



**CRIN**  
CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK



**The United Nations  
Special Session on Children**

**time for action**

**United Nations Special Session on Children  
8–10 May 2002  
New York, USA**



## Why a Special Session on Children?

In 1996, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to hold a Special Session on Children – an unprecedented meeting dedicated to the children and adolescents of the world bringing together heads of state, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), children's advocates and young people. Originally scheduled for 19–21 September 2001 the Special Session was postponed because of the tragic attacks on the United States on September 11 and rescheduled for 8–10 May 2002. The gathering has presented a great opportunity to change the way the world views and treats children.

# The United Nations Special Session on Children

## Aims of the Special Session

The General Assembly defined two objectives for the Special Session on Children:

- a review of the achievements in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children.
- a renewed commitment and a pledge for action for children in the next decade.

## The importance of the Special Session on Children

- The first time that the General Assembly – which is the highest level of the United Nations – has held a meeting devoted solely to all aspects of children's lives.
- Governments have a 'second chance' to take decisive action to achieve full implementation of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- An important opportunity to review the successes and failure in achieving the goals set at the 1990 World Summit for Children (and the principle of looking back at progress on promises is a good one).
- A chance for children, NGOs and civil society organisations at national, regional and international levels to talk to governments about what needs to be done.
- An additional mechanism for governments to be held to account for their actions towards children – that is the development and implementation of National Plans of Action after the Special Session.
- The first time that young people have actively participated in deliberations at a major UN conference in such numbers. More than 300 children are delegates.

## Key documents

Two documents relate directly to the two objectives of the Special Session:

- The report of the UN Secretary-General 'We the Children' (A/S-27/3, 4 May 2001) reviews the progress made over the last decade in fulfilling the goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children. The report assesses the decade's achievements and its setbacks, highlights best practices and lessons learned, describes the obstacles to progress and makes recommendations for further action. An accompanying statistical review presents the most recent data on children's rights and well being, based on exhaustive data from 150 countries.
- The outcome document of the Special Session, 'A World Fit for Children', includes a Declaration and a Plan of Action to realise children's rights and improve child well being over the next ten years.

To view these documents, please see the websites of CRIN and UNICEF: [www.crin.org/specialsession](http://www.crin.org/specialsession) and [www.unicef.org/specialsession](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession)

## Participants at the Special Session in New York

Delegates include heads of state, governments, NGOs, civil society leaders, business leaders, and children's advocates including children and young people. In certain circumstances government delegations have included up to two NGO delegates. Around 3,600 NGOs were accredited to the Special Session on Children.

## Other events that relate to the Special Session on Children

- a Children's Forum (5–7 May) held for children and young people to discuss the issues that matter most to them.
- side events organised by NGOs for the duration of the Special Session.
- a Forum on Women's Leadership for Children.
- a Parliamentary Forum.
- a Religious Leaders Symposium.
- three NGO plenaries.
- the signature and ratification of human rights treaties for children.
- a public-private sector dialogue meeting.



## A World Summit for Children

**OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS** a number of significant events led to the UN General Assembly convening a Special Session on Children, and contributed to the promotion of child rights within the international arena.

### The World Summit for Children

On 30 September 1990, at the World Summit for Children held at the United Nations, the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration were signed by 71 heads of state and governments, and was later endorsed by 181 countries. The Plan of Action established seven major and 20 supporting goals that were considered achievable by the year 2000.

The Plan of Action called for national action and international co-operation to meet the goals set in the Plan, and which would greatly improve a child's chances for survival. The Plan covered child health, food and nutrition, the role of women, maternal health and family planning, the role of the family, basic education and literacy, children in especially difficult circumstances, the protection of children during armed conflicts, children and the environment, and the alleviation of poverty and revitalisation of economic growth.

Governments were urged to prepare national plans of action (NPAs) for the implementation of these goals. At the international level, international agencies were asked to assist underdeveloped and highly indebted poor countries in the achievement of their plans of action. UNICEF was then entrusted with preparing a consolidated analysis of these plans in collaboration with other UN bodies, and providing a periodic review of progress.

### Mid-decade reviews

In 1996 the Mid-Decade Review following the World Summit for Children stressed that the General Assembly should consider holding a Special Session to examine how far the world's nations had managed to fulfil their 'promises to children' and implement the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

### End-decade national and regional reviews of progress

Paragraph 15 of the General Assembly Resolution 54/93 adopted in December 1999, invited governments and relevant organisations (in particular UNICEF and regional and sub-regional organisations) to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children, and encouraged appropriate national, regional and international preparatory activities. In paragraph 16, the resolution requested 'the Secretary-General to submit to the special session ... a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and Plan of Action.' (A/RES/54/93, dated 17 December 1999).

### 'We the Children'

This report is the summary and global end-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The report is from United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and was considered by the third Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the United Nations in June 2001 (A/S-27/3, 4 May 2001).

The report assesses the progress made in meeting the commitments made to children at the 1990 World Summit for Children. There is an accompanying statistical review that presents an exhaustive 150-country data collection effort.

The report announced that considerable progress was made since 1990. The most notable achievements are in the areas of polio eradication, neonatal tetanus, diarrhoea, vitamin A deficiency and iodine deficiency. Nearly 1 billion additional people now have access to improved drinking water. Additionally, there are now more children in school than there were ever before.

But for many of the seven major goals of the 1990 Plan of Action achievements were less than impressive. As examples, infant and under-five mortality only declined by 11 percent (rather than the goal of 33 percent), malnutrition declined by 15 percent (rather than 50 percent), there was no real progress in the reduction of maternal mortality (the goal was a 50 percent reduction) and universal access to safe drinking water and hygienic facilities is far from a reality.

All of these documents are available on CRIN's website.

To find more information on what your country has been doing since the World Summit for Children go to UNICEF's website. There you'll find the most recent data on children's rights including national end-decade reviews, reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, by governments as well as NGOs. For more information see: [www.unicef.org/specialsession/how\\_country/index.html](http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/how_country/index.html)

## The road to the Special Session

### National activities and end-decade reviews

The World Summit for Children Plan of Action called on governments to prepare NPAs to implement the World Summit commitments in a coordinated and strategic manner. Over 155 countries carried out NPAs for children and social development. These plans have been implemented to certain degrees. Almost all of these plans were adapted to reflect country-specific challenges and goals.

Extensive end-decade review and reporting processes were established at national, regional and international levels. Participants in the reviews included intersectoral government bodies, parliamentarians, national and international NGOs and civil society organisations, religious groups, academic institutions, the media, United Nations agencies and donors. This helped ensure broad ownership of review findings and consensus on priorities for future action. Various efforts were also made to encourage participation by children, notably through children's and youth parliaments, forums and opinion polls. A number of countries extended the review to sub-national levels through local surveys and consultations.

By the end of April 2001, 130 reports were received from governments and 15 reports had been received from UN agencies and other groups. Many countries made specific reference to the close links between the end-decade review process for the World Summit and reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant UN human rights treaty monitoring bodies. One of the most encouraging aspects of many national reviews has been the extent to which they have gone beyond a retrospective analysis to set priorities for future policies on children.

### Regional meetings

The World Summit Plan of Action requested that all regional institutions (including regional political and economic organisations) include consideration of the Declaration and Plan of Action on their agendas, with a view to developing agreements for mutual collaboration on follow-up. At six regional meetings, governments presented reports on their progress in meeting their national commitments to their children. Meetings took place in Africa, the Arab States, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition to these government meetings consultations were held amongst NGOs and civil society, and specialised meetings were organised to ensure the effective participation by under-18-year-olds in the Special Session process. Hundreds of meetings took place around the world. A series of meetings (almost 20 in total) brought together youth in places that spanned the globe, including Pakistan, Panama, Lesotho, and Berlin. NGOs and other civil society groups organised many meetings in their respective regions. National reviews gained additional visibility through linkages with high-level regional events. Some of the outcome reports of those meetings are also available. Meetings were held in Africa, Asia, Central America and Caribbean, Europe, Middle East, North America, Oceania, and South America. All these events have all helped to add to the impact of this Special Session.

### An overview of the Prepcom process

The Special Session on Children has been the culmination of several years work by governments and NGOs alike. The formal process included three preparatory committee meetings (also called Prepcoms) where government officials met to discuss and negotiate the text of 'A World Fit For Children', the proposed outcome document of the Special Session.

Government delegates elected a small Bureau to manage the proceedings of the Prepcom. The Bureau has Ambassador Patricia Durrant (Jamaica) as Chairperson, and four Vice-Chairs: Ambassador Madina Ly Tall (Mali), Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Ambassador Hanns Schumacher (Germany), and Deputy Minister Lidija Topic (Rapporteur – Bosnia and Herzegovina).

UNICEF served as the Substantive Secretariat of the Preparatory Committee, which means that it: prepared documents (such as the 'We the Children' report); prepared initial drafts of the outcome document according to the directions given by the governments and the Bureau; drafted the agenda of the Prepcom for discussion; and proposed specific events for the Prepcoms – such as the panel sessions – and suggested key speakers.

UNICEF had been working on a 'Global Agenda for Children' since 1998, and had shared this document with NGOs in mid-2000.

The first Prepcom was held from 29 May to 2 June 2000, the second from 28 January to 2 February 2001, and the third from 11–15 June 2001.



### Key outcomes of the first Prepcom

- UNICEF was asked to produce the first draft of the outcome document by November 2000 for consultation with governments.
- it was agreed that the outcome document was to be concise, action-oriented, forward-looking, 'do-able', and measurable.
- it was agreed that children and young people's involvement in the Special Session should be 'substantial', but the exact nature of it was unclear.
- the Child Rights Caucus addressed the Prepcom and prepared documentation.

### Key outcomes of the second Prepcom

- a majority of governments called for a restructured action-oriented outcome document with realistic, achievable goals.
- many governments stressed the importance of the UNCRC and of a rights-focused approach.
- government statements emphasised: health, education, HIV/AIDS, poverty and debt reduction, children and conflict, violence against children, environment, gender and participation.
- governments addressed the need to incorporate commitments made at world conferences held over the last decade.
- a second draft of the outcome document to be made available by mid-March.
- decisions on proposals for the participation of children in the Special Session were to be made at the third Prepcom.
- a proposal to hold a Children's Forum prior to the Special Session was to be developed.

### Key outcomes of the third Prepcom

The third version of 'A World Fit for Children' issued in May was a significant improvement upon earlier versions of the document, particularly in terms of strengthening the child rights approach of the document. This version included a number of amendments, for which the Child Rights Caucus and other NGOs had been lobbying. These improvements included:

- stronger language on child participation,
- new references to sexual and reproductive health care, early childhood care and education, and universal access to education by 2015,
- new strategies related to protection from armed conflict, child labour, and sexual exploitation,
- additions to the mobilising resources section, and
- a new commitment to national-level monitoring systems.

Not all these changes were subsequently agreed to, and the Prepcom failed to finalise the document. The contentious issues that halted the third Prepcom included:

- the issues of resources (with developing countries pressing for a strong commitment to the provision of additional money),
- the status of the UNCRC as a framework for action, and language on rights and the UNCRC in general,
- reproductive health,
- references to the Israel-Palestine dispute and to Iraq.

### Negotiations after the third Prepcom

Informal government negotiations were held in September 2001. Some 23 new paragraphs were agreed during this meeting. The negotiations on the outcome document were stopped following the events of September 11. A number of key issues still needed to be discussed before a final consensus text could be reached.

The key problem areas were:

- paragraphs 4 and 29 of the outcome document concerning the status of the UNCRC.
- paragraph 8 on resources and the manner in which these resources will be made available.
- paragraph 15 on the definition of the family.
- references to reproductive health throughout the document.
- paragraphs on child labour.

In March 2002 the Chair of the Special Session Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Durrant circulated a new text, the "Draft Chairperson's Proposals" that she proposed as the basis for continued negotiations for the outcome document. Governments resumed negotiations on 22 April 2002.

## 'A World Fit For Children' – the outcome document of the Special Session

### 'A World Fit for Children'

Endorsement of 'A World Fit for Children' by heads of state and governments commits heads of states and governments to achieving a set of targets and benchmarks for children by 2010. The outcome document includes a declaration, a review of progress and lessons learned and a detailed Plan of Action.

There are four priorities for children in the coming decade:

- promoting healthy lives.
- providing quality education.
- protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence.
- combating HIV/AIDS.

The Plan of Action outlines how to create a world fit for children through specific goals, strategies and action; mobilising resources; and follow up actions and monitoring. Goals and actions are linked to the achievement of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

There are more than 20 specific targets and benchmarks, and these include:

- Reduction of the infant and under-five mortality rate by at least one third, in pursuit of the goal of reducing it by two thirds by 2015.
- Reduction in the maternal mortality ratio by at least one third, in pursuit of the goal of reducing it by three quarters by 2015.
- Reduction of child malnutrition among children under five years of age by at least one third, with special attention to children under two years of age, and reduction in the rate of low birth weight by at least one third of the current rate.
- Reduction in the proportion of households without access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable and safe drinking water by at least one third.
- Universal access to primary education.
- Protection of children against all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence; the impact of armed conflict; all forms of sexual exploitation; the worst forms of child labour and child labour that is contrary to accepted international standards; and to include in those protection mechanisms other especially difficult circumstances.
- Reduction of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, in order to combat the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on children according to a series of time-bound targets.

### National Plans of Action

After the Special Session on Children, governments will be required to develop national, and where appropriate, regional action plans to ensure that the targets and benchmarks are achieved. Governments have been encouraged to develop the NPAs taking into account the key issues and priorities for children in their own countries, as well as relevant cultural, religious and social traditions. The NPAs will be complemented by inclusion of these goals into other policies and development plans, such as poverty reduction plans.

The development of NPAs will require strengthening national statistical capacities to collect and analyse data support child-focused research.

Periodic reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels will also take place. At the regional level, reviews will require sharing best practices and strengthening partnership in order to accelerate progress. States Parties to the UNCRC are being encouraged to include in their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child information on measures taken and results achieved in the implementation of 'A World Fit for Children'. The Secretary General will report regularly to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Plan of Action.

### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

**In November 1989, the United Nations General Assembly by Resolution 44/25, adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty. In May 2000, the General Assembly adopted two Optional Protocols to the UNCRC: one on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and another on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Both of these entered into force in 2002 (A/RES/54/263 and A/RES/54/263).**

#### Child poverty

One of the most significant gaps in the Plan of Action is the absence of a concerted, practical and time-bound set of actions to eradicate child poverty. In total, 600 million children live in extreme poverty – the largest number in history. Poverty is a major obstacle to the ability of parents to protect their children's rights to survival and development and to provide them with the educational and other opportunities that every parent desires for their child.

#### Children's rights

The near universal ratification of the UNCRC was a major success of the 1990s. It established once and for all that children do have human rights and that governments have duties to respect and fulfil them. These rights are concerned with the most important practical aspects of children's lives that governments can reasonably be expected to do something about. It also establishes that these essential rights belong to all children – including the disabled, indigenous children, refugees and other discriminated-against groups. Of course there are other very important things that children need – love, respect, moral guidance, good and responsible parenting, but these cannot be legislated for, or made an enforceable duty. However, what governments can do is to create an environment in which parents and other carers are given support and assistance to enable them to offer these to their children.

The issue of child rights was one of the most contentious aspects of the negotiations leading up to the Special Session – despite the fact that the majority of governments gave strong support to the UNCRC. The Child Rights Caucus of NGOs has argued throughout the Special Session process that the best way to construct a world fit for children is to use the principles and standards of the UNCRC. Politically and practically it makes sense to build on the foundations created over the last ten years in implementing the UNCRC. It does not make sense to have two competing sets of obligations on governments (as happened in the 1990s).

The Child Rights Caucus therefore argued that the Plan of Action should clearly express this through:

- specific reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the key framework for the Declaration and Plan of Action
- a clear statement that the purpose of the Declaration and Plan of Action is to advance and ensure implementation of the UNCRC
- integrating monitoring of progress of the Plan of Action with the monitoring systems of the UNCRC

The negotiations, however, have left the links between the Plan of Action and the UNCRC incomplete and uncertain. On the positive side, the Declaration reaffirms the obligations of governments to promote and protect the rights of children. However, there has not been full recognition of the UNCRC as the central statement of children's rights.

Failure to use the UNCRC as the basis for implementing the Plan of Action will not just be a setback to the cause of children's rights but also to efforts to create a better world for children. It will perpetuate, rather than remove, the current fragmentation of responsibility for children and will encourage a focus on a limited set of goals, separated from the overall vision for children that the UNCRC contains.





**IF THE GOALS OF THE PLAN OF ACTION** are to be achieved, new, substantial and long-term resource commitments – human, financial and material – are required. It is estimated that a minimum of \$70 billion per annum is required to reach the goals in health and education alone. These resources need to come from both domestic and international sources.

## Follow up commitments

### Mobilising resources

The Plan of Action repeats familiar calls for higher levels of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), enhanced debt relief, implementation of the 20/20 Initiative and the development of 'innovative' (but unspecified) arrangements for mobilising additional resources, both private and public. It encourages governments to 'explore' re-allocating military expenditure to children – at a time when agreements on arms sales made by developing countries totalled \$25.4 billion in 2000, the highest in constant dollars since 1994. Levels of ODA fell during the 1990s, are far too unstable and are not targeted on supporting achievement of the goals – while debt relief is slow, insufficient and too few countries are eligible to receive it. The majority of the least-developed countries spend far more on debt servicing than they do on basic services for children – and they will continue to do so even after debt relief under the enhanced heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative.

The unwillingness of governments to allocate resources on a scale proportionate to the problems faced by children is clear. Current investment in basic services, which is a good measure of both domestic and international commitment to children, is only two-thirds of that required to achieve the child-focused Millennium Development Goals. These targets include universal primary education in all countries by 2015; the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005; reduction in under-5 mortality by two-thirds of the 1990 level by 2015; reduction of maternal mortality by three-quarters of the 1990 level by 2015; access through the primary health care system to reproductive health services by 2015.

The call for higher levels of ODA is linked

to a 30-year-old commitment by the developed countries to give 0.7% of their GNP in aid, a commitment which has never been honoured. If it were honoured this alone would generate \$100 billion. But ODA is currently given at only a third of the level promised – and only a tenth of that is targeted at basic services for children. Recent efforts to set up a Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis – among the most serious diseases facing children – have demonstrated the scale of the problem. Only \$1.8 billion has been committed to the Fund (as of July 2001) – this is too small an amount to have real impact.

Yet there is some good news on this front. From 18–22 March 2002 an international conference "Financing for Development" was held in Monterrey, Mexico. This was the first UN-hosted conference on key financial and development issues. Over 50 heads of states and over 200 ministers attended the conference. This meeting marked the first exchange of views between governments, civil society, the business community and the institutional stakeholders on global economic issues.

There were a number of outcomes to the meetings. The EU and the United States both committed to increase their ODA budgets. This is significant, as the EU represents more than 50% of all ODA worldwide, including humanitarian aid, totalling \$25.4 billion in 2000. Similarly the United States made a commitment to increasing its development budget by \$5 billion over the next three budget years. The conference also recognised the link between financing of development and attaining internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Aid and new international resources, however, are not the only solution. Developing countries themselves already spend 27 times more on basic services for children than rich

country donors provide. What is also required is greater attention to the effectiveness of that spending (including addressing corruption and the diversion of resources to better-off groups). In education expenditure, for example, there needs to be a stronger emphasis on concentrating spending on primary and secondary education, both to increase the enrolment of children from poor families and to improving its quality. Decentralisation can also play a part in improving the effectiveness of public expenditure – provided it is accompanied by the decentralisation of management, and greater participation by communities, parents and children.

### Globalisation and policy coherence

Global trade, agricultural and investment policies can play an important part in determining the resources available to developing countries to help them reach the goals and targets of the Plan of Action. Such policies play a key role in determining whether children benefit from globalisation. At present, however, there is a lack of coherence between such policies and the goals of the Plan of Action. It is estimated, for example, that nearly \$50 billion a year – 70 percent of the \$70 billion a year needed to give every child in the world access to basic education, primary health care and safe water – is lost to the developing world because of protectionism and barriers to market access in the industrialised world. (This includes tariff and non-tariff barriers and agricultural subsidies). The goals of the Plan of Action are much more likely to be achieved if policy in these other areas can be aligned in support of them, rather than undermining them. The promotion of children's rights and the achievement of the goals of the Plan of Action should be a central element of trade and other global negotiations.

**“The greatest challenge for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children and UN Member States in this new millennium is to develop practical and sustainable ways to fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as rapidly as possible world-wide. This needs to be achieved by making the Convention’s provisions ever-more binding for Member States, by reinforcing its monitoring and implementation capabilities, by selecting a new set of comprehensive and measurable goals on which to focus for the next decade, and by mustering the political will to achieve them.”**

‘A Child Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade’,  
Child Rights Caucus, 2000

## NGOs working on ‘A World Fit for Children’

### NGOs lobby for change

Non-governmental organisations have played a vital role in the Prepcom process. They were active at all levels (local, national, regional and international) carrying out their grassroots work on child rights, and also lobbying for change.

A number of NGO caucuses were involved in the Prepcom process. Created in early 2000, the Child Rights Caucus was formed to serve as an NGO lobby group pressing for a strong child rights-based approach to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. The document ‘A Child Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade’ outlines priority areas for child rights in the coming decade.

The Child Rights Caucus, in consultation with other caucuses, prepared an alternative text of the outcome document, in the form of a line-by-line edit of the draft outcome document. This text, which was revised as the Prepcom process continued, was intended to provide specific and detailed text to strengthen the outcome document.

The NGO Alternative Text:

- substantially expanded the goals of the document.
- identified five priority goals: eradication of child poverty, education, health and HIV/AIDS, protection from violence, and participation.
- added issues that had not been adequately addressed by the initial draft.
- proposed language to strengthen monitoring mechanisms.
- stressed the importance of linking the monitoring of Special Session commitments with the monitoring of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Documents and statements made by the caucuses were taken seriously by UNICEF and by government delegations and used in negotiations and preparing the new drafts of the outcome document.

The Child Rights Caucus served as the main NGO lobbying group, but there were many other very active groups and caucuses. The NGO Committee on UNICEF ensured the participation of NGOs in the Prepcoms and the Special Session. They concentrated particularly on the logistical arrangements of the meeting.

Among the other caucuses were those on: Children and Armed Conflict, Girls, Violence against Children, Health, Education, Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Working Group on Girls, Religion and Disabilities and regional caucuses. The regional caucuses include: Asia, Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic States (CEE/CIS), Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, the Africa Regional Caucus, and the Western Europe and North America Regional Caucus.

The thematic and regional caucuses played an integral role in the Prepcom process.

The caucuses held regional consultations, prepared reports for the Prepcoms, and lobbied governments on the outcome document. The regional consultations organised by NGOs also had an input into the regional meetings held by governments. These consultations allowed NGOs and civil society to focus on issues specific to their regions. Similarly the focused nature of the thematic caucuses allowed each group to be very specific in their lobbying. For example, the Children and Violence Caucus, representing over forty NGOs, lobbied governments on the outcome document, notably on protection. Among the issues they addressed were: the prohibition of corporal punishment, the death penalty, life imprisonment for crimes committed by those under 18, and the treatment of children as adults in a court of law.

Similarly the Children in Armed Conflict Caucus also lobbied governments for changes in the outcome document. Part of its focus was on the need to listen to and work with war-affected children and youth and address their needs after as well as during conflicts. Members of the Children in Armed Conflict Caucus discussed the ways they could to work with others at the Special Session and beyond. They discussed the role of children in the criminal tribunal in Sierra Leone, and organised a session for youth and adults to speak to Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children in Armed Conflict.

The position papers and the NGO alternative text can be downloaded from CRIN’s website. Various other NGO resources are also available. For further information on the NGO Committee on UNICEF go to: [www.ngosatunicef.org](http://www.ngosatunicef.org) and for the Child Rights Caucus go to: [www.crin.org/specialsession/child-rights-caucus](http://www.crin.org/specialsession/child-rights-caucus)

## Children's participation



### On the road to the Special Session

Young people were involved in the lead up to the Special Session in local, national, regional and international meetings. They took part in consultations on drafts of 'A World Fit for Children'. There were regional meetings of young people prior to high-level regional meetings where young people also participated. Young people met in New York prior to the second and third Prepcoms.

### Children's participation at the Special Session

The direct participation of children and young people in the Special Session process made it unique. Their dynamic contribution to the preparatory process demonstrated their need for a central role in the Special Session itself. Their participation included:

- a presence on many government and NGO delegations at the Special Session.
- taking part in the Children's Forum from 5-7 May 2002.
- addressing the General Assembly.
- addressing each of the three official Round Tables.
- addressing the Forum on Women's Leadership for Children and other side events.
- attending child-centred events staged by UNICEF and NGOs.

### Children's Forum: 5-7 May 2002

Children and youth who participated in the preparatory process for the Special Session made it very clear: they wanted to be treated as partners and they wanted their views to be taken seriously by the adult delegates. They also want to meet together in their own space, their own time and in their own style. In recognition of this UNICEF, in collaboration with NGOs and children's groups, supported the holding of a three-day Children's Forum. The Forum, held in New York before the Special Session, has given the under-18s who are part of official government or NGO delegations the chance to share their ideas before the Session actually begins.

The Children's Forum has given participants the chance to explore the issues highlighted in the outcome document of the Special Session, 'A World Fit for Children'. Discussions included how they can be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the goals of 'A World Fit for Children' and how they can influence their own governments, UN agencies, NGOs and others involved in the implementation process.

Children and youth who are unable to take part in the Children's Forum or attend the Special Session can take part through UNICEF's Voices of Youth website. UNICEF is committed to children and youth having a forum to express their views.

There are child-friendly versions of 'A World Fit for Children' and 'We the Children'. These are available on CRIN's website.

**THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN** (GMC) is a coalition of organisations, sectors and individuals that share a common vision of a world fit for children. It is a movement that seeks to build a far-reaching constituency to promote child rights and to take actions for their implementation and to demand public accountability.

As one part of this, for example, two international champions of human rights, Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel, are heading the Leadership Initiative, reaching out to leaders from all parts of the world and all sectors of society to jump-start the global movement.

The coalition aims to mobilise a massive groundswell of public opinion in support of children's rights. The group believes that the lessons of other movements for social

change, such as the environment movement and the women's rights movement and the civil rights movement in the United States can help to shape the global movement for children.

Taking cues from the workshop of CSOs held in July 2001 in London on the future of the GMC, the founding partners of the GMC have been discussing ways in which to build greater participation and partnership with a wider base of CSOs and others from across the world. Most important to the success and long-term sustainability of the movement is the engagement of those whose rights it is seeking to defend. GMC partners recognise the necessity of engaging children at all levels in the movement – from global governance to national and community networks.

The partners also recognise that the focus of action should be at the national and local levels where real impact is made. International and regional efforts should aim to support this action.

### **Say Yes for Children Campaign**

By far the most successful activity of the GMC to date has been the 'Say Yes for Children' campaign. The campaign has collected over 60 million pledges from around the world in support of the Rallying Calls – 10 imperative actions to improve the lives of children. Beyond that, Say Yes has galvanised people worldwide, particularly children, at a grass-roots level, to become involved and take action on behalf of children.

# The 'Global Movement for Children'

## The Global Movement for Children – the rallying call

In every child who comes into the world, the hopes and dreams of the human race are born anew.

Children are the bearers of our common future – a future that is in our hands as never before. For the world has the knowledge, the resources and the legal imperatives to give every child the best possible start in life, in a family environment that offers the love, the care and the nurturing that children need to grow, to learn – and to develop to the fullest.

The entire community of nations acknowledged as much when they embraced the Convention on the Rights of the Child – and vowed, a decade ago, to fulfil the goals of the World Summit for Children. These obligations must be met, not only by governments, but by all of us.

Yet in this new Millennium, it is clear that more – much more – must be done if the world is to protect the rights and meet the needs of all children.

That is why we, as citizens of every nation and members of families, communities, and civil society organisations of every kind, hereby resolve to help mobilise a Global Movement for Children – an unstoppable crusade to end, at long last, the poverty, ill health, violence and discrimination that has needlessly blighted and destroyed so many young lives.

Our determination is rooted in the knowledge that in furthering the best interests of children, the most effective actions must come from within the context of our own lives and hearts, and from listening to children and young people themselves. As members of the human family, each of us is responsible. All of us are accountable.

### **1. Leave No Child Out**

Because every girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights, all forms of discrimination and exclusion against children must end.

### **2. Put Children First**

Governments must meet their obligations to children and young people. At the same time, everyone – including individuals, non-governmental organisations, religious groups, the private sector, and children and adolescents themselves – must recognise their responsibility to ensure that child rights are respected.

### **3. Care for Every Child**

All children must enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, especially through immunisation, good nutrition and diet, clean water and adequate sanitation, proper housing and a safe and healthy environment.

### **4. Fight HIV/AIDS**

Children and adolescents and their families must be protected from the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS.

### **5. Stop Harming and Exploiting Children**

The violence and abuse that children suffer must be stopped now. And the sexual and economic exploitation of children must also end.

### **6. Listen to Children**

Everyone must respect the right of children and young people to express themselves and to participate in decisions that affect them, consistent with their evolving capabilities. And we must listen and act.

### **7. Educate Every Child**

All girls and boys must receive a compulsory, free primary education of good quality.

### **8. Protect Children from War**

Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict.

### **9. Protect the Earth for Children**

There must be urgent steps by every one of us – including governments, civil society and the private sector – to assure the well-being and security of future generations by safeguarding the environment at global, national and local levels.

### **10. Fight Poverty: Invest in Children**

Because children suffer the most from poverty, the fight against it must begin with them. This includes investing in social services that benefit the poorest children and their families, such as basic health-care and primary education. At the same time, the well being of children must be a priority objective of debt relief programmes, development assistance and government spending.

For more information on the Global Movement for Children please see [www.gmfc.org](http://www.gmfc.org)

“The well-being of children requires political action at the highest level. We are determined to take that action.”

Declaration of the World Summit for Children, 1990

**The United Nations Special Session on Children – A unique opportunity to take action on child rights and move forward from commitments made at the World Summit for Children, while using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a strong foundation. CRIN applauds all those working towards this end.**

**For the latest information on the follow-up to the Special Session please view our website at:  
[www.crin.org/specialsession](http://www.crin.org/specialsession)**



The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) exists as an independent, non-partisan forum for the exchange of information that assists the work of all those actors committed to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. CRIN aims to democratise information on child rights and to encourage information-sharing between different parts of the world and different actors in the implementation of the UNCRC.

By providing a central ‘clearinghouse’ for such information and by making information available in a variety of formats and media, CRIN seeks to empower the child rights community and to accelerate implementation of the UNCRC. Information is disseminated to thousands of organisations around the world, including over 1,200 organisations that have joined as members to CRIN.

Established formally in 1995, CRIN is funded by Save the Children Sweden (Rädda Barnen), the United Nations Children’s Fund, Save the Children UK, and the International Save the Children Alliance. The office is hosted by Save the Children UK in London.

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The CRIN Working Papers are published occasionally by the Child Rights Information Network to support and promote the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are intended to satisfy the varied information needs of organisations and individuals working for child rights at the grassroots, national, regional and international levels. CRIN Working Papers can be downloaded in pdf format at: [www.crin.org/about/working-papers](http://www.crin.org/about/working-papers).

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