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AGENDA ITEM 26

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

1. The PRESIDENT: As I had occasion to remark earlier in this forum, the present state of the world imposes on our Organization a heavy responsibility for urgent action in many areas that touch on the daily lives of the peoples we represent. Indeed, no issue touches us more closely, or has more direct bearing on the future of the world, than that of our children. For we are keenly aware that those who will inherit our world and manage it in the third millennium, which is drawing near, are the children of today; and that the shape of that world is being decided today by the way in which we are building their bodies and forming their minds.

2. In declaring 1979 the International Year of the Child [resolution 31/169] the General Assembly sought to place the child at the centre of world attention, and to provide a framework for advocacy on behalf of children and long-term action to meet their special needs. The Assembly saw a unique opportunity for all countries to review and evaluate their policies for children and to set targets for action on their behalf.

3. It is my sincere hope that in the course of this debate Governments will indicate not only how the Year has been observed in their countries, but how the momentum is being carried forward in the form of increased commitment: legislation enacted, programmes planned and resources earmarked to promote the well-being of children as an integral part of efforts to accelerate the economic and social development process.

4. The spirit of the International Year of the Child, which has prevailed throughout the world during the year, must be sustained; it must not be allowed to fade away. Now is the time to translate interest into action, promise into fulfilment. It is the beginning—not the end—of our commitment. As Albert Einstein best expressed it, so simply: "There are no discoveries and no progress so long as there is one unhappy child on earth."

5. The first speaker in the debate is the First Lady of the Philippines, and Special Envoy of the President of the Philippines, Her Excellency Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos.

6. Mrs. MARCOS (Philippines): Sir, it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of President Marcos, to add my own congratulations to those already expressed here by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines on your election as President of this Assembly. Your election signifies the international community's recognition of the dynamic leadership and competence which you have amply demonstrated in promoting the cause of international co-operation and the independence of nations.

7. May I avail myself of this occasion to convey to our esteemed Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, the appreciation of my Government and the Filipino people for his untiring and dedicated efforts in the search for peace in these difficult and dangerous times.

8. Today we are gathered together to awaken the conscience of mankind to the plight of the world's children. I am privileged to share this historic occasion with the First Ladies of Mexico, Bulgaria, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. The presence here of the First Ladies from three continents affirms the collective concern of the international community for the well-being of our children and the future of the world.

9. I rise to speak on the issue of human rights—the right of the child to be human—for the children today are the image of future humanity and, when we nurture and cherish our children, we are, in truth, recreating humanity. This subtle yet awesome power we can wield to shape the quality not only of our own lives but also that of future generations, presents us with a crisis of choice: shall we continue to ignore and neglect two thirds of the world's children, who are now hungry, in pain, and ignorantly languishing in physical and moral decadence and poverty, or should we now adopt positive actions to rescue tomorrow's human beings by providing them with food, clothing, shelter, education and all other things that will make them delight in living?

10. For us in the third world, where most of these suffering children live, the choice is inescapable and clear: we will do our best to stand by them. But the greater burden of the moral choice is with countries that have more. We should like to plead with those countries for compassion, and for them to go outside their wall of affluence and behold our children. For our part, we who belong to the third world, perforce driven by self-reliance, must avail ourselves of our own resources to refurbish our houses. We can create an environment of vigour and growth for our children by ridding ourselves of the encumbrances of past social inequities and oppressive traditions. We must invent, renew and rein-

vigorate our social, economic and political systems in order to ensure and confirm the right of our peoples to be human. Individual countries, it must be granted, will have individual approaches to this enterprise, but I am sure that all our efforts will ultimately converge.

11. Institutions evolve and develop in order to cope with particular problems—in particular, historical circumstances. We in the Philippines sometimes regret, and at other times enjoy, our country's strategic location in the world. Our 7,100 islands are between two great oceans: the Pacific Ocean and the China Sea. We are at the cross-roads of the great cultural traditions; the winds of the great religions of man blow upon us. Being strategically located, we were inevitably colonized, both by the East and by the West. Colonization has, of course, enriched our culture, but it has also severed our links to our roots as a people. We found ourselves burdened by an identity crisis after the colonizers left. We have had great difficulties as a nation, but we rose to the challenge of national survival. In one crucial moment in our history, we decided to reverse the remorseless decline of our political and social institutions, and seven years ago the leadership in my country was compelled to declare martial law. We have transformed the concept from one of oppression and tyranny to one of liberation, identity and dignity. This declaration was a declaration of freedom—freedom to demand social justice, freedom to reach out to other countries of any ideology, and freedom to humanize the fabric of our lives. Thus, the Filipinos have recycled the concept of martial law.

12. Where anarchy, violence and apathy with respect to the law once reigned, now there is peace and order; now we have one of the lowest crime rates in the world. Where government was once held captive to the dictates of political war-lords, now there is a true participatory democracy, working from our humblest village, the *barangay*, our smallest political unit, upwards through all sectors of our population. Where there was feudalism which saw our people chained to the soil, now there is nationwide land reform, both urban and rural, and there is happiness among our farmers and our people. Where there was hunger due to insufficiency of basic foods such as rice, now we export rice and are self-sufficient in fish and other staples.

13. We are proud to note that the number and scope of social infrastructures built in our country in the last seven years far exceeds the combined accomplishments of previous decades and administrations. Our labour sector has been given its due in terms of wages and the redress of grievances. Job creation efforts have effectively brought down unemployment from 8.4 per cent in 1972 to 4 per cent today. The international economic crisis notwithstanding, we have experienced respectable growth rates and have contained inflation within reasonable bounds.

14. In a country like the Philippines, where the number of persons less than 20 years of age already constituted 56 per cent of the total population as early as a decade ago, it can really be said that our development programme is principally addressed to the young: to our children. The Philippine population programme, which has been taken as a model by the United Nations, has brought our population growth rate down from 3.2 to 2.5 per cent annually in five years. Our national nutri-

tion programme addresses itself to mothers from the time they conceive until they give birth, and to children from birth to 6 years of age. In fact, our nutrition centre has been made an associated institute of the United Nations University, and of other world universities.

15. Complementing this, a "mental feeding" programme reaches the Filipino child in the first three years of life, when consciousness is just beginning. Moreover, the closely-knit Filipino family, which is an extended clan, gives the child a stable emotional base and surrounds him with the positive inputs necessary to his spiritual and moral development.

16. The Philippine educational system, with a current enrollment of 12 million children—one fourth of our population—at the elementary, secondary and collegiate levels, and a teaching corps of 600,000 for our 47 million people, has given us a literacy rate of 90 per cent nationwide and 98 per cent in metropolitan Manila, which itself accounts for 20 per cent of our national population.

17. National youth movements, like the *Batang Maharlika*, composed of children up to the age of 11, and the *Kabataang Barangay* for those aged 12 to 21, give our youth a formal role of leadership and a voice in community affairs.

18. In 1975, President Marcos gave voting rights to youths 15 years old and older. Their representatives now sit with their elders in our National Assembly.

19. All these programmes on behalf of our youth come together in the Philippine Programme on Human Settlements, which I am privileged to administer. In this programme we aim, through human settlements, to translate our broad development goals and gains into concrete measures touching the day-to-day life of every Filipino through our BLISS programme: this means meeting the basic needs of man in every community through the delivery of 11 essential services: water, power, food, shelter, clothing, medical service, a livelihood, sports and recreation, mobility and ecological balance. In this, we are mobilizing the villages we call *barangays* into self-reliant units working through various community-action brigades. Our initial successes give us hope that our continuing search for a more normal political system will be fruitful.

20. This has been the Philippine experience in the new society: a compassionate society under the leadership of President Marcos.

21. Whatever the diversity among us, we are one in observing this year as the International Year of the Child. Indeed, anyone with sensibility and reason will realize that no matter what we say or do the world of the future is ineluctably and inescapably less and less your world and mine as it becomes more and more the world of today's children.

22. Allow me to recall, as many have done before me, today's scenario of teeming millions of children in the poor countries. Worldwide there were an estimated 1,439 million children under 15 years of age in 1975. Eighty-nine per cent of these children did not live in slums and squatter settlements. Nevertheless, about 156

- million did live on such premises and 417 million were born and are growing up in substandard housing. Of children aged 5 to 14 years old, 65 per cent were in school, but 250 million were not. There was no access to medical services for 604 million and although more than 1.2 billion children had adequate food and nutrition, 230 million were undernourished. Twelve million children die every year from preventable diseases. We are told that we have the technology to avoid this needless tragedy, but at some cost. That we do not now apply the technology we have had for generations to save those children is a crime against humanity. We are denying 12 million children a year the most fundamental of human rights: the right to live.
23. Man can never be free unless the child grows in a free society.
24. The literature of liberty began as, and still very much remains, a literature against political authority. My Government and people recognize and accept, with most of the rest of the world, that repressive government stunts and curtails liberty. We believe that abusive and tyrannical government kills and destroys liberty.
25. Liberty is the capability of every person to become a human being whole and entire, with dignity and worth, as a physical, intellectual and moral being, with a status and a role in society. This capability is the ultimate human right.
26. But we also know that there are restraints on and threats to this capability that do not come from government and political authority. Sickness and illiteracy, unemployment, anarchy, runaway technology, ecological deterioration and social exploitation are real and everyday threats to people, to many peoples of the world. These peoples, especially those afflicted by destitution and exploitation by other men, are not free.
27. In many developing countries the many who are poor do not have this capability. In these cases the textbooks of the West often do not apply because our poor look to the community's institutions, including government, for assistance and liberation. In the case of children, it is not debatable that the community and its government must respond to their needs, either from necessity or out of a sense of simple responsibility and simple humanity.
28. We, the developing countries, cope with our problems and responsibilities as best we can. For most of us, however, the problems persist and grow faster than our capabilities can expand.
29. We are face to face with a paradox: the rural areas of the third world, where most of the world's children live, are also the areas where valuable natural resources lie. Poverty, it seems, thrives in areas of natural wealth. It is quite clear that the problem is one of unrealized potentials.
30. The world's efforts to attain improved welfare for children are inextricably interlaced with the most basic issues facing the human community, particularly the development issues that are associated with a new international economic order. We have a global emergency before us. Let us act now if man is to prevail in this universe.
31. Our task is to begin, in our time, the reshaping of a world where our precious children, in their time, will have to work and live. They in turn will have the responsibility of transforming and maintaining the world as a truly human habitat.
32. There is in the world today an ambiance of apocalypse. The negativists and the pessimists believe that doomsday is knocking at the door. We affirm that the human community today has enough resources to raise every human being's existence to human levels. Our capacity for infinite fortitude can transform crisis into opportunity, and the challenges we face shall serve as an impetus for spiritual rebirth. We can temper our appetite for excesses. We can change our attitudes and ways of doing things. We can learn from one another, and do many practical and innovative things to make our world a better one for our children as for ourselves.
33. The People's Republic of China, with the world's largest population, has largely conquered the problem of childhood malnutrition. My most impressive memories of the People's Republic of China are the happy and healthy faces of children I have seen in that country. China's genius shines in the simplicity of its approach. Where the provision of basic needs is paramount, the technologies used are consistent with the ecological imperatives. The message from China is simply this: satisfy the basic needs with practical technologies.
34. In the Soviet Union, artistic expression and development in children and youth are encouraged and enhanced by government. Having provided for basic needs, the Soviet Union emphasizes the development of man through artistic creation and expression.
35. In the United States, children are exposed early to an abundance of educational inputs that stimulate their minds. Thus today the United States of America is the leading country in scientific and technological innovations.
36. It is refreshing to note that, from the experiences of many countries in the world today, we have all the elements necessary for the total development of man—in his body, mind and spirit. From China, we have the technologies of survival; from the USSR and the Orient, we have the instruments for inner growth in terms of the arts and religion; from the United States, we could learn science and modern technology for the development of our minds and the production of machines for efficiency and comfort.
37. In the Philippines we consider important, too, the physical and metaphysical environment of children. We consider it vital in the scheme of development. For want of a better term, we give this concern the label "ecological humanism". This philosophical outlook acknowledges, in the truest humanist tradition, the centrality of man and the human condition as the final object of our concern.
38. We believe, that all living things—be they high or low in the order of existence—are linked with one another in the intricate and complex web of life. This web is fragile and yet, like the handiwork of the spider, it can stand pressure, but only if we abide with what it takes to survive.

39. We must learn, as we are learning in the Philippines, how to use our natural resources without debasing them, how to harness natural forces without destroying them, and how to husband other living creatures without threatening their survival.

40. Our ultimate goal is the realization of the total potential of man—the goal of assuring the continuous evolution of the distinctly human attributes of body, mind and spirit. We must aim for man's physical comfort and spiritual bliss.

41. To put it simply, let us now invest in the child, for he is the future of humanity. Let us invest in man, for only man, with his powers, can make the earth yield the bounty of its resources that will satisfy our needs. His talents make work a creative pursuit and labour an easy task. His brawn builds our houses and the boats we use to bring the sea closer to the shore.

42. If man brings about development, then let development focus on man. Let us now give man the chance and the opportunity to develop himself. Let us now start by helping him to grow the food he needs or by sharing with him what has been grown in plenty but far from his reach. Let us build schools, houses, health-care centres and make cleaner surroundings for him. Let us deliver needed social services, make just labour laws and provide a more viable environment for him. Let us make these investment decisions. They are as rational and "economic" as investments in roads, ports, airports and telecommunications. We have developed very sophisticated quantitative processes to evaluate capital investment projects, but not with the same success for socially-oriented endeavours. For how does one measure a project's return in terms of improved individual attitudes or in terms of transforming a dormant community into a society of achievers?

43. I ask, therefore, that investments in basically social projects to meet basic needs be considered in the same light as the "economic" investments and programmes.

44. The children of the poor countries do not come here to beg. There is no need to, for human beings are not naturally selfish. To those who are really human, sharing is not a responsibility but a manifestation of the truly human attribute of compassion.

45. A global village is emerging. Soon there will be no need for walls between nations, between peoples. In the not-too-distant future, I pray, we shall reaffirm our common humanity.

46. We do not begrudge the efforts of any nation to protect its people and to ensure its national security. We concede the rationality of every country's decision to produce and procure the armaments needed to maintain tranquility and order in its society, as the foundations for growth and development.

47. But let us teach our children today the common humanity of the peoples of the world, and there will be no need for armaments. The \$400 billion we spend annually for defense could then be used for the development of man, his science and his arts.

48. Recently, at the initiative of the United Nations

under the enlightened leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, and with the active and tangible support of the United States, the nations members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and many others joined in concerted action to extend a helping hand to the so-called "boat people" and other refugees. The majority of those refugees are children. This is an example of human concern, a concern that inspired us in the Philippines, despite our own problems, limitations and difficulties, to offer to be a nation of first asylum for about 50,000 refugees.

49. To live in a world of rapidly expanding population requires the moderation of consumption and an end to the profligate use of resources. Under these conditions, recycling becomes not only an imperative but the only acceptable way of life.

50. First and foremost, we waste human resources, especially the most valuable, our children, in terms of their unrealized potential for contributing to the wealth of the world and to the welfare of mankind. In every child who becomes stunted because of malnutrition, or who grows to adulthood without education, humanity loses a precious resource of energy and creativity. On every unemployed man we waste an incalculable investment.

51. Clearly, what is called for is a world programme for the revival of these human resources, and with resolve, they could be fully utilized in the reconstruction of society and infrastructure, as has been done in some countries. This is a demonstrated fact. There is no reason why we cannot utilize them on a global scale.

52. We are surrounded by abundant energy and yet we cannot meet our daily energy demands. The enormous energy of sunlight, the winds, the ocean waves and biomass is being ignored and wasted. On the other hand, we have not learned, despite the present crisis, not to waste available energy resources in useless pursuits.

53. The savings from a well-directed energy conservation programme could amount to billions of dollars.

54. In a similar manner, the recycling of wastes from forestry, mining, manufacturing, agriculture and food processing could result in huge savings.

55. All over the world, there is a great deal of waste and garbage generated in our towns and cities. In the Philippines alone, the daily waste *per capita* is 0.6 kilograms. We have undertaken a programme of recycling such waste through the organization of ecological aides who collect sorted garbage from households and then deliver the recyclables to redemption centres, which in turn resell them to factories for recycling. Programmes like these are also carried out in our major towns and cities. The average daily earning per household is 30 centavos or four United States cents per kilo of recyclable garbage.

56. Since at least 190 cities in the world have populations of 1 million or more, they could generate a combined annual income from recycled garbage amounting to at least \$1.7 billion, using the most conservative projection. With only one sixth of this money, we could save 12 million children annually from death caused by

preventable diseases like polio, diphtheria and tuberculosis.

57. In conclusion, permit me to make the following proposal: let us draw up a parallel programme of waste recycling and resource conservation. Let us make an inventory of our respective waste and garbage. The programme will result in a gradual enhancement of environmental quality and in tremendous savings brought about by a recycling of wastes into assets. This resource could then be used to finance our programmes for children. Thus, this proposal is in reality a proposal to save the earth's ultimate and priceless resource—man.

58. This moment in history asks not too much of us. As a matter of fact, it merely calls on us to use our ingenuity to make use of what we throw away—our garbage, our waste—to provide for those whom we so dearly cherish, our children.

59. The furies seem to have conspired to put our age in a convergence of crises. Besetting and confronting us today are a host of crises—the energy crisis, the environmental crisis, the urban crisis and the monetary crisis. Our century, besides, has seen the most tragic moral crises in mankind's history—two world wars, the nuclear holocausts and biochemical warfare. But we should not be dismayed, nor should we now bewail the sins of the past. Other civilizations in other eras have had their crises too. Some survived magnificently and gained new splendour. Ours can do no less.

60. We should therefore view our crises in that light — as a challenge to man, an unprecedented and overwhelming challenge, but also an opportunity that calls for our total and unprecedented response. That being so, the millennium may not be too far away.

61. Let us plan for a new age of enlightenment, the renaissance of humankind.

62. Let us make man in his totality—body, mind and spirit—the bearer and the torch of what is good, true and beautiful in man.

63. Let this be our commitment to mankind, and to the children of the world we say: yours is the right to be human.

64. The PRESIDENT: I now call on a member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Minister and President of the Committee for Culture of Bulgaria, Mrs. Lyudmila Zhivkova.

65. Mrs. ZHIVKOVA (Bulgaria) (*interpretation from Russian*): I thank members for the opportunity given to me to speak on this particularly important, always topical, issue of prime significance to mankind and its evolution which is now on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly—the problem of children.

66. Children bring together as in a focus the present and the future of our planet. They are the indispensable connecting link between the past and the future of the human race which brings with it the inevitable natural necessity of physical and spiritual regeneration of life.

Every new generation of children born on the planet possesses inherently the potential forces for further renovation, but the conditions in which those forces are unfolded carry along the burden of limitations and imperfections imposed by man himself and society—imperfections which impede, slacken and obstruct nature's laws and regularities from being further expanded and revealed in their optimal boundaries.

67. The most acute and topical problems which humanity encounters and whose solution is sought by nations are most intimately related to children. The most daring aspirations, the bravest exploits, the most magnificent discoveries, the most splendid creations have been and are achieved by mankind in the name of the future, in the name of the children—this eternal symbol of the new, of the everlasting succession of life which encloses in the inevitable cycle of development the need for renovation and perfection of existence.

68. The image of the child—personified in magnificent works of art reflecting through the power of sound, colour and words, the striving, faith, optimism and struggle of man for the building of an equitable, totally humane and fraternal human society raised to the level of a synthesized and generalizing universal symbol inspiring the discoveries and the struggle of thinkers, philosophers, scientists, revolutionaries and humanists — has been passed on and carried through the centuries. Despite all crucial and grim moments in human history, the vitality of this symbol has survived suffering and destruction, has risen in defense of human dignity, has indicated the way to perfection and has revealed the indestructibility of unity because, in a synthesized form, it has always borne in itself the natural inevitability of renovation, of movement forward, and of faith in and striving for the beautiful. It has revealed the generic oneness of man.

69. And, even today, can the question of children be discussed for its own sake only, taken apart and isolated from the complex and contradictory problems that accompany the development of mankind on our planet in the twentieth century? Do not the acute social, class, economic and national contradictions limit life itself? Do not the ugly cankers of imperfection bedeviling the planet place their antihuman, counter-evolutionary, degenerating imprint on the consciousness of thousands — indeed, millions — of children on the earth, on those who have been called upon by the inevitability of nature's laws to continue life and endow humanity with new revolutionary changes and renovations?

70. Today, towards the end of the 1970s, when mankind is on the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is our duty to draw up a balance-sheet and trace out the chain of cause-and-effect relations that ties countries and peoples down to the wheel of infinite succession — a chain that implacably unifies past, present and future; a chain in which every single event, big or small, infamous or glorious, humane or antihumane, is an inseparable part of the whole, and has its place and importance in, and impact on, the processes which are developing and which, depending on the quality, power and direction of the energies and action, hinder and delay or speed up the progressive march of humanity forwards.

71. The dynamic major changes taking place in the world at the end of the 1970s are accompanied by

serious difficulties and ordeals that are endured by countries, nations and humanity as a whole. We have witnessed the progressive easing of political and military tensions, the removal of the imminent threat of a new world war that would be destructive for humanity and human civilization, the consolidation of the principles of peaceful coexistence among States with different social, economic and political systems; the deepening of the process of détente and disarmament, the intensification of the national liberation movements, the consolidation of the sovereign right of countries and peoples to independent and free development, the promotion of political, economic and trade co-operation; the establishment of the need to expand individual and national awareness, the raising of the level and quality of scientific and cultural contacts, of mutual knowledge and co-operation. These basic trends, phenomena and processes that characterize our time and the phenomena and trends that accompany and foster them, such as the awakening of women, the mobilization of their vigour and abilities for active social life, the multiform and impetuous development of science and the consolidation of the scientific approach as the basic factor for the reorganization and management of social spheres, the enhancement of the role and importance of culture, education and the arts as the most immediate factors and means for the formation and transformation of human consciousness, the ascent of man into outer space, the growing aspiration to acquire knowledge of and to master the cosmic spheres and the ever more profound mastering of universal principles and laws that govern nature, the growing scientific and public interest in the meaning of human existence and in the character of the potential forces inbred in every man by nature—all those undoubtedly reveal qualitatively new prospects and possibilities for the individual and humanity as a whole optimally to develop and realize their abilities, as well as the opportunity for individual countries and nations to take their legitimate place and play their role in the development of man's progressive processes and in the formation of human civilization in harmony with the specific features, quality and contribution of each nation.

72. But is it not true that, in parallel to these tendencies and phenomena which are the messengers of beauty and the limitless prospects for the future, there appear right before our eyes and minds the practices of destructive wars, the humiliating consequences of national enmity, class and social animosity, exploitation, the shameful and unequal status of thousands, indeed millions, of human beings, poverty and starvation, disease and illiteracy, the irresponsible encroachment on the life of man, the policies of *apartheid* and genocide, growing unemployment, unjust economic machinery, the pitting of countries, nations and races against each other, the growing alienation, the deepening of egocentric, vulgarly primitive, degradingly vicious and elementary material interests? These and many more repugnant cankers daily tear at the sick flesh of the earth, build up more and more chains of negative cause-effect relationships, breed terror, suffering and destruction; result in depression, suspicion and fear; yield prejudice, intolerance, hatred and all those dreadful antihuman and counter-evolutionary occurrences which oppressively encumber our planet. It will take decades and centuries for the whole of mankind to overcome them, since they create the pre-conditions for generation after generation of enmity among men and bring with them the consequences bred by the causes created, in every single instant, by us the people.

73. That is why it is with particular acuteness that once again today the question is posed of the level and quality of the consciousness of the individual and mankind as a whole, of the direction in which the vigour, abilities and fulfilment of man are channelled, of the character of social relationships, of the real capacity of mankind to utilize to the maximum the relevant possibilities presented by evolution at every historical stage. Through our feelings, thoughts, desires, aspirations and actions we create and determine the future in every single instant; we set the conditions in which every coming generation is born, develops and fulfils itself. What the future will be depends on us alone; what our children will be tomorrow depends to the greatest degree on our own selves, on the level and quality of each and every individual's consciousness, on the organization and nature of human society, and on the level of material and spiritual values created by mankind.

74. The attitude to life forms life itself—forms us, the people, society; the purity of the atmosphere, the specifics of the environment, where life on the planet manifests itself and develops, and where every human being lives, works and fulfils himself or herself.

75. It is impossible for the question of children to be detached from the complexity and multiform nature of the problems that humanity is solving today or from the principal issue of our time—the safeguarding of world peace. The elimination of war as a means for settling international disputes is not merely advisable, it is a vital premise of our time, a guarantee for the continuance of life on our planet and for the perfecting of the human race. But has peace ever been an end in itself? The very concept of peace, identical with the concept of the universe, comprises and carries in itself the need for the development of everything in existence, for renovation and construction not only on earth but in outer space too, and reveals the indivisibility and oneness of life in the universe and the immediate dependence of man on nature and on the action of the universal principles and tenets. The knowledge and mastering of those tenets, the transformation of man into a conscious master and ruler over the natural elements, the perfecting of man and human society, the expansion of his outlook, the conquering of far-off realms, the transformation of man into a creator, into an all-round and harmoniously developed personality, the establishment of real human brotherhood—that is the supreme objective of human development.

76. Today, at the end of the twentieth century, still more often are the questions posed: is humanity prepared to carry out this lofty mission? Will new generations be formed according to the laws of beauty or those of antihuman enmity and intolerance, helpless ignorance and destructive actions? Will the contaminating energies of egocentricity hinder for decades to come the progressive, triumphant march of man towards the light?

77. There is no higher rostrum than that of the United Nations—this international Organization of a universal nature whose Members are almost all the countries and peoples on the planet, which has established its prestige as an international forum vital to humanity, and is called upon to defend the right of all States to free and independent development, to support peaceful coexistence and to render decisive assistance in solving the most topical global problems of mankind—which could

pose the problem of children in all seriousness and comprehensively, with a strong feeling of responsibility to all mankind and to the future.

78. In the versatile activities of the United Nations, questions pertaining to children and, in particular, their political, legal, social, economic and spiritual aspects, have been the focus of still greater attention and have been further developed. The 10 fundamental principles enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 [resolution 1386 (XIV)], which refer on the one hand to the preservation of the physical health and material living conditions of the child and touch, on the other hand, upon the spiritual development of the child, and the general provisions on securing peace and protection against racial and other kinds of discrimination, against exploitation and any other forms of cruelty and constraint, reflect and testify to the democratic and progressive nature of the tendencies and processes in the development of contemporary international relations and international law. The proclamation of 1979 as the International Year of the Child by General Assembly resolution 31/169 indicates that the world Organization is fully aware not only of the paramount importance and relevance of this range of problems, but also of the imperative need of our time and of the concern, responsibility and willingness of countries and nations to share the responsibility for the future of our planet and through collective efforts to guarantee the right of children from all over the world to free, legal and materially secure development, education and culture. However, the 1959 Declaration, with its great moral and political importance and the measures mapped out and undertaken by various countries and Governments on the occasion of the International Year of the Child with a view to creating more favourable social, economic and cultural conditions for the child's physical and spiritual formation, should become an inalienable law, a daily practice, a supreme national and global responsibility for the fate of children and for the future of the planet.

79. Will mankind be able to overcome, in the coming decades, the contradictions and striking paradoxes characteristic of the twentieth century? What will the world be like tomorrow, in 10 to 20 years' time? What will be the conditions in which life will manifest and reveal itself in the twenty-first century? What will man assert in his everyday work? Will it be genuine, dynamic and bright development, or will the ignorance of limited consciousness and the inertia of the old continue to breed new difficulties and ordeals, thus making longer the path to free, dignified and aesthetic development? Synthesizing in itself the multifaceted problems of life, this basic issue stirs millions of people on the planet because the conditions in which humanity is developing in the twentieth century and the level of its consciousness allow for the parallel existence and development of vividly contradictory and paradoxical phenomena.

80. An eloquent testimony to the uplift of the human spirit and its striving to transcend the boundaries of our small planet, to master the cosmic spheres and the unknown, were the 42 manned space flights and the launching of thousands of artificial earth satellites, space stations and installations for space research. But do not the 17 tons of explosives *per capita* produced on the earth, as of 1979, reflect the poverty of the human spirit? What else but the contradictions of our time is

revealed by such phenomena as the birth of hundreds of new scientific discoveries and the creation of interdisciplinary sciences, of new branches of science which prove the relationship and interdependence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, establish the link in scientific knowledge between biochemistry and biophysics and astrochemistry and astrophysics, and pave the way for humanity to conquer far-off worlds and, on the other hand, the parallel occurrence of anti-human policies of genocide, the existence of 240 million children who do not attend school, the death of every fifth child before the age of five, the existence of 200 million children suffering from chronic malnutrition, and of thousands—indeed millions—who sell their child labour. To what dreadful consciousness, to what feeling of responsibility belong these cankers, torturing humanity and the planet? Unless mankind displays efforts in the coming decades to change these infamous statistical data, the peculiar synoptic charts of the future will further reflect the low quality of human consciousness in the twentieth century and the anti-human phenomena which we have allowed to accompany our life.

81. The International Year of the Child has proved a powerful focus, and a factor which has made it possible for these contradictions of our time to become obvious to mankind. At the national and international level, measures should be mapped out and decisions taken for the improvement of the poor social, economic and cultural conditions in which millions of children live and develop, and through collective effort the right to wholesome physical and spiritual development should be established and guaranteed to all young citizens of the world.

82. The host of the major cultural event of the International Children's Assembly "Banner of Peace" last August was the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Under the honorary patronage of Todor Zhivkov, the President of the Council of State of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, and Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, the Director-General of UNESCO, 1,300 children, representing 76 countries, got together and held out their hands in the name of the future, beauty, creativity and brotherhood. Reflecting the thoughts, aspirations, dreams and optimism of the youngest creators on the planet, 16,000 works of art by 13,000 children from 84 countries shed their glow in the Treasury of the Assembly.

83. In Sofia, the capital which bears the name of wisdom, the chime of the bells rang out and the multiplied might of vibrations flew out into space to imprint on the memory of generations the joy and the striving of children from all over the world to establish on earth unity, creativity and beauty. The zeal of dreams, the joy of creativity and the faith in the future springing up in the young and pure hearts have become a powerful revolutionary explosion conquering and incorporating, expanding the limits of human capability, transforming labour into creativity, joy into wisdom, boldly penetrating the Great Unknown, daringly establishing the inalienable right of man to strive for perfection and to be a creator living after the laws of beauty. Children's solidarity has hammered out the monolithic monument to unity, creative aspirations, unified by beauty, merged all hearts into one and defended the genuine essence and significance of the Assembly concept. The striving for creation did not af-

firm destruction, egocentrism and degradation of consciousness, but it did affirm the faith in heroism, the inevitability of heroic deeds, the joy of discovery, the will to go forward, the daring flight of thought and the need for beauty.

84. The "Banner of Peace" Assembly has joined those evolutionary events which have become the herald of a new epoch and have confirmed the need to awaken the consciousness for unification and fraternity, have raised high human dignity and spirit, and have opened up the possibilities and prospects of creative harmonious development and existence.

85. Carried on the wings of spiritual striving, the thousands of children's smiles, blazing eyes and ringing voices echoed and vibrated, and the sound became a question: whither, humanity? We, the future of the planet, have the right to ask because "each day 80,000 children die on Earth from hunger. Each day! Eighty thousand of us—the future of Mankind and the Planet" [see A/34/551, annex]. Children wrote these words in the letter of appeal to their brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers the world over.

86. Whither, humanity? Has this question not been asked thousands of times on our planet? The world has imprinted deep in itself the image of pain, suffering, horror, joy and hope with which this question, carrying along and comprising in itself the essence of human existence, has been posed. In the decisive moments of human history, in the terror of destruction and in the ecstasy of the process of discovery this question again has sounded in various parts of the world. How many times the impossibility of answering this question has enclosed humanity in the vicious circle of deadlock, and has created chains of destructive cause and effect relationships, burdensome in time and space for centuries on end, hampering and slackening the ascending progressive march of the human race? But humanity remembers the banners with the images of the heroes, victors and teachers consecrating themselves in the name of the future and beauty; it remembers that, on the threshold of the decisive combat, in the minutes of utmost effort and fateful decision, the need to march bravely forward has mobilized and inspired us. The images, the exploits and self-sacrifice of the heroes, of all those who devoted themselves in the name of beauty and future, have risen high before us like victorious banners to remind us that battles are won in the name of the common weal, and that man's spirit should strive higher and higher to perfection.

87. And once again the eyes of the thousands of children assembled in Sofia kept asking: Whither, humanity? "We do not want to believe it . . . Can this be possible? We ask you—how can you, our parents, bear to see beauty crucified and the lawful right of our brothers and sisters to rejoice in the sun be taken away from them?" [ibid.].

88. And it was there, in Sofia, that the present and the future, the beauty of cherished dreams and the consequences of destructiveness, selfishness and injustice, met again. It was there that once again rang out the confident voice of the future, the appeal and faith of the children—the future of the planet: "Mothers and fathers, protect the joy of the community of people, let the symbol of the Child, interlocking the past, the pres-

ent and the future, and invariably connecting like a bridge children and parents, be always radiant and pure. ". . . the Earth belongs to all, the cosmic rays illumine the vast expanse of the universe and everyone can reflect them, the Sun is ours, it belongs to all" [ibid.].

89. If we set aside the geographic concept of Sofia, the capital of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, and try to go deeper into the essence of the concept of Sofia, this eternal symbol of universal wisdom, we see and know that it has been to it, to truth and wisdom, that humanity has always turned; it is to it that questions and quests are addressed. It is the truth that has always been and will remain the basis of bold decisions and daring actions, a winged victress lighting up the steps of development.

90. But should the efforts of hundreds and thousands of generations to discover the secrets of life and existence, to overcome man's dependence on natural elements, to build up a humane and just society of mankind, to evolve and comprehensively perfect man and society, to expand the boundaries of human consciousness and to make for distant worlds be placed at stake? Should daring thoughts and fiery strivings perish on the pyre? Should the natural need for the regeneration of mankind be delayed and maimed by the ugly phenomena of social injustice and by the unbearable exploitation of man, the physical and spiritual degeneration resulting from famine and the deprivation of the right to education and the suppression and humiliation of man's dignity? Should the act of discovery and the accumulation of man's knowledge and experience be accompanied by misery, ignorance and poverty of the human spirit, beauty and creativity by egocentrism, alienation and stagnation? Are the conquering of the cosmos and the victory over the unknown possible without co-operation, mutual assistance, integration and the unity of people's efforts? Is the beauty of the future possible when the present is tarnished by the whirlwinds of the unworthy and the ugly?

91. Do we, the people, have the right to forget our common generic oneness? When has nature justified, and which history has forgotten, destructive activities and short-sighted decisions? Do not we, the people, carry within ourselves the principles of existence? Does not the quality of our consciousness focus the most acute problems of life? Is it possible for the many-sided problems of the day to be solved by anybody else and not by us, the people, the conveyors of evolution?

92. Yes, the children, uniting their youthful abilities in the name of the future, have defended the true nature of the concept of the "Assembly". Uniting and involving in its triple unity the true essence of life, the path and prospects of human evolution, and revealing human dignity and the high mission of man the creator, the monolithic motto of the Assembly—"unity, creativity, beauty"—has become a resounding appeal, an appeal addressed to mankind, to present and future generations, calling for struggle in the name of beauty. The children know and trust that this is the last struggle to be waged by mankind, but it is a struggle which entails the manifold problems of a complex life, a struggle that can be won only when man himself has changed, when his outlook will embrace the boundaries of the cosmos and when human society will be built up according to the laws of justice, brotherhood, truth and beauty, when

peace will not be an alternative but will be the one life uniting all parts of our planet with the cosmos and when man will become the master of himself, of the elements and of the future.

93. To be a maker, a creator, a discoverer, a daring victor—man is made for all that. Nature has taken billions of years to create this highly organized, thinking and conscious organism called man. And it is man that has to defend what he has been predestined to be. Man's thought should create, discover, penetrate into the unknown, unite and govern new realms and spheres in his conscious activity; it should perfect life.

94. Genuine culture, art and creation have never been an end in themselves. Today, in the time of scientific and technological revolution, science should not be an end in itself either. It should assist and intensify the development of human consciousness, the comprehension, study and organization of life in its complexity; it should assert the development of man and human society in accordance with the universal principles and laws working in nature. But the complex comprehension of life depends on the complex development of man. It is inconceivable to perfect human society, to discover and tap new energy resources, to rule over the natural elements, to conquer the cosmic spheres without the creative development of man, without the awakening of the creative beginning implanted by nature in every man, without an optimal development of abilities in harmony with nature's laws and regulations, without the integral all-round and harmonious development of man and society.

95. Today we witness one of the most vivid tendencies characterizing development in the last decades of the twentieth century—the growing role, significance and place of culture and art in the life of contemporary man. The growing understanding of the universal capacity of art and culture as factors of communication, of formation and development of the individual and society, is directly reflected in this ever-ascending trend. The ever-increasing interest of science in man's potential creative powers, the awakening and development of which transform man into a creator and engender the inner necessity of development and self-perfection, is indicative of the direction in which the efforts of scientific exploration, of man's interest and energies, are channelled and will be extended.

96. For several years now a unified national programme for aesthetic education has been worked out in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the purpose of which is the formation of not only artistic knowledge, skills, interests and experience, but also the complete, complex, all-round and harmonious formation of the individual according to the laws of beauty, on the basis of the awakening of the creative principle, of consistent and uninterrupted development and of the perfection of creative abilities. The aim of aesthetic education for the integral and harmonious development of man, for making labour a creative necessity and basic factor of development and the changing of life, comprehensively embraces not only the individual but all social spheres too, closes up in an indivisible whole the triune chain of man-society-nature in order to help and speed up their transformation according to the laws of beauty.

97. Are not the lofty goals, glorious ideals, co-opera-

tion, equitable social conditions, a powerful factor in the dynamic acceleration of human and social evolution? What was Bulgaria like 35 years ago, just before the victory of the socialist revolution? It was a poor agrarian country, among the most backward in Europe, and it took only 35 socialist years—years of trials, difficulties and victories, years in which national consciousness was in the process of transformation and growth—to achieve a situation in which, as compared to 1939, industrial output increased by 67 times, the manufacture of the means of production by 187 times, the production of commodities by 33 times and agricultural production by 2.5 times. From a backward and poor agrarian country within only three decades Bulgaria was transformed into an advanced industrial-agrarian country of collective and highly organized agriculture, with an up-to-date socio-administrative, scientific mechanism for the management and organization of all social fields, with qualified national personnel and experts catering to all spheres, with a broadly democratized cultural life, organized and managed on the basis of the public-cum-State principle. Today, the People's Republic of Bulgaria occupies one of the foremost places in the world in terms of the dynamics of its social development. The country now has a total of 404,001 places in kindergartens as compared to 12,859 in 1939; in other words, 75 per cent of all children are taken into the system of preschool education; there are 30,291 students in the country now compared to 10,169 in 1939; 56 opera and drama theatres have been opened compared to 13 in 1939. Some 4,000 titles are published annually with a total printing of more than 52 million copies, or an average of six books *per capita* of the population. Today Bulgaria is among the countries with the lowest general and infant mortality and with the highest life expectancy in the world.

98. The People's Republic of Bulgaria pursues a consistent and active foreign policy and participates in the international economic, commercial, scientific and cultural division of labour, as well as in the work of all international organizations. It assists in development of the most progressive processes and trends in the world. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria guarantees the rights of the child; a broad network of children's health and educational establishments has been built up throughout the country, providing free medical care and tuition. The social and cultural rights of women and mothers are also guaranteed. Within the framework of the national programme adopted in connexion with the International Year of the Child, a comprehensive and closely connected set of initiatives has been worked out which covers all walks of life. These initiatives flow from and are subject to the aim of all-round improvement of the conditions in which Bulgarian children live, grow up and develop.

99. To what do all these data testify in the development of a small nation—of a people that had been under foreign domination for 500 years on end, detached and isolated from the development of European civilization? They testify, without any doubt, to the vigour and vitality of the Bulgarian national spirit, but also to the regenerated strength and abilities of the people, which are now unleashed under conditions of socialist construction, the high degree of purposefulness and integration of national energies in the name of the building of a just, humane and highly developed society. No computers could foresee and precisely determine the development of the people in the twenty-first cen-

ture and the centuries to come, because a people which has set itself the goal of building its society according to the laws of beauty has unlimited possibilities for an uninterrupted upsurge. No one can foresee or place the limits of evolution. And this is the magnificent essence of creativity, of the daring, brave and unshakeable quest for the future, for beauty and perfection.

100. It might be asked whether we are to speak of creativity, creative development and beauty while thousands of people on our planet are dying every day of hunger, of the terrors of war and destruction, while millions are undernourished and do not have elementary education, and while the hard social, economic and educational problems oppressing the earth have not found their solution as yet.

101. But is not creation the transformation of life; does it not change and perfect man, society and the environment? Will the terrors of destruction and of misanthropic behaviour be able to exist if thoughts, feelings, aspirations and actions are noble, if they do not destroy but create and affirm, if they dignify man, society and the environment, if the creative fire elates the human spirit, and dreams bring closer a bright future? Has any worth ever been created on earth of a lasting cultural and historic value without the superb zeal of thought for the future, without the power of the act of creation, without the high responsibility of creating in the name of the common good?

102. It is for a world without alternatives that man is created, when his will power shall act according to the laws of truth and beauty, when thought shall come to know and conquer the Great Unknown, when labour shall become an inner necessity, when man shall be a free creator, bestowing on society, and enriching mankind's treasures with, his individual abilities, equal to nature and society in the right to perfect himself.

103. The role of the world Organization in solving the problems of children's development is exceedingly important. And this importance ensues not only from the concrete ways and means it uses to assist in solution of these specific problems, but from the fact that the Organization itself is universal in character and reflects and focuses the multifaceted problems of life. It is based on the free and equal participation of all countries and nations on the planet, affirms the principles of peaceful coexistence and is the forum where the positive and negative tendencies of international development are most directly reflected. It is on the enhancement and consolidation of the prestige of the United Nations in international development, on the level and quality of its activities, on the effectiveness and relevance of its decisions and on its ability constantly to improve its organizational mechanism in harmony with the development and requirements of experience and to enhance the feeling of responsibility on the part of its Members for the whole of humanity and for the future—it is on all this that the safeguarding of peace and the consistent solution of acute international problems will depend to an extraordinarily great degree.

104. Naturally enough, the role and responsibility of each country and Government in solving the problems of children are indispensable. The recommendations

and efficient efforts of the United Nations and the assistance rendered by it to promote solution of the acute socio-economic and cultural problems in various countries and parts of the world cannot be put to meaningful use without the decisive actions of those countries themselves. In solving these problems, United Nations assistance will be most purposeful and effective if, on the basis of statistical data on the realities in which children in the world develop, the international Organization periodically gives its opinion, offers recommendations and assists in the drafting of national, regional and international programmes. This would undoubtedly stimulate the constructive development of processes of national and international co-operation. In conjunction with the realization of specific kinds of assistance and programmes for children, it would be relevant and particularly useful to work out guiding principles which will constitute a code of conduct for various countries in solving the problems under discussion. As an important step in this direction a comprehensive international document might be elaborated and adopted within the United Nations framework to define the responsibilities of States in the comprehensive settlement of the problems of children and their rights. The People's Republic of Bulgaria will give its support and all-round assistance in the drafting and adoption of such an international document.

105. There is nothing more splendid than youth; than the capacity of nature and life constantly to regenerate and attain perfection. Bestowed on the human race by nature, this great capacity must be preserved and guaranteed. It is here that the true essence of human existence and all of development lies. Man's destiny is to be a creator, to create new forms of life, and constantly to strive towards perfection: his own and society's. Let the appeal of our children be heard by us all: let us give all children the world over enough bread, smiles and crayons; let us encourage creative efforts and labours. When people from various continents, countries and nations join hands in the name of creative construction and the common future of mankind and realize that the inspiring motto of the "Banner of Peace" Assembly—"unity, creativity, beauty"—refers not to children alone, but to all of us, the peoples of this planet, then we will see the erection of a monolithic monument to creativity, unity and brotherhood and the true Assembly of Peace will be safeguarded, affirmed and bathed in light.

106. The PRESIDENT: The next speaker is the First Lady of Colombia and Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Colombia, Her Excellency Mrs. Nydia Quintero de Turbay. I call upon her to make her statement.

107. Mrs. QUINTERO DE TURBAY (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am deeply gratified to have the opportunity to come, on behalf of Colombia, to this exalted rostrum from which distinguished spokesmen from many countries voice the policies and commitments of their Governments for the benefit of their youth.

108. I know that this is not mere routine, but rather an exceptional event pointing to the importance the United Nations attaches to the acute problem of children.

109. In Colombia, as in all the countries of the world,

the United Nations declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child [resolution 31/169] encouraged existing policies in support of this noble cause. When we speak of children in our country we are referring to the 51 per cent of our population which is under 18 years of age. This situation is a fundamental characteristic of the developing countries and the Government for which I speak has set up its social priorities accordingly. Colombia is therefore gratified to note that the aims of the International Year of the Child are one with its own programmes of action to benefit this majority of our population.

110. The situation of children in my country is no different from that of the two thirds of the world population that makes up the third world. It would be useless for me to attempt to describe our common problems, for the Assembly is fully aware of them. For this reason I should prefer to summarize the policies of my Government and the programmes under way, on which work will continue in the future.

111. The problems of children are deeply rooted in the past and will clearly outlive the International Year of the Child. This means that the noble task to which we turn today with renewed vigour must be continued in each of our countries with enthusiasm and decisiveness. This year, 1979, marks a growing awareness of problems related to social and family environment and to the physical, ethical and spiritual circumstances in which the child is brought up. We cannot separate attention to children from the future of mankind itself, for mankind will always be the true reflection of the individuals which make it up.

112. To help children is to brighten the future of coming generations. Our undertaking has the great merit of contributing to the fact that our children and our children's children will not have to bear the pain and suffering that millions of children must bear as they wander hopelessly, without resources and without health.

113. As the wife of the President of the Republic, and aware of the many needs of our people, I have become co-ordinator of all action aimed at strengthening the family and protecting minors, and have organized this action on three fronts, all closely related.

114. The first front is the national programme for the unprotected child, which is intended to mobilize State resources and co-ordinate Government agencies in the social sphere which are entrusted with the planning and implementation of family and child welfare programmes. Our efforts are channelled towards those groups with the most wide-ranging and severe problems of mortality, disease, malnutrition, abandonment, delinquency and prostitution.

115. One of our country's special problems is that of the urchin. This is a problem of the big cities when children leave their homes at a very early age to live permanently in the streets, begging and later drifting into criminal activities or those on the verge of crime. This is a problem to whose solution I have tried to devote particular attention and effort, co-ordinating and initiating a series of specialized State agencies to develop a concerted and vigorous effort to combat this problem.

116. The second front of action is the movement of solidarity throughout Colombia, intended to muster the participation of the community through a foundation which aims at channelling physical, financial and human resources, donated voluntarily by private persons and enterprises for the development of social welfare programmes.

117. This joint undertaking is intended to guarantee respect for the country's values, cultural traditions, civic spirit and sense of solidarity with the dispossessed.

118. The solidarity among our different departments is indispensable in this ambitious project to help unprotected children. In and of itself, however strong it may be—and the Colombian State is not strong—the State cannot shoulder all the weight and the endeavours that this great and noble battle entails.

119. The private sector does have unavoidable social responsibilities unless it wishes further to widen the profound gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Solidarity with those that need help—and the child requires aid more urgently than anyone—is the best way in which people can express themselves if they possess human sensitivity and have a social conscience.

120. Without boasting, I would say that that kind of organization is a useful tool in the strategies that must be used to achieve those aims underlying the campaign to defend children's rights.

121. Although the indigenous population of our country is quite small, it is none the less a group to which our Government gives particular attention simply because, apart from being outside the mainstream of society, it represents a historical and cultural contribution that we want to preserve. That is why we have created special programmes for education, health, vocational training and teaching on how to raise food and other daily necessities, and sports and recreation in some of the most abandoned areas that traditionally have lacked even the most basic services.

122. The third front is the Committee for the International Year of the Child, over which I preside, which has worked through health committees and committees on education, labour and recreation all over the country. The Government, by dint of great effort, has achieved significant progress in all these fields.

123. I repeat that the basic strategy is that of creating a national purpose and consolidating an institutional infrastructure that will give continuity to the initiatives and programmes undertaken in the course of the International Year of the Child.

124. Colombia is a developing country, and as such it wishes to improve the situation of its youth and its children, thus preparing them in due course to improve the society in which they will have grown up. But the education and training of children is not just a humanitarian concern; it also has a significant impact upon the process of development, because, as has been correctly stated, in a few decades the children of today will take the place of today's adults.

125. The situation in my country is characterized by the fact that hundreds of thousands of children grow up

in survival-level conditions because of a high incidence of sickness, undernourishment and malnutrition. One may nevertheless be cautiously optimistic. One of the main aims of our Government is to ensure that the children will share the benefits generated by the country's development.

126. It is important that we bring up to date policies and programmes for the protection of minors and the family, thus bridging the gaps and correcting the deficiencies that we have inherited from a history of paternalism, repression and cyclical crises, and setting aside the hit-or-miss and purely emotional approaches to the problems of children. Our commitments towards minors must take full account of their historic and human value, but also presuppose calmness of mind and reason in the diagnosis of the problem and the taking of the necessary action to treat it.

127. We must understand that minors will become the axis around which the social policies of countries rotate, because it is ultimately and to the greatest extent the children that suffer the consequences of poverty, unemployment and lack of educational and health services. Thus matters concerning children must be given priority in the preparation and implementation of the social policies of countries and their development programmes.

128. It is obvious that the problems afflicting children in my country have not been solved. They are a heritage of the distant past, and doubtless they will continue for a long time to come. We have acquired some experience. We do possess institutions and methods that have flowed from the decisions of the Government and the country's support for its programmes. But we must redouble our efforts and guarantee their continuance in the future.

129. Despite our efforts, the joint problems to which I have alluded will continue to afflict children all over the

developing world. That leads me to suggest to this great Assembly that we should undertake the necessary actions so that the important initiative of the International Year of the Child does not end, as so often happens, in commemorative ceremonies, but, rather, that we consider each year concrete programmes of international scope designed to meet the most acute problems of children — that is, nutrition, health, the strengthening of family ties to protect children, foster homes and adoption.

130. Just as so many young, new and vigorous nations have emerged to an independent existence under the auspices and protection of the United Nations, it is to be hoped that the same co-operation will be extended to the world's children, to millions of hungry and abandoned young people who will nevertheless soon be responsible for solving those major problems that constitute for us today the essential issues for discussion in the General Assembly: the world order, the peaceful settlement of disputes, economic relations among States, and, primarily, peace.

131. I should like to reiterate to this Assembly my personal commitment and the commitment of the Government of Colombia not only that the children of Colombia will be given special attention in 1979 but also that we will continue with the same determination to make the present governmental administration a four-year commemoration of the Colombian child.

132. I realize that we are shouldering great responsibilities. Our resolute will to shoulder them with a sense of great love and service can be rewarded by only one thing: the joy of seeing the innocent smiles of children.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.