the needs of the people; secondly, health care reform, giving priority to environmental sanitation and the setting up of mother and child health-care centres, and to the growth and development of children; thirdly, the transformation of some of our social structures, leading to the emancipation of women, who are, by their nature, the heart of the home.

206. Within the context of the International Year of the Child, as has been so eloquently stated from this rostrum by our Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, the Head of the Guinean delegation [*29th meeting*], the Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea set up in 1978 a preparatory national commission, under the chairmanship of Comrade Andrée Touré, the First Lady of Guinea. That commission has become a standing institution which functions with the effective co-operation of the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health, Information, Justice, Pre-University Education and Literacy, and Labour; also with the effective co-operation of the national committees for

<sup>4</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1978, Supplement No. 4, chap. XXVI, sect. A, resolution 20 (XXXIV), annex.*

youth, workers and women, and the revolutionary union of Guinean women. At the level of each of the 34 administrative regions of the nation, we have in operation a sub-commission of the national commission.

207. In order to meet the objectives which we set, the national commission drew up a general programme the highlights of which deal with: the writing and publication of story books and tales for children; the drafting of a code of protection for children; the development and building of playgrounds; the issuing of a commemorative postage stamp; radio and television programmes for children; the writing and publication of brochures for parents and educators on the hygiene and nutrition of children; making educational films for children; developing and setting up child-care centres; building health-care centres; the organization of a fair and the exhibition of children's work; a national seminar dealing with the subject of youth faced with the problems of sexuality, juvenile delinquency, on which plays were presented, the responsibility of parents in educating their children, and the role of the bodies in the Party-State of Guinea.

208. In addition to this national programme, the Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea hosted on 21 and 22 March 1979 the fourth working group of the International Year of the Child. The results of that meeting, the theme of which was "Assistance to handicapped children, orphans and abandoned children", helped to ensure the success of the international conference in Moscow, in which Comrade Andrée Touré, the Chairman of the national committee, took an active part.

209. If these efforts are to be crowned with success, they must be continued at the regional and international levels.

210. In that connexion, the Guinean delegation welcomes the adoption at the sixteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held at Monrovia from 17 to 20 July 1979, of the Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child [see A/34/55?, pp. 81-83], which, *inter alia*, calls for the transformation of the national commissions or any other body set up within the context of the International Year of the Child into permanent organs which would then undertake or continue their efforts to ensure the implementation of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959.

211. We would also launch an appeal to the specialized agencies within the United Nations system to intensify their co-operation and we would encourage them to continue the activities which have a positive impact on the condition of children in Africa. That Declaration also recommends to Member States that they review those aspects of their cultural heritage and practices which may be prejudicial to the normal growth and development of the child.

212. The future of the child is indissolubly linked to the future of the parent and that of the society in which he lives. Therefore any measures to improve the situation of the child must begin with the education of the parent and the society.

213. That is why the injustice of which the victims are the parents of children in Soweto, in South Africa, in Palestine, and in all other countries under foreign domination, the destruction of hospitals, schools and houses by the forces of evil, the repeated bombings in southern Lebanon, and the thousands of homeless and hungry families around the world seriously jeopardize the efforts of the international community to ensure a happy future for our children.

214. The inequality characteristic of economic relations, chauvinism and egoism in human relations, as well as all practices that give rise to hatred, must be prohibited if we want to make our society a human society and one in which our children can fully develop, for they will be the leaders of tomorrow.

215. The leader of the Guinean revolution, President Ahmed Sékou Touré, teaches us that:

"Youth represents the future, and if the future is to measure up to their requirements for attaining our deeply felt and legitimate aspirations, then young people must be prepared for the role for progress that they must play later when they are adults".

216. In other words, the task is a tremendous and continuing one, but we are—one and all—determined to succeed, and nothing is impossible.

*The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.*