



لتظلّ الشعلة وهّاجةً - 保持火焰永不熄灭

Entretenons la flamme - Keep the flame alive - Не дать огню погаснуть

Que no se apague la llama

13th plenary meeting, 21st of June 1993

World Conference on Human Rights

Vienna, 14-25 June 1993

13th plenary meeting, 21st June 1993

[A/CONF.157/PV.13]

This document does not constitute an official record of the meeting proceedings.

It contains the text of speeches that were transcribed from the audio recordings of speeches delivered in English and of the English interpretation of speeches delivered in other languages. All care has been taken to present the most accurate version of the speeches as delivered during the Conference.

The translation into English of statements delivered in French and Russian were edited according to the actual delivery.

Statements delivered in other languages were edited based on the English interpretation.

The term “indigenous peoples” is used throughout these records of the plenary meetings of Conference.

Automatically generated transcriptions were provided by UNOG's project FAST (Fully Automated Speech-to-Text), powered by WIPO AI.

Compiled and published by the OHCHR Library, Geneva, 2021.

The symbol A/CONF.157/PV.13 is not an official UN document symbol and was assigned by the OHCHR Library for library classification purposes.

Contents

KOIRALA, Girija Prasad (Nepal)	2
NENA, Jacob (Federated States of Micronesia)	5
FALL, Ibrahima (World Conference on Human Rights. Secretary-General)	9
ANAYA PERLA, Rosa (Coalition for Children of the Earth)	11
Sleepy Eye Sharon La Framboise (Coalition for Children of the Earth)	12
LEWIS, Stephen (UNICEF)	13
BADRAN, Hoda (UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child)	18
SULIMAN, Nazeer (National Child Rights Council of South Africa)	20
MUNTARBHORN, Vitit (UN. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the sale of children)	22
AGNIVESH, Swami (UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery)	25
BOLKIAH, Mohamed (Brunei Darussalam)	27

Agenda Item 9. General debate on the progress made in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on the identification of obstacles to further the progress in this area and ways in which they can be overcome.

Agenda Item 10. Consideration of the relationship between development, democracy and the universal enjoyment of all human rights, keeping in view the interrelationship and indivisibility of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

Agenda Item 11. Consideration of contemporary trends and new challenges to the full realization of all human rights of women and men, including those of persons belonging to vulnerable groups.

Agenda Item 12. Recommendations for: (a) Strengthening international cooperation in the field of human rights in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and with international human rights instruments; (b) Ensuring the universality, objectivity and non-selectivity of the consideration of human rights issues; (c) Enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations activities and mechanisms; (d) Securing the necessary financial and other resources for United Nations activities in the area of human rights.

MOCK, Alois (President):

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 13th meeting of the plenary of the World Conference on Human Rights is called to order. Three meetings are scheduled for today. The third meeting, scheduled from 9 o'clock to midnight, is still subject to confirmation. This will be done in the course of this afternoon's meeting and is dependent on the schedule of the Drafting Committee. It will be appreciated that at the present stage of our work priority is to be given to the Drafting Committee. Should this result in any of the speakers listed for today's meetings not being able to make their statement, alternative arrangements will be made for them during the rest of the week. The President counts on the understanding of all concerned in this regard.

The speakers list for today's meeting is reproduced in today's Journal. I wish to make an appeal to all speakers to observe the order of speakers. Any change in that order may only take place when two speakers concerned mutually agree to exchange places. I wish to reiterate my appeal to all speakers to observe the time limit agreed upon that is ten minutes and not more. Joint non-governmental organizations statements may also last for no more than ten minutes. All other NGOs making individual statements should limit their interventions for up to five minutes. Priority is given to the joint statements in order to have the larger spectrum of youth reflected.

We shall now resume our general debate. You may recall that today's theme is children. The first part of this morning's meeting is, therefore, dedicated to that theme. Before starting the commemoration of the Children's Day, I wish to invite His Excellency Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal, to address the Conference. Excellency, you have the floor.

KOIRALA, Girija Prasad (Nepal):

Keywords: HUMAN RIGHTS - NEPAL - HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your unanimous election to the Chair of this very important Conference, the first of its kind to have taken place at a very crucial period of history. I am confident that your wisdom and vast experience will guide us to make our deliberations and the outcome rewarding and bring this Conference to a successful conclusion. I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the government and people of Austria for the excellent preparations for the Conference and for extending to us generous and warm hospitality in this beautiful city of Vienna.

Our appreciation is also due to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has been instrumental in organizing the Conference. We in Nepal have watched with admiration the various initiatives taken by the Secretary-General towards reorientation of the United Nations in line with the emerging realities. I would also like to commend Mr. Ibrahima Fall, the Secretary-General of this Conference whose untiring efforts and admirable qualities have immensely contributed to bringing this Conference to this stage. We also sincerely thank other United Nations officials and all those who have put in their toil and talent for the preparation of this Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

The timing of this Conference would not have come at a better moment. We are passing through one of the great epochs of human history. The cold war has tapered off; ideological divides have crumbled giving way to a new era of democratization in politics and liberalization in economics; a number of festering wounds manifesting themselves in conflicts and even wars are healing; and the world has grown more interdependent than at any time before. These and many other momentous changes have ushered in a new era of hope, progress and higher values and offered new opportunities for a global meeting of minds in areas of common concern that should help evolve shared beliefs, values and principles.

Much ground has been covered since the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. From the seminal Four Freedoms and the Declaration of 1948 we have made a notable progress in setting common human rights standards through various international instruments. In particular, major advances have been made in the promotion of human rights since the Teheran Proclamation of 1968. While the International Bill of Human Rights has now come into force, several new instruments particularly those that address the most frequent and serious violations of human rights have come into being. Notable among these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Convention on the Rights of Child. Monitoring and enforcing mechanisms have also been put in place to ensure an effective implementation of the provisions of various human rights covenants. If accession to these instruments constitutes an initial step, ratification and assimilation of the provisions into national laws as well as the enforcement thereof is what can bring these ideals into reality. My delegation views that the universal ratification of the International Bill of Human Rights would be a milestone in the annals of the promotion of worldwide respects for human rights.

These brighter prospects notwithstanding, we have also to admit that all is not well in our planet. Despite the progress made in promoting and protecting human rights, ethnic cleansing, forced eviction of people from their homeland, xenophobia, racism, discrimination on one ground or the other and international conflicts, all with their attendant atrocities, are still with us. Millions of people are reeling under the pains of poverty and deprivation. The gap between the rich and the poor is far from being narrowed and is even widening thus breeding social tension. Mother Nature has not been very kind to

many places thus pushing the people to the verge of displacement, starvation and death. The causes of these problems may be diverse but the effect is often a pervasive violation of human rights and mostly the victims are the weak and innocent people.

Mr. Chairman,

I feel happy to inform this august gathering that Nepal has made great strides towards improving the human rights situation in the country after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990. Our Constitution has abolished death penalty altogether and guaranteed fundamental freedoms and human rights to all citizens without any discrimination based on religion, caste, sex, race, ethnicity or conscience. Many other steps have been, and are being, taken by the democratic government to promote respect for and observance of human rights. The assimilation and incorporation of human rights provisions into national laws is underway in earnest. We all know, implementation of all human rights standards is a lofty goal we all have yet to realize but Nepal is working towards achieving this goal with a strong sense of commitment. As a result, there is not a single political prisoner in Nepal.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to speak of few things about the police force also. The police force of Nepal has organized human rights training seminars in Katmandu. This kind of seminars by policemen has not been organized in any part of the region. Nepal is the only country where this kind of human rights training has been organized by the police force itself. I am very proud of that also.

Nepal believes in a strong and inalienable inter-relationship between human rights, democracy and development and recognizes their mutual contributions to sustain and nurture each other. Thus, we subscribe to a holistic approach, which ensures greater freedom and long-term prosperity for all. This, we feel, is the human rights philosophy, which as a common strand pervades the Charter and many other international instruments and resolutions of the United Nations.

Nepal upholds the principles of universality, objectivity and indivisibility of fundamental freedoms and human rights for the wellbeing of every human person, a human person who should be at the center of all our activities. If the promotion of civil and political rights without a decent and respectable living will hardly be meaningful to the people, the promotion of social, economic and cultural rights without civil and political rights will be hollow and unsustainable. Coming from a least developed country, I can tell you how debasing poverty is and how onerous it is to enforce human rights standards in a situation of persistent poverty. We must, therefore, recognize the mutually reinforcing nature of these categories of human rights and follow a balanced approach in pursuing them. We see a clear need for encouraging concerted efforts at national, regional and international levels to correct the imbalances and also for discouraging the temptation to selectively use human rights for political expediency. We do, however, feel the enforcement of one category of human rights should not be stipulated as a precondition for the implementation of other category of human rights.

Today, we live in a civilized world that must protect and promote human rights of all segments of the population without discrimination. This entails that we bring minorities, indigenous peoples and the weaker and underprivileged sections of our societies to the mainstream of socio-economic development and political process ensuring for them the fuller enjoyment of human rights. All people should be allowed without prejudice to live in peace, liberty and harmony and to engage themselves in the pursuit of happiness without the fear of persecution, forceful eviction and abrogation of universally recognized human rights.

Similarly, the promotion of rights of women, who constitute one half of the world's population, should get a high priority. We must make sure that women enjoy human rights at the same plane as their men counterparts by ensuring equal rights for women and by creating conducive social attitude.

Mr. Chairman,

We live in an age of global interdependence. A gross and systematic violation of human rights, which crushes the dignity and worth of human person, has implications transcending national boundaries. Therefore, we have all recognized human rights as a legitimate concern of international community and international cooperation as an instrument of promoting respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. We do, nonetheless, strongly believe that international concern for human rights and the principle of sovereignty of state must not be permitted to work against each other. While international cooperation should be primarily directed to capacity building for the promotion and observance of human rights, the responsibility and prerogatives to implement them must rest with the states themselves. The United Nations should have a pivotal role in the emerging international framework for the protection and promotion of human rights.

The Charter of the United Nations and international instruments of human rights have made provisions for the use of United Nations mechanisms to ensure promotion and protection of human rights. In consonance with these provisions, there is a need for more coordination and streamlining of the existing human rights mechanisms with a view to enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness. Similarly, their growing responsibility should be met with the availability of resources at an enhanced level so that these bodies could provide support and assistance to the requesting states and effectively fulfill their duties demanded by the treaty provisions.

It needs to be stressed that the full realization of human rights by all demands a concerted action at all levels. We are appreciative of the role played by non-governmental organizations in enhancing the awareness of human rights and urge them to be transparent, accountable and credible in promoting the great cause of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

All eyes of the world are now set on Vienna while we are in Conference here to deliberate on such a vital issue of global concern. The decisions we make here will greatly contribute to a new world order, which is in the making now, a world order which should be comprehensive in nature, stable in content and equitable in essence. As we prepare to enter into the 21st century, we should ensure that the coming one would be a better century in which human rights, democracy and development thrive together, the principles of sovereignty of a state and international cooperation for the promotion of human rights coexist and flourish in peace and harmony and human being can live with more dignity and honor. To achieve these larger goals, it is essential for us to put our differences behind and work in a spirit of understanding, cooperation and accommodation. I would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, Nepal shall extend all possible cooperation for a successful and meaningful conclusion of this important Conference.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Change of President]

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I thank His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Nepal, for his statement. Now, I invite His Excellency Mr. Jacob Nena, Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia to address the Conference. I ask the Head of Protocol to accompany him to the podium. You have the floor, Your Excellency.

NENA, Jacob (Federated States of Micronesia):

Keywords: MICRONESIA (FEDERATED STATES OF) - HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION - NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS- DEVELOPMENT - INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - INTERNATIONAL COURTS AND TRIBUNALS - HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to speak to this historic Conference today, particularly because in doing so, I am making for my country its first public statement relating our position in regard to the international human rights system and the fundamental rights and freedoms addressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Federated States of Micronesia is a relatively new nation but having had a long association with the United Nations as a Trust Territory we made at our outset a firm commitment to pursue our social and economic development in the context of international cooperation. Thus, United Nations membership was one of our first priorities after self-determination was achieved and we proudly took our seat in this body in October 1991. We quickly learned, however, that international cooperation for development is not simply a marketplace wherein we can easily pick and choose among those issues that bear directly on our immediate goals. We have come to appreciate how almost every great international issue has an interrelationship with our development goals - and in the case of human rights the discussions here during this Conference clearly show that connection.

We are a country made up of widely dispersed small islands, above the Equator in the Western Pacific Ocean. Our people, who number just over a hundred thousand, exhibit a wide variety of cultural and ethnic differences. More than ten separate and distinct languages are spoken with English currently serving as our common link.

Despite the outward appearance of great differences there is one strong force that unites us, namely, our Constitution and the democratic institutions of government it prescribes. For centuries, our diverse islands were governed by colonial masters but when the possibility of self-government became real it was clear that we could only be united by forming our new nation on the traditional democratic principles that our people long have honored and practiced locally and which evolved in the days when we lived our lives with very little regard or need for what lay beyond the horizon.

A basic example is that our people have lived by the rule of consensus as long as anyone can remember. Even with legal mechanisms in place, which include voting processes, our small nation still finds it possible in most instances to achieve consensus on important decisions. You will appreciate then that this has made our transit into the UN system very comfortable.

A vital feature of our Constitution is Article IV entitled "Declaration of Rights." Here, and elsewhere in the Constitution, one finds expressed a comprehensive listing of individual rights and freedoms that is in close conformity with international standards. But the Constitution was not written with international standards in mind, rather, it reflects the norms of our traditional culture. Thus, I humbly submit that our society grew up with an appreciation of the value of individual human rights and charged their government to protect them as a matter of fundamental legal obligation.

Mr. President,

As Micronesians recently emerged from centuries of relative isolation, it was a grim awakening for us to learn how so many of the people on Earth never have been able to exercise the individual rights that we take for granted. We have seen war firsthand and we have endured domination by foreign powers

but the impulse that would subject so many millions to torture, arbitrary imprisonment and all the other offenses against human dignity has been, until now, almost beyond our comprehension.

Looking back, a number of factors may have interfered with our forming accurate and timely perceptions. During the cold war years, we commonly heard references to the "Free world," as contrasted with the Communist world, which presumably, was unfree. We supposed that everyone in the Free world must enjoy the same freedoms we did - a supposition we now know was sadly inaccurate. We supposed that every man, woman and child in the Communist world lived in the darkness of oppression. We certainly would have thought that the fall of Communism would have quickly brought about a Nirvana of human rights. Instead, today the picture seems, if anything, darker than ever and in this hall we can almost hear the cries of women and children, victims of a process grotesquely called "cleansing."

Throughout the times to which I just referred, the very process that has brought us to Vienna was underway. But the splendid work done by so many in the cause of human rights during that period was somehow overshadowed by public utterances from governments everywhere professing love and respect for human rights. In fact, I doubt that I ever heard a government official denounce human rights. Now, however, we are saddened every day by some new aspect of the reality that what governments say, often is not what they do in observing and protecting the fundamental rights of those who are subject to their power.

It is to be regretted that in convening here during these days of 1993, almost a half century after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this Conference cannot be a historic occasion to celebrate worldwide acceptance of and adherence to the fundamental rights of humankind. Instead, this Conference is at grave risk of making history of a different kind - of becoming a tragic and historic failure, if the nations of the World coming together in such numbers to focus on one subject, in the end can do little more than congratulate ourselves on the past accomplishments.

What I fear, Mr. President, is that lacking the resolve or the ingenuity to implement more effective approaches to problems that are unquestionably growing, this Conference will be remembered as a giant paintbrush with which a World helpless to do more simply painted over the agonies of growing numbers of the suffering with a review of achievements to date and then applied a second coat of resolve to continue old methods with vigor.

Before passing on, let me add that I fully realize it would be inappropriate on my part if, speaking for a new and previously uninvolved Member, I appeared with these remarks to be disparaging the fine record of past achievements. Worse, I would be disrespectful to the memory of so many who have given their very lives in this cause. That is, of course, not my intention at all. But I am confident that those very heroes would be among the first to say, "Let us look into the past only for what we can learn from it. The job is not yet done and our enemy grows stronger."

Mr. President,

We seem to have reached a point where it is painfully obvious that if the UN Charter is to have continued relevance to individuals living on this planet something must be done differently. Even so, this delegation has watched sadly during the past days here as the debate seems to have reflected an increasing rather than a decreasing polarization of views along familiar North and South lines. And yet, from our viewpoint as a new entrant, there is a basic validity to what both sides are saying. Permit me a few moments to explain.

Underlying most of the observations of developing countries is a fear of exposing our most precious hope - the securing of a decent, sustainable lifestyle for our peoples - to a judgmental process established and enforced by others who do not share that hope in the same way and who are driven by priorities based on different backgrounds. The scope of many situations of human rights violations today is so great and the level of frustration is so high within the United Nations that developing

countries fear the search for effective measures could go too far and lead to actions that themselves violate one or more human rights principles or interconnected principles of democracy and sovereignty. Not only are many such actions far more costly than can be afforded but also we know from lessons of history that "the end justifies the means" can never serve as a fitting basis for national or international action.

Were the strong to become empowered in the name of moral imperative to carry out unregulated interventions upon the social and economic development of the needy, this obviously would be a very corrosive agent within the UN system. But I speak of extreme perceptions on both sides. Ways must be found to balance these considerations. At the risk of being naive I dare to hope that ways can be found at this Conference to engage the spirit of international consensus enshrined in the Charter to which we are all committed and build upon the undisputable elements recognized by both developed and the developing world - to recognize and embrace our common ground rather than shrinking from it out of mistrust.

Many speakers here have pointed out correctly that the right to development is a critical human right in itself and that by enabling the underdeveloped to pursue that right with necessary assistance, living conditions and educational levels can be established wherein human rights and fundamental freedoms are more likely to flourish. This should not be dismissed as a form of conditionality on human rights. It is an important and perfectly valid component of our complex effort to deal with the problem.

But neither is the right to development a *sine qua non* that supersedes all other considerations. Would anyone seriously defend ethnic cleansing were it to be advanced on the basis of a right to develop? Still, great care must be taken in approaching the placement of conditionality on development assistance tied to someone's idea of compliance with human rights requirements. While extreme human rights atrocities make this approach very tempting, all too often such conditionality only penalize those in need.

The other danger inherent in any over-empowerment of authority at a super-national level is that international human rights standards must respect the rights of countries and peoples to improve their human rights conditions at a pace appropriate to them in line with their own values, social environment and cultural traditions. Obnoxious as this sounds to well-meaning people who are evangelistic in their beliefs regarding human rights, there is, nevertheless, a legitimate place for this principle, properly defined, if we have any hope of truly attaining and maintaining international consensus on what we all came here to discuss.

Again, this point cannot be a shield for atrocious conduct but it must also be recognized that the goal of universal adherence to the principles of the Declaration and acceptance of the obligations of the covenants and related treaties will never be reached if the system operates without sensitivity to the sovereign rights of all parties. This is not said to disagree with our esteemed Secretary-General Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali where he commented on the limits of sovereignty. In fact, I believe it is consistent with the basic thought that, up to a point, even on the subject of universal human rights progress is best maintained through an approach of open-minded discussion.

Mr. President,

I hope that the context of my remarks up to this point establishes a receptive framework for what I will now say regarding the position of the Federated States of Micronesia. First, we align ourselves with the Bangkok Declaration, particularly as to the right to development and inclusion of a country's background and culture among the considerations to be taken into account in its human rights advancement. We feel that these are essential and workable concepts, which should not be shouted down as amounting to shields for repression. They need not be.

Second, were this Conference to leave in question the universality of human rights, we would all have come here in vain. We support a strong and unconditional expression in that regard along with new resolves to give meaning and definition to the concept.

I might add that we do not regard the application of this principle as inconsistent with the Bangkok Declaration.

Third, we call for a concentration of effort to gain universal accession to existing human rights instruments. For our part, we recently became party to our first such undertaking, the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Anyone familiar with our island cultures knows the special concerns that we keep for children and so we thought appropriate to make this undertaking our first among the human rights instruments. We hope soon to complete an examination of others, particularly, the two Covenants, with a view to freely undertaking the obligations thereunder.

I would like to mention our pleasure at hearing the strong commitment expressed by our partner in Free Association, the United States, to the cause of the rights of women and their protection against discrimination and abuse. We fully support the measures called for by the distinguished Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, and will be giving these matters our own priority attention.

Fourth, as a nation comprised wholly of indigenous peoples, we hereby state our solidarity with all the indigenous peoples of the world and particularly with those subjected to any form of discrimination or maltreatment within their homelands. We hope that the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples will emerge during the International Year. The recognition of this cause by the United Nations is most welcome and it will have our support now and in the future.

Fifth, we recognize the sensitivities surrounding the United States' proposal for the establishment of a high commissioner for human rights. To many of our colleagues in the developing world this proposal embodies and crystallizes all the fears of uncontrolled and unwarranted interference to which I made reference earlier. Nevertheless, in principle, with proper protection against excesses, we approach it with open mind recalling the flood of extreme situations in our world today that simply must be addressed in some way other than business as usual.

Whether or not the idea of a high commissioner finds ultimate acceptance, other ideas as well must be seriously considered, such as the establishment of a permanent international human rights tribunal. The independent and juridical character of such a body should place it above the concerns regarding political intervention while denying human rights criminals any refuge from appropriately defined international responsibility.

Sixth, without question, existing human rights mechanisms must be strengthened. Parties must work together to make treaty monitoring and fact-finding bodies more effective and increased funding must be applied. We have been shocked to learn that less than one percent of the United Nations budget is expended for human rights activities. Reporting and information dissemination probably will always be the most effective basic tool in discouraging those who would violate the rights of individuals because they, like all enemies of society, fear most the light of day.

Perhaps the most pressing example of need for immediate increase in funding is the Center for Human Rights, who are to be highly commended for their service to humankind under the most difficult and limiting circumstances. This need cannot be neglected any longer.

Finally, Mr. President, we agree with those who see a need to integrate more fully into the entire human rights process the participation of non-governmental organizations and private parties. Any form of exclusion from the United Nations effort to advance human rights is simply wrong, deprives us of rich sources of ideas and support and only serves the interests of those who are against us.

In closing, my delegation expresses warm thanks to the government and people of Austria for hosting this Conference, for the excellent facilities and arrangements and for the many special courtesies extended to us throughout our stay. The beautiful city of Vienna is a living shrine to the harmony and enrichment of the human spirit, and, thus, the work of this Conference can only be inspired by our presence here.

Thank you, Mr. President.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish; text is edited based on the English interpretation:

Keywords: RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - UN. System - CHILD WELFARE - TREATIES - INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

I thank His Excellency Jacob Nena, Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia, for his statement. I would ask the Head of Protocol to accompany His Excellency from the room.

Now, as President of the World Conference, I should like to express the warm welcome to the representatives of groups of children who are with us today, the day when the rights of children are to be discussed. It is particularly significant that boys and girls from all regions of the world should be here representing the wealth and pluralism of the international community. Their presence and participation will encourage us to establish a world where cooperation and understanding between peoples and states prevail. You well know that the world is far from being a peaceful world. Children often suffer more in times of war and conflict and it is often children who are most affected by hunger, poverty and a lack of education and health. Therefore, the United Nations is making great efforts on their behalf. UNICEF is at the centre of this work and is determined to improve the conditions of children throughout the world.

I should also like to emphasize the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More than one hundred states have already ratified this Convention in a very short time. Efforts should now be concentrated on its implementation and the implementation of all rights contained in the Convention in all states that are members of the international community.

You have had the opportunity to meet here in Vienna, Austria, and to meet each other and to exchange points of view on the subject of human rights and how to promote and protect such rights, which indeed is the reason for this World Conference. I think it is very important that we should hear you today and that we should hear the conclusions, which you reached through your meeting. This is important because you are our future. Thank you.

Now I should give the floor the Secretary-General of the World Conference, Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall, you have the floor, Sir.

FALL, Ibrahima (World Conference on Human Rights. Secretary-General):

Keywords: RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - TREATIES - TREATY-MONITORING BODIES - UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child - SPECIAL PROCEDURES - SPECIALIZED AGENCIES - NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, dear children,

It gives me great pleasure to open the theme of today – children and their rights. May I begin by welcoming you, the children from so many nations, to this meeting of the World Conference.

Never before has the United Nations associated you, the children, so closely with the discussions of your own rights. You have worked long, long and hard, to get to know each other, each other's way of

thinking, different cultures and religions and have come to us with your understanding of your rights. This is the foundation on which we wish to build our future together.

And I wish to assure you of the full support of the Secretary—General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for this new approach in associating those directly concerned with our human rights activities. He will, I am sure, highlight the importance he gives to your proposals, children. He will do that in his statement when he comes back to Vienna this week.

The idea that children have particular rights that need to be met is relatively new. Yet, the concept has gained wide and rapid acceptance since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989. In the three years that have passed since the Convention adoption, more than 130 states have accepted to become a party to this international treaty. It is hoped that all states will ratify or accede to this treaty by 1995.

At the international level, this strong movement to protect and promote children's rights has led to the establishment of a number of children rights focused arrangements. There has been created a ten-member Committee on the Rights of the Child whose mandate is to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. By studying the efforts taken by governments to protect and promote children's rights and by making recommendations to governments on the action that should be taken to improve the situation of children within a given country.

We have a Special Rapporteur too who tries to prevent the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in every part of the world. He makes reports, does research and acts quickly to protect the children when he receives precise reports of violations.

Other human rights mechanism address children's matters as part of their work. We have a Working Group that tries to protect children from various types of exploitative labor. In line with the spirit of our meeting here today, this Working Group has only last month taken steps to associate children and youth more closely with its work.

To help people, especially from the poorest countries, to come and present information to this Working Group and make its work more meaningful, a special fund has been established. This Fund, which also helps victims of exploitation, relies on voluntary contributions. We hope that further contributions will be made to the Voluntary Fund.

Making a reality of children's rights everywhere means that all the organizations and bodies belonging to the United Nations family have to work together in order to provide real help to children.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has benefitted particularly from the activities of UNICEF and ILO, which assist countries in implementing the rights of the child according to their respective mandates. In fact, we have hoped that Mr. James Grant, the Director-General of UNICEF, would be with us to address you, the children. And his representative Ambassador Stephen Lewis will do it at this place. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has not only set in motion specific measures for coordination among United Nations human rights activities and United Nations institutions, it has also actively encouraged the involvement of academic institutions and national institutions and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of children's rights. In this regard, it is interesting to note the Committee's encouragement of the establishment of national coalitions of non-governmental organizations dealing with children's rights. Most importantly, however, the human rights bodies and the Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations have welcomed the active participation of children themselves, that they be given the opportunity to have their voice heard and be given access to decision makers.

Dear children,

I must say what a pleasure it was to meet with some of you from the Austrian Children's Summit, last Monday, the opening day of the World Conference on Human Rights, and to hear of your concerns on human rights and the promises you wish the leaders to keep. I know that you have carried the baton of work from the Austrian Children's Summit to this meeting today. The work of you, children, is with us throughout this Conference. It has been the most clearly displayed through the Children's Tree of Human Rights Promises, which is standing in the lobby of the Austrian Centre. It is the symbol of this Conference. It gives recognition to the universality, indivisibility and interdependency of all human rights and it calls also for action to be taken to protect and promote human rights, which is the task set before this Conference.

You, the children, are calling on us to take action to help build a better future for yourselves and your children. We cannot ignore this call.

Already many suggestions have been made concerning the more effective and coordinated operation of our mechanisms for protecting rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has adopted innovative procedures that promise to have a real impact on the way children live.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear children,

To conclude, there are four things I would suggest would help us implement more effectively children's rights. First, rapid ratification of the Child Convention. Second, increased resources to enable us to support more meaningfully the Committee in its work. Third, more contributions to the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation to help the Centre respond to many governmental requests for help affecting the rights of the child. Fourth, a strengthened non-governmental network, especially at the local level, for the rights of the child.

Finally, let me again say how happy I am to see you, children, here today. We await with much interest what you have to say. My only regret is that it is impossible for me to be present here and also in another place this morning.

Dear children,

On this day, the first day of summer, a season of fine weather, vacation, travel and fullness of life – *la joie du vivre* in French – on this first day of summer I am especially happy that you, youth of today and our hope for tomorrow, now in the summer of your life, bring us your message of youth and hope.

I thank you.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for his statement. I am pleased to invite representative of the Coalition for Children of the Earth to address the Conference on behalf of all the children of the Coalition for Children of the Earth. You have the floor.

ANAYA PERLA, Rosa (Coalition for Children of the Earth):

Keywords: RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - VIOLENCE

First, I want to thank everybody for being here and for believing in us and for making this possible that we are all here. I want to thank all the children for being children. Because we are all children, we are here to fight for ourselves.

I am Rosa Anaya. I was born in this world.

First of all, let my voice be the echo for all the children of the world whose voices you cannot hear right now. These are the children who are dying and who are dying with pain and sorrow within their hearts. I appeal to the love and the hope in your hearts that you not let any children face the brutal reality I have experienced.

This is my father whose life was dedicated to human rights work. This may be just a picture to all of you but for me it is my reality and this is the reality for a lot of children in the world.

For most of you to be able to understand our pain, you should personally go to a conflict area where you will experience what we children have been through, what we are struggling for and what we must stop now.

I would like few seconds of silence for all those children that are suffering, that are dying, that have died in the world.

[Minute of silence]

On this day of the rights of the child, please stop the violence surround the children of the world.

Thank you.

Sleepy Eye Sharon La Framboise (Coalition for Children of the Earth):

Keywords: DISCRIMINATION - CHILD ABUSE - RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - CHILD WELFARE - POPULAR PARTICIPATION

What is the difference between a black man and a white man? What is the difference between a person with blue eyes or green eyes? Is it true that all human beings have hearts? Is it true that all people feel pain and joy? Every person on this entire earth seeks the happiness of life. Is there any reason why people cannot live together in peace?

Estakaba - emakyapy - my name is Sleepy Eye. I know what it is like to feel hopelessness, pain and suffering. I know what it is like to see your land, your culture, your beliefs, your hopes and dreams diminished before your eyes. I know the feeling of discrimination and racism just because your skin is a different color or just because you worship the creator of life in a different way.

These are only a few of the emotions millions of children are feeling everywhere.

Every single child in this room and throughout the world is beautiful and deserves a chance to live, a chance to laugh, a chance to play, and a chance to feel safe and secure.

I imagine that the majority of the leaders in this world never had to carry a gun when they were eight years old. They never had to experience starvation. They never had to experience abuse or neglect. They never had to see the death of their parents or brothers and sisters. I assume that these government officials never had to go through life begging in the streets just to live day by day.

If they had experienced these brutal ways of life, then they would understand and this world would be in peace. Then there would not be killings and brutalities against these children.

The children's World Conference on Human Rights was put together for all children of the world, to give them a sense of direction once again. It is this Conference that revived their hopes and dreams.

There are many nations that have come together and shared their thoughts and emotions. And the main question that comes from these beautiful, innocent children is, why? Why is there war in my country? Why must I hate that kid over there? Why do not I have enough to eat? The children of the world are young and innocent but they possess something that many adults forget at times. And that is they act

through their hearts and emotions, which means that they come into this world without prejudice. It is only as they grow older and through the teachings of their parents that they begin to hate.

Being a part of the children's World Conference for Human Rights, one is able to see that there is a chance that people can live in peace. Every child in our Conference has grown to love one another and open-mindedly listen to each other. As a result, we children feel that our human rights are violated, and we feel that it is vital that we are a part of the decisions that will affect us. We need to be recognized and heard. If the children can continue to be united and are given a voice within the United Nations, generation after generation, then can there be peace on Earth.

When the adults can begin to act as children and love one another, then and only then will this world be exactly what the Creator intended it to be.

Aho matakoyasin to all my relations.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I would like to thank you for the statements we have just heard.

I would like to express thanks for the statements we have just heard. I would like to ask the members of the Coalition to leave the stage. Thank you very much.

I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Stephen Lewis, Special Representative of the Executive Director of UNICEF, who will be speaking on behalf of UNICEF. You have the floor, Sir.

LEWIS, Stephen (UNICEF):

Keywords: UNICEF - WOMEN - RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - TREATIES - CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS - SALE OF CHILDREN - GIRLS- EXTREME POVERTY

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, and children of the world here assembled,

On UNICEF's behalf I want to begin by associating ourselves with the remarks of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ibrahim Fall, in welcoming you to this Conference and to say to you, as one delegate in this room, that when both Rosa and Sleepy Eye spoke the sense of truth and clarity, the force and poignancy of what was said are realities that adults can only think and approximate. It occurred to me as I was sitting, and watching and listening, and observing, that when the question was asked – Why? Why? – and there is never any adequate answer. The inadequacy of the adult response reverberates hollowly around this room. And I cannot thank you enough for having come here this morning and made of this forum a moment of reality that it has not, I suspect, otherwise had.

Mr. Chair,

I find my way to this platform as the special representative of Mr. James Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF. Mr. Grant would have wished more than it is possible to convey, to deliver this speech himself but as some of you may know he is recovering, recovering splendidly I might add, from a recent surgery and, therefore, unable to be here today, albeit he has been following this Conference closely and we have been in constant contact. I speak the following words in his name. And as I speak, UNICEF will be distributing to all delegations a full text of our position at this World Conference on Human Rights as Mr. Grant had planned to express it had he been present. My remarks at this time will attempt to encapsulate the main themes of Mr. Grant's address and try to place them within the context of some of the issues, which have emerged during the first week of this Conference.

Mr. Chair,

As everyone now knows, today is the child's rights theme day. It is the day to celebrate what we have achieved for children, to identify the vast range of what remains to be achieved and to set the rights of the child within a broader context, so let me initially attempt to do that.

In a few short years since the end of the cold war, humankind has leap-frogged ahead and stumbled backwards simultaneously. New possibilities for cooperation, community and wellbeing have been opened. In spite of the proliferation of conflicts and the unleashing of centrifugal forces pulling apart the very fabric of the nations and communities, the end of the East-West ideological polarity and the spread of democracy around the world have set the stage for making greater progress than may now be apparent. At the same time and echoing the words you have just heard from the participants of the Children's Coalition, at the same time no one can deny that we are witnessing an upsurge of intolerance and hatred, callous abandonment of the most elemental notion of human rights and human dignity.

These dark forces turn neighbor against neighbor, set majority against minority, minority against minority. They set national against foreigner, halves against halves-not, one religious group against another. They threaten to pull us back from our leap into a better future, as a matter of fact, they bring us to the brink of the abyss. This Conference, therefore, must send a clear, unequivocal message to the forces that would deny us the dramatic progress of transformation that could be ours.

With a single voice celebrating a diversity of tonalities and timbres, we must reject hatred and barbarism and affirm the vast potential we have glimpsed, particularly at the start of this decade. We must, as the saying goes, draw a line on the sand and say that ethnic cleansing, and rape, and slaughter of the innocents is utterly unacceptable to humanity on the threshold of the 21st century. But we must, on all accounts, not despair for us intractable the most of the conflicts and problems confronting us may seem, they do not represent the fundamental trend of our era, which is leading us, I am convinced, towards greater tolerance and cooperation, greater freedom and wellbeing.

Mr. Chair,

That is why this Conference is so opportune. Yes, we recognize that there are those who question the timing and like everyone else has followed the Preparatory Committee, we recognize equally just how tough it can be to reach the consensus final declaration, although I gather, the drafting goes better than we might have assumed a number of days ago.

We want the final declaration. We hope we get there. But in the very nature of these events, there is a historical dynamic at work, and whether or not everyone emerges satisfied with the result, profound changes inevitably take place. The world is never exactly what it was at the outset.

In the instance of this Conference, for example, who can dispute that there has been a major breakthrough on the rights of women? The NGO Conference, which preceded our own, had women's rights as its centrepiece, and it would be hard to find a delegation that has taken this podium that has not expressed solidarity with the struggle for gender equality on every front.

Indeed, it seems fair to say on the basis of the speeches made that the agenda of the international women's movement has been embraced as never before. And whatever emerges at the end of this week, there will be no turning back. Between now and the Fourth International Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing there will clearly be a period of determined consolidation.

Mr. Chair,

UNICEF is delighted with this turn of events. As a matter of fact, we applaud and rejoice in the gains that have been made by the struggle for the rights of women during the course of these conferences.

We applaud and rejoice for three primary reasons. First, because the breakthrough on women's rights is incomparably overdue and is finally being expressed as the entire panoply of rights covering every aspect of women's experience. Second, because any significant improvement in the status of women cannot but benefit the status of children. Third, because inevitably as the rights of women are affirmed and protected so too are the inseparable rights of the girl-child acknowledged. Gender does not begin at the age of eighteen. UNICEF has been making this argument for a very long time. Indeed, we feel so strongly about the predicament of girl-children in so many societies that in our 1992 State of the World's Children report we characterized the situation as apartheid of gender. The particularly coarse range of discriminatory behavior directed at the girl-child, from the denial of education to abomination of rape, is the pattern of behavior which must end. We are of the view that by the time the Conference in Beijing in the 1995 Social Summit, significant progress will have been made towards that goal.

An indispensable measure of course, the progress which we make will also be linked directly to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Again, there is a clear tie to our Conference discussions of last week. The Convention's adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1989, after a decade of intricate negotiation, was one of the first demonstrations of the potential for global cooperation opened up by the end of the cold war. Even so, sceptics predicted - there are always endless people given to inveterate skepticism these international processes - the sceptics predicted that few governments will go on formally to embrace the Convention, much less to live up to its comprehensive standards. The sceptics were wrong. By September 1990, record time in the history of human rights treaties, the Convention obtained the twenty ratifications required for its entry into force as international law and it has gone on to become the most nearly universal international human rights instrument. In little over three years, 139 countries have ratified and made the Convention the law of their lands, a process which ordinarily takes much longer. Fully ninety percent of the world's children now live in the countries whose governments have ratified the Convention.

This rapid acceptance of the Convention leads us at UNICEF to hope for something that has never been accomplished before - achievement by the year 1995, in time for the UN's 50th anniversary, of universal or virtual universal ratification of the Convention. It would then become the first truly global law of humankind, undoubtedly spurring on the process of implementation. There are only fifty countries left to ratify and almost half of them have already signed.

But frankly, Mr. Chair, some of the discussion at this Conference makes us anxious.

As delegates know, there has been a call for universal ratification of all international human rights instruments by the year 2000. Another proposal suggests similar universal ratification by the year 1998, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

We at UNICEF have no problem with either proposition so long as the 1995 target date for the Convention on the Rights of the Child remains intact.

The reasons are simple. Number one: we can do it. There are no obvious legislative or administrative obstacles, which would impede the ratification by any of the remaining fifty states when there are still two and a half years to go. Second, universal ratification of the Convention is 1995 mid-term goal of UNICEF approved by consensus in April this year by UNICEF's Executive Board, interestingly enough, including countries that are yet to ratify. Third, in both Part 2 and Part 3 of the report of the Fourth Preparatory Committee to this Conference, the target date of 1995 is confirmed. Fourth, an irreversible momentum would be created for children and for the specific goals for the year 2000 as established by the 1990 Summit on Children. Goals such as reduction of infant mortality rates by a third, by the cutting of maternal mortality by half or an equivalent reduction in malnutrition. Fifth, the impetus provided for universal ratification for all other conventions would be equally irresistible.

In fact, if you would forgive Mr. Chair, I think that it is worth saying that the entire argument seems irresistible and, therefore, our profound hope that this World Conference will add its voice to the rising crescendo of approval for 1995.

What gives the matter even greater force, Mr. Chairman, is the nature of the Convention itself. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a convention like no other and as such it speaks to the one of the most fascinating, recurring themes of this Conference. As we at UNICEF set listening to the interventions of many delegations, it occurred to us, time and time again, that the indivisibility of the rights embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child directly addresses the constant juxtaposition of economic, social and cultural rights on the one hand and civil and political rights on the other. Let us recall that with the Convention on the Rights of the Child the international community was able, for the first time ever, to lay a bridge across the ideological gulf that has traditionally separated civil and political rights from economic, social and cultural rights. People forget that, countries forget it. On occasion, dare I say it, conferences overlook it. But here we have a convention where all the rights are fully integrated in a word: indivisible.

Mr. Chair,

Nothing could be more important to UNICEF. Nothing.

For years, UNICEF has been bringing to the attention of the world what we call the "silent emergency" of children. If we agree, as surely we do, that ending the massive violation of children's rights still taking place around the world today is one of the central moral imperatives of our time, then at absolute minimum something must be done to reverse the grotesque desecration of the rights of 35,000 children who die every day of largely preventable malnutrition and disease - 13 million children a year in the developing world.

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the equal guarantee of economic and social rights means that the world can no longer turn a blind and impervious eye to the "silent emergency." What used to be seen as the needs of children have now as a matter of binding international law become the rights of children. It has finally been recognized that these economic, social and cultural rights are inseparable from political and civil rights. They have to be inseparable. Economic and social rights must have an equal status. For children it is often a matter of life and death. There is, if you forgive me, therefore, no fashion in speculating further about the meaning of economic, social and cultural rights. Children give them meaning. The Convention of the Rights of the Child gives them meaning. It is the ultimate violation of the Convention to ignore or to fail to take action on a "silent emergency."

UNICEF makes this point forcefully because as the record of the Conference so far shows there is still a tendency to see and define human rights primarily in civil and political terms. UNICEF obviously has no quarrel with civil and political rights. We are implacable in their defense. God knows, the rights of children are as susceptible to abuse in those domains as in any other. What we argue for is the reading of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives full credence to the principle of indivisibility. And when that happens, Mr. Chair, the civil and political rights of children can be seen as every bit as important as they are for adults. We believe that the Convention's articles on children's rights to participation and to freedom of belief can be used to strengthen and enrich democracy both where it is new and fragile and where it is venerable and stable. If anyone doubts the validity of the principle of participation under the Convention and its utility, one only needs to witness what took place here this morning. Although children do not have the right to vote, we all know that the children can be powerful agents for social change. Just look at their roles in overthrowing repressive regimes and in the movement to preserve the environment.

At the same time, we must employ those articles of the Convention aimed at protecting children in armed conflicts. Day after day, television consecrates images of famine and war - children reduced to skeletons, rapes of girls and women, the shelling of soccer games, snipers firing at buses of refugee children, children maimed for life physically and psychologically by stepping on land mines - and we run the risk of becoming inured to these atrocities. Children have now become targets in the adult psychosis of war. In the armed conflicts so far waged in this decade, several children have died for each soldier killed. Children are displaced; they are homeless; they are on the run. They need security, intervention, and rehabilitation. We must hold accountable those who believe that killing, and injuring,

and violating children is an acceptable way to punish or demoralize their parents and communities. In fact, it is a form of dementia that borders on depravity.

But it does not end there. Children in especially difficult circumstances are everywhere. Just read the painful and startling report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Or follow the plight of children and teenagers who, by the millions, are driven by poverty and abuse into the streets or the sweatshops where they are brutally exploited. We must see to it that the children of the AIDS pandemic - orphans and those who are themselves infected - receive the care to which they are entitled coupled with respect for their rights. And we must use the opportunity of this opportunity of the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples to redouble our efforts on behalf of the indigenous children. As this Conference has revealed, the international records on indigenous peoples are lamentable at best and abysmal at worse.

Mr. Chair,

I can see that it is an unhappy litany but I refuse to close unhappily because UNICEF believes, with a patience unabated, that we can turn things around for our children and through them for this world. It can be put as a simple proposition, and the proposition is this – viewing children as the cutting edge of human rights and of many ongoing efforts to diverse fields of development, that viewing of children at the cutting edge of human rights would contribute more to international peace and security and more to democracy, development and environment, more to preventing crisis and conflict in a shorter period of time and a far lower cost than any other set of doable actions aimed at remedying global problems on the threshold of the 21st century.

Now I can see that that a large claim but it is a claim rooted in UNICEF's experience. And for all of the sceptics who litter the landscape of social commentary these days, it is a claim whose power and force is worthy of recognition.

Mr. Chairman,

We are all, as the truism goes, interdependent neighbors and it is unconscionable to believe that we can continue to live indefinitely side by side, amidst the kind of obscene disparities in wealth, health and levels of freedom and participation that exist today. Radically narrowing those disparities is not only an ethical priority of the highest order, it is increasingly the question of global survival- I am suggesting that we can now make a remarkable progress in that direction starting with children. That assessment is based on a new capacity we have developed to extend the benefits of the modern science and medicine to people everywhere. We can jumpstart the process of narrowing these disparities by breaking what we call poverty's inner cycle early in the lives of its victims whose illnesses, poor growth and illiteracy are some of the most fundamental causes as well as some of the most severe symptoms of poverty and underdevelopment. Our capacity to place a bubble of protection around the most vulnerable months and years of millions of children has increased exponentially over the past decade and as this capacity has grown, it has become unacceptable, ethically, not to use that capacity or to exclude nations, communities or individuals from the benefits of progress.

Look at what we have achieved for children, I beg you. Who can fail not to see it as a revolution? The combination of universal child immunization, oral rehydration therapy, the iodization of salt, distribution of Vitamin A, the scientific acknowledgement of the miracles of mother's milk, basic education at low cost, particularly for girls, bringing safe water and sanitation to poor communities - it amounts, cumulatively, to an astonishing quantum leap in the improvement of the human condition.

We estimate that the child survival and development revolution of the past decade employing the technologies and know-how just enumerated have saved some twenty million lives and made living something more than mere survival for another one hundred million children, which is probably a significant underestimate. If we are successful in reaching the World Summit goals for the year of 2000...

[The sound of the gavel.]

I am near the end of my remarks, Mr. Chair. Very near, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate, albeit, a length of time that you would accord me this time, which was accorded to Heads of other agencies and other delegates and I am at my peroration, so-called, so the delegates would appreciate.

And if we are successful in reaching the World Summit goals for the year 2000, these gains are then extended in a dramatic fashion to the majority of the human family in a way that has no modern precedent. That is why the UNICEF can make a claim we made, the revolution that is underway for children is ultimately not confined to children, it encompasses us all.

Mr. Chair,

You will be relieved to know that that brings me to a final, concluding thought that I can deliver in a matter of seconds.

The various fora of this World Conference are pulsating openly and in subterranean precincts with the clash of opinion over the principle of universality. And when it is not universality, it is a controversial mesh of human rights, democracy and development complicated yet further by the lurking question of conditionality. That spectrum of political conditionalities with which we are all familiar. UNICEF wants to end by saying simply and forthrightly that where the rights and needs of children are concerned, let me say it again, where the rights and needs of children are concerned, universality is not negotiable and conditionality is unacceptable.

On these two truths there is no compromise. There may be variations in timing, there may be variations in implementation. But I repeat, on these two truths there is no compromise and based on the unprecedentedly rapid and widespread support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit, we would submit that the great majority of countries and peoples already agree.

UNICEF thanks the Chair and all of the delegation on this remarkable Day of the Child for your gracious indulgence and allowing us to put the argument.

Thank you.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I thank you. I now give the floor to Mrs. Hoda Badran, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who will address the Conference on behalf of that Committee. You have the floor, Madame.

BADRAN, Hoda (UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child):

Keywords: UN. Committee on the Rights of the Child - TREATY-MONITORING BODIES - RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Dear children,

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is extremely happy to have you with us. We have listened to your speeches, which actually have given fuel to our work – that is monitoring your rights. Anything, anything to be said after your speeches will sound bland because they were touching and moving, but I will try, on behalf of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman,

Let me say that no human rights treaty has had such a response as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Since it was adopted in November 1989, no less than 139 countries have become parties to the Convention and some twenty others have signed it and, thereby, indicated their intention to ratify. We are convinced that by 1995 all countries of the world will have acceded to this Convention.

Why is it that the Convention on the Rights of the Child has had such an unprecedented response?

The major reason, of course, is that we have begun to understand the depth of the suffering inflicted on children through violations and neglect. Still, 12 million children die unnecessarily each year as victims of diseases, which could have been prevented. Millions of children, the majority of them girls, are deprived of primary education. Children suffer severely both physically and mentally during armed conflicts and civil strife. In some countries young boys are used as soldiers and many children have been crippled by land mines in recent times. Many children are forced into hazardous work, some of them even have to sell their own bodies. The Convention addresses these problems.

There is also a growing realization that all human rights start with the rights of children. True democracy can be learned and practiced in childhood. Tolerance, empathy and solidarity are natural for the child - that human wisdom should be protected and allowed to influence the adult world.

The Convention makes no distinction - or grading - between economic, social and cultural rights on one side and civil and political rights on the other. All these rights are interdependent and truly indivisible. Also, an understanding has developed that the implementation procedures should be constructive rather than punitive.

The Convention formulates a visionary perspective. It defines the principle of the best interests of the child. It also states that the child should be free to express his or her views, and be listened to, respected as an actor in society.

The Convention also expresses that children should be given priority. States should implement the rights of the child "to the maximum extent of their available resources."

These principles and positions form a new attitude towards children. This has not been lost on various institutions, non-governmental organizations and groups of children in many countries. The Convention has turned into a starting point for discussions about human relationships.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has now operated for almost 2.5 years. We have begun to discuss country reports with State Parties. We have appreciated the honest, sometimes self-critical reports we have received so far. The participation of non-governmental and other interest groups including children have been valuable.

One aspect of our approach should be emphasized, that we want to encourage local promotion and monitoring. Governments should spread information about the Convention and make their reports widely available. Only in this way will it be possible to build a wide and meaningful alliance for children.

We hope that there will be, in each country, a review of the legislation, the administrative practices, the health programmes, the school system, etc. as a consequence of the Convention. The Committee sees itself as an instrument for further discussion, our role is to "monitor the monitoring."

We are convinced that our work is important and we are disappointed that the Human Rights Centre has not been given resources to service us properly. That problem should be remedied during this Conference.

The Committee takes this opportunity, when addressing high-level country delegations and important organizations, to appeal for the following:

First, countries that have not yet ratified the Convention should do so as soon as possible and no later than 1995. States facing problems in the ratification process are invited to make use of the assistance in this field by the United Nations.

Second, countries that have ratified with reservation, we appeal that they would review these reservations and consider waiving them.

Third, States Parties should take serious steps to implement the Convention at the level of policies, legislation, institutions and government programmes. They should allocate all the necessary resources for that purpose.

Fourth, States Parties should submit their periodic reports in a timely manner. The reports should be comprehensive and prepared in the spirit of the guidelines issued by the Committee.

Finally, the Committee appeals to individual donor countries and to the international community to support countries with fewer resources in their efforts to implement the Convention. We also appeal for more resources to enable our Committee to perform our role effectively.

Thank you very much

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I thank you. I now give the floor to the representative of youth of the National Child Rights Council of South Africa to address the Conference. You have the floor.

SULIMAN, Nazeer (National Child Rights Council of South Africa):

Keywords: SOUTH AFRICA – AFRICA - RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - CONFERENCES - DECLARATIONS

Distinguished delegations and above all the children of the world,

I am Nazeer Suliman and I will be speaking on behalf of the children of South Africa and Africa.

On the threshold of the transition to democracy in South Africa the focus of children's involvement is increasingly shifting towards emerging democratic structures for children, in support of basic human rights.

It is in this regard that South African children have realized the importance of advocating a culture for children's rights. This awakening is particularly during the era of transition. It has shocked my country. It may shock the world too just to realize how far we, South African children, have gone to ensure that we be part of the future constitution.

The incredible breakthrough came when we had the first International Children's Summit, held last year in Somerset, Capetown, South Africa. It contributed to unfolding success in that it gave children, for once, a chance to give their opinions and to express their pleas. The greatest achievement realized at the Summit was the adoption of the first ever Children's Charter for South Africa. It deals with my country's unique context in which it has placed children and reflects the demands of various children in its Articles. This charter indeed mirrors the experiences and feelings of South African children and the injustices they have been dealt.

This has, thus, made the Summit a vision of the New South Africa. A New South Africa which projected itself through the faces of 200 children of all races and colors, aged between twelve and sixteen, from twenty different regions of South Africa, but the deception only lasted for a few days and now the concept of the New South Africa projects its reality with children still facing the effects of apartheid, where they are ignored and treated with the ignorance of being seen and not heard.

Right now, as I speak, tomorrow's nation is been forgotten. In South Africa children suffer in areas of conflict, racial, political and tribal violence, orchestrated by so-called political leaders and our government who has remained consistent in ignoring its future generation, declining to listen to our voices.

In an era of increasing awareness about the plight of children in Africa, it seems ironic to note that on this side of the 21st century we still do not have shelter, food and an equal education.

In the light of and in conformity with the plan of action adopted at the World Summit for Children held in New York in September 1990, we, the children of South Africa, request the South African political players, the Organization of African Unity and the various communities to rally efforts with us to make certain that the South African children's Charter is billed and included into any new constitution. We, the South African children, rally efforts with all other African States towards ensuring that children be put at the top of their political, economic and social agendas especially as they enter into a period of democratic reforms.

The majority of African countries have signed the Declaration of the World Summit for Children. This shows a good spirit but we all have learnt that a signature does not mean much without the sincerity and pledge. We challenge the signatories to implement and keep to their conviction, then only can we children have a new hope.

My coup de grace: and we children, South African or other, will no longer remain silent about our rights, but we will speak and even shout out about our needs and demands!

Thank you.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

Thank you. I now give the floor to Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on questions related to the sale of children.

SULIMAN, Nazeer (National Child Rights Council of South Africa):

I would like to say something.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I give the floor to the representative.

SULIMAN, Nazeer (National Child Rights Council of South Africa):

On behalf of the children of South Africa I would like to present the President with a t-shirt and the first historical Children's Charter of South Africa.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

You have the floor.

MUNTARBHORN, Vitit (UN. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the sale of children):

Keywords: RIGHTS OF THE CHILD - SALE OF CHILDREN - CHILD SOLDIERS - CHILD LABOUR - TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS - CHILD PORNOGRAPHY - SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Dear children, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Thank you warmly for the hospitality. Just last week I was investigating the sale of children in a certain country. Two children, girls of an indigenous people, eleven and twelve years old, were being trafficked for sexual exploitation into a neighboring country. It was the sister-in-law who was the intermediary in the trafficking. She had organized the sale into prostitution.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Such disturbing facts are not rare but are becoming sadly commonplace. Why -o- why? Behind the sale, behind the tears, there is the issue of poverty, family disintegration, criminality, linkage between supply and demand and the chain effect of root causes.

But more! First, the problem of trans-nationalization. The increasing trans-nationalization of the sale of children is most disquieting. When the situation seems to improve in one country, others seem to arise in another part of the world, thereby perpetuating the problem. The sale of children especially for sexual exploitation is related with transnational trafficking between developing and developed countries, between the developing countries themselves and between the developed countries themselves. Cross-frontier abductions and disappearances aggravate the issue.

Second, the problem of technology. Just as new technology may help to protect children worldwide, it is also used to abuse children. This is particularly relevant to certain practices akin to the sale of children; notably while *in vitro* fertilization and surrogacy may at times be justified for humanitarian considerations if carried out ethically, they are giving rise now to increased commercialization paralleling a situation of sale. The new technology which renders possible organ transplants can also have horrific results where children and others are subsumed under a trade in organs.

Third, the problem of security. While the threats to global security have subsided on many fronts, several conflicts remain or have developed inter- playing with ethnic discord. Children are often used in these conflicts as porters and soldiers to supply arms to the combatants and/or to fight - practices again akin to a sale of children. At the personal and family levels, physical and psychological security cannot be truly ensured unless basic needs are satisfied and the quality of life is promoted. The child must be respected as personifying the zone of peace and the priority of development. Fourth, the problem of crime and corruption. The sale of children is the product of crimes. These shed light on an old problem. For example, although child labor has been with us from time immemorial, criminal syndicates and individual exploiters are now manipulating children in new ways as instruments of crime. Notably, the use of children to sell drugs and to steal. Much of this is sadly linked with corruption and the fact that many elements of the law enforcement authorities collude actively or passively with criminal elements. There is a huge divide between laws and the loopholes of law enforcement.

In my work for children and for the United Nations, I address three specific issues: sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Under the heading of sale of children, four areas are dealt with. Children in relation to adoptions, child labor exploitation, human organ transplantation and other forms of sale such as children used as soldiers and abducted children.

On the first issue of sale of children, in relation to adoptions, the law is there but the practice is amiss. The Convention on the Rights of the Child encapsulates many primary principles to protect children in that regard. It calls, for example, for authorization of the adoption by competent authorities and exploration of adoption possibilities in the country of origin before the potential intercountry

adoptions. However, the situation remains disconcerting in many areas of the world; there continue to be reports of sale of children for intercountry adoptions transnationally from many parts of the globe.

On the sale of children for exploitation of labor, at the international level, various agreements provide an umbrella of protection for child laborers. These include the International Labour Organization Convention number 138 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the national level also, there are plenty of laws, but the enforcement of such laws is often lacking. Instances of exploitation can be found in all regions of the world, developing and developed, although the numbers and extent vary per region. Sadly, during the past year I also observed various aspects of child exploitation in this field, including camel racing linked with trafficking and abduction of children. Meanwhile, discrimination against the girl-child aggravates the problem often linked with forced marriages of young girls in certain regions, together with sexual exploitation beyond. While developed countries are witnessing the rise in child labor exploitation, in developing regions reports of abuses are abundant particularly with the shift of children from rural to urban areas and the rise of street children. Also, children are used to perpetrate crimes in those regions on behalf of adults.

On the sale of children for organ transplantation, the situation is highly sensitive. At the international level, although there is no international instrument on the issue of human organ transplantation, the implication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is that the sale of children for this purpose is totally illegal. This is bolstered by various guidelines from the World Health Organization. And yet during 1992 and now, a number of reports have been received concerning such threat to children in relation to organ transplants. Moreover, the use of fragments of human fetus and the reproductive system for various unethical purposes such as surrogacy arrangements for a price has also given rise to commercialization which needs to be dealt with, even though these practices do not fall neatly into the definition of human organ.

In regard to the abductions and disappearances of children, a number of countries have been facing an increasingly difficult and serious problem. At times, these cases involve parents in a family tug of war. At times, they involve criminal elements in search of extortion. At times, there are political reasons for the disappearances. On another front, the issue of child soldiers remains daunting and is widespread in many parts of the world despite international and national laws regulating or prohibiting use of children in armed conflict situations. At times, the children are kidnapped and forced to join the armed forces. The spread of ethnic violence sadly acts as a push factor to induce civilian children to join the armed forces or groups.

With regard to child prostitution, there has been a long line of international instruments relating to slavery, trafficking and exploitation of women and children. The most recent, of course, is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which calls for measures against inducement or coercion of children in any unlawful sexual activity including prostitution. There is also the Commission on Human Rights programme of action in this regard, which calls for more information, education, legal measures and law enforcement, social measures and development and rehabilitation and reintegration assistance. Yet the situation at the national level remains disquieting. Cross frontier trafficking of women and children rages in various parts of the world. The problem is linked with sex tourism, both local and international. The sex tourists such as pedophiles include those from developed countries. Of particular concern are the physical and psychological threats to children. Many are lured and tricked by criminal elements into prostitution and some are incarcerated in various countries and are subjected to the threat of HIV/AIDS. The trafficking of children for sexual exploitation is thus widespread and global. Tragically girls forced into prostitution are sometimes arrested as illegal immigrants and placed in prison pending their return to the country of origin.

In the linkage between developed and developing countries, there has emerged the call to extend the criminal jurisdiction of countries, extra-territorially, to cover criminal acts committed by the country's nationals against children abroad.

Finally, in regard to the question of child pornography, again the Convention on the Rights of the Child voices the need for measures against exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials. The trend is also to criminalize the possession of child pornography and to tackle new

forms of technology that are used for pornographic purposes. Yet, while the law is there, the problem of child pornography remains widespread and disconcerting. A recent example is the use of telephone networks to offer the sexual services of children. There are also reports of an increase in child pornography through videos and computers. Pornographic performances are also visible in several quarters.

In conclusion, friends, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that action should aim for more prevention of the root causes of exploitation, protection of children and their rights, and rehabilitation of families with the full participation of children. In this regard, let me call your attention to some strategies for the future.

First – prevention. A key priority for action is in the area of prevention. This is often dependent upon effective anti-poverty strategies, access to improved information flow and education, community consciousness raising and mobilization, satisfaction of basic human needs, occupational opportunities and other forms of employment (above the minimum age). As many forms of sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography are related to family decline and disintegration, measures to bolster the family system are required. These may include social assistance facilities and family and child subsidies. As an essential root cause of child exploitation is criminality, anti-crime measures should be broadened and community participation to take precautions to protect children as part of a community watch programme should be maximized.

Second – protection. Protection of the rights of children from abuse and exploitation depends upon effective laws and policies and their implementation at the national and local levels. As all countries already have laws which can be used to protect children (for example, the presence of the criminal law), these should be implemented in a more committed manner. Where there are legislative loopholes, states should consider the possibility of adopting specific laws against the sale and trafficking of children. In many parts of the world, the quality of the police force, immigration authorities, et cetera, and other law enforcement authorities needs to be improved. Low pay and insufficient training on child rights often result in poor law enforcement and corruption. The better parts of these authorities need incentives and in-service training for quality performance. The worst parts need to be penalized. The responsibility of the customer or consumer in child abuse and exploitation should also be highlighted. This implies, for example, incriminating customers of children in prostitution and those possessing child pornography.

In view of the malpractices of those who go abroad to commit crimes against children in other countries, the criminal jurisdiction of the countries of origin may need to be extended to cover the acts of their nationals even when perpetrated abroad. Improved links with Interpol and other law enforcement authorities bilaterally and multilaterally should be voiced. Community groups including child and youth groups should also be promoted as part of a broader community watch programme and a participatory approach to forewarn of the violations which may take place in regard to children and related exploitation.

Finally, on rehabilitation or social recovery/reintegration, remedial action should be taken to help children who are abused and exploited. This may include judicial remedies such as prosecution of abuses, coupled with legal aid and assistance and/or socio-medical provisions, such as hospices, counselling and other forms of support. Particular attention should be paid to child trafficking between different countries. This entails proper safeguards for the trafficked children to return to their countries of origin. Bilateral and other links to ensure such return need to be evaluated by independent monitoring. Facilities should be provided to help those with health problems, including HIV/AIDS, and these may include medical and other community facilities as part of a safety net. These should also be directed against discrimination, particularly in regard to the disease itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me note that there is a little letter that a child from a developing country has sent you via me. Let me read it out. The child is an abused child, very sadly.

It is my great luck to write a letter to you. Hope you will relay about our situation.

We have to face many difficulties. Our life is like a fish in the pond.

That little child is looking for a pen friend. Can we be? Let us be, but can we be more? Let us be the global family of and for child's rights and let that be reflected prominently in the final document of the World Conference.

Thank you very much.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I thank you. I now give the floor to Mr. Swami Agnivesh, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. He will be speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees. You have the floor.

AGNIVESH, Swami (UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery):

Keywords: SLAVERY - FORCED OR BONDED LABOUR - CHILD LABOUR - RIGHT TO EDUCATION - TRUST FUNDS

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

My name is Swami Agnivesh. I come from India. Today, I am speaking here as Chairperson of the United Nations Trust Fund for Contemporary Forms of Slavery. This Fund has been created recently to assist NGOs and also the victims of slavery to fight this evil. It is scandalous that at the end of the 20th century there should still be the need for such a Fund. Slavery is perhaps more prevalent now in its various forms than ever before. Bonded labor, child labor, together with aspects of women's rights including forced marriages are present day manifestations of this ancient evil.

Mahatma Gandhi always said that the test of human rights and human dignity was when "the last among the least" were empowered to realize them first. Amongst these the most defenseless and the most voiceless are the children. The International Labour Organization has recently estimated the number of contemporary slaves at around 200 million in bonded labor and/or servitude.

While slavery persists in our age in various forms, the bonded labor system is considered to be the most virulent and the most prevalent contemporary forms of slavery. In most developing countries, the informal money lending system coupled with usurious rates of interest, sometimes as high as 200 percent, gives birth to a phenomenon called debt bondage. Here the employer entraps a laborer by offering an advance to be paid off through future earnings. But since the wages are low and the employer frequently makes deductions for accommodation and/or tools, the worker cannot repay. As the debts mount steadily, the employer insists that it be passed from parent to child or even grandchild. Cases have been found of people slaving to pay off debts eight generations old.

A similar situation is experienced by developing countries who now find themselves shackled by massive and ever-increasing burdens of indebtedness to the industrialized world. Interest payments alone frequently exceed the Gross National Product and unless these huge debts are cancelled - and cancelled very soon - many Third World nations will find themselves becoming ever more wrecked and poverty stricken and reduced to a state of bondage.

Besides grinding poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and such other economic factors, the socio-economic, cultural factors like the abominable caste system, ethnic and racial and gender discrimination are responsible for the perpetuation of this scourge.

Mr. Chairman

While the governments have readily signed and ratified the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956 and the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of

Others of 1949, the utter lack of political will to abolish this most despicable form of forced labor has come to stay as the worst form of violation of human rights.

Mr. Chairperson,

Here not only is the government monopolized mass media conspicuously silent about disseminating information on various laws and conventions pertaining to the abolition of slavery-like practices, even the dominant western model of development aided and abetted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, is responsible for generating more and more victims of slavery. Development projects are displacing the poorest among the poor by thousands every day with little prospect of their being rehabilitated. The normal course, open for the displaced or the uprooted, is to become a migrant laborer, a contract laborer and then a bonded laborer.

The working conditions of child laborers are extremely deplorable causing various physical and mental hazards, depriving children the bliss of their childhood, education and flowering, all of which constitute their natural rights. Numerous cases of torture, beating, sexual harassment and other forms of inhuman treatment are reported, which are a reflection of the medieval slavery.

These children are made to work for fourteen to sixteen hours a day, voiceless and as non-beings. Their working places are unhygienic, poorly ventilated and dimly lit. In most cases, these children reside in the working sheds, devoid of all basic civic amenities. They are either paid nothing being bonded or sometimes paid a pittance. They are susceptible to all sorts of occupational diseases, like tuberculosis, bronchitis, skin problems, defective eye vision, cancer and deformity in various organs of the body. Some studies have brought out that their span of life is reduced by twenty to twenty-five years.

On the export front, some of these countries enjoy an enviable position as they export a large variety of goods such as carpets and druggets, garments, leather goods, precious stones, brass items, glass products, marbles, granite, surgical instruments, etc. The human side of the story is very gloomy as a large number of children are engaged in production of these export goods. It is apparent that child employment has been thriving uninhibitedly as an attribute to the increase in exports and in blatant violation of the prohibitive laws of the lands.

It would be pertinent, Mr. Chairperson, to mention the grave concern shown by the United Nations Sub-Commission on Human Rights in response to persistent testimonies and appeals on this issue. It has espoused the "seal system" as a measure of eradication of child labor in one of its recent reports, the report of 1991 number 119. The Sub-Commission on Human Rights

recommends that products such as carpets whose manufacture is liable to involved child labor should bear a special mark guaranteeing that they have not been produced by children. In this context consumers should be alerted so that they will demand products bearing such a mark. In this end information campaign should be conducted with a view to the boycotting of all goods on the basis of the exploitation of child labor.

But may I point out, Mr. Chairperson, no government to date has carried it out.

It is commonly contended that the child servitude as a harsh reality is borne out of socio-economic and historical reasons. It is believed that four factors, namely poverty, unemployment, population and illiteracy, are the main reasons for this malady and removal of these factors is a prerequisite for whipping out the child servitude. But allow me, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to argue the other way. Our experience and the various studies conducted by researchers corroborate the fact that child servitude is equally if not solely responsible for causing and perpetuating unemployment, poverty, population growth and illiteracy.

No government can scale down unemployment without curbing child labor as the maximum job opportunities created every year are preferably given to the children because of the physical and mental vulnerability and also their being the cheapest source of human labor.

It is logical to fear that if we do not eradicate child servitude today we will be responsible for perpetuating poverty, abject misery and sickness of millions adults in the world.

Keeping in view the seriousness and urgency of the situation we vehemently demand: first, that the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights should ask the governments of all importing countries to enact suitable legislation banning import of goods made fully or partially by children. Only those groups giving a label from the authorized agency vouching for "Free from child labor" be allowed to enter the country. Similarly, the exporting countries should also be asked to take similar steps for banning goods made by children.

Second, education for all children irrespective of caste, creed, color or sex up the age of fourteen must be made compulsory and free. Incentives should also be provided to the children of poor parents. There should be global mobilization of resources towards this end. There can be no better investment than this in the future of humanity, Mr. Chairperson.

Thirdly, that National Commission on bonded labor should be appointed, including child servitude, with eminent human rights activists on the Commission, vested with statutory powers to identify, release and rehabilitate the bonded laborers. Laws relating to abolition need to be enacted expeditiously in countries where they do not exist.

Fourth, that there be no loans, aid or support by any of the United Nations organizations or Development Banks to any project which is likely to involve or perpetuate bonded labor and/or child labor.

Finally, I would urge the assembled delegates to this august Conference to contribute liberally and urgently to the newly constituted United Nations Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. This will enable the Trust to carry out its mandate, to wipe every tear from the face of the children and to give them new hope, to all those who are languishing in conditions of modern age slavery.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

Thank you very much. Before adjourning our meeting, I would like to invite His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, who will make a brief statement. You have floor, Sir.

BOLKIAH, Mohamed (Brunei Darussalam):

Keywords: HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION - SOVEREIGNTY - INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate you on your election, Mr. President, and present my best wishes to the members of your bureau. At the same time, I would like to thank His Excellency, Ibrahima Fall, and his secretariat for their work in preparing this Conference. May I also express my appreciation, through you, to the government and people of Austria for their warm hospitality.

Mr. President,

In the twenty-five years since the first World Conference, much has been done in the promotion and protection of human rights. Governments and non-governmental organizations, private groups, ordinary citizens and many distinguished individuals have helped to do this. As a result, human rights are on the annual agenda of the United Nations and have become important matters for discussion at many international and regional meetings. To this extent, I think we all understand much more about this sensitive subject.

I believe our Conference offers us a chance to see how we can add to that progress by promoting international consensus. I hope we can listen to each other with respect, seek mutual understanding and try to reach common ground. In this way, we may be able to build upon what the United Nations has already achieved.

This is called for in the United Nations Charter. Of course, it is not a simple task. There are clearly differences of opinion and approach. These do not necessarily mean that we have opposing principles. They do, however, reflect differing national priorities.

Some governments must recognize the special needs of individuals who have been able to reach a high level of social and economic development. By contrast, others must satisfy the pressing needs of people who lack the basics for a life with dignity. Whereas, some try to apply universal principles, others feel that human rights development has to follow the pace of political and economic development.

None of these positions can be simply described as right or wrong. Any set of truly universal principles must recognize that they are all legitimate. The questions we are asking at this Conference are, therefore, complex.

Attempting to change conditions by economic and political pressure will raise crucial questions about national sovereignty. These could lead to serious misunderstandings between nations and stand in the way of any improvements that may be needed.

Rightly, the international community must express concern where it believes human rights have been violated. However, if the measures it takes to encourage change are to be successful, broad-based Agreement is needed.

Hence, I would like to see this Conference helping to develop a process that will lead to international cooperation and dialogue. After we end here, I hope we will carry on listening to each other and learning from each other,

I think it is essential for us to do this if we are to ensure that the provisions of the United Nations Charter are applied consistently. This would also be most timely when violations of human rights in some places threaten what we in Brunei Darussalam hold to be the most important right of all - the right of the individual to live in harmony with the other members of his or her community and nation.

Thank you.

HELLER, Claude (President), spoke in Spanish:

I would like to thank His Royal Highness for his statement.

Finally, I would like to make few announcements before adjourning the meeting. The plenary will meet from 3 pm to 9 pm. The Drafting Committee will meet from 3:15 to 9:45, that is a quarter to 10 pm. The General Committee will meet tomorrow from 9 to 10 in the morning. I repeat, plenary from 3 to 9 pm. Drafting Committee from 3:15 to 9:45 pm and the General Committee will meet tomorrow morning from 9 to 10 am. Thank you very much. The meeting stands adjourned.