

# UN Special Session on Children



## Newsletter

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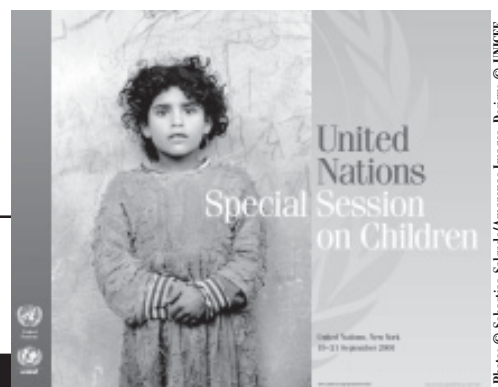


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## WHY A SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN?

The reality of life today for the world's children is that:

- *More than 10 million under the age of five die each year, mostly from preventable disease and malnutrition;*
- *One third fail to complete five years of basic schooling;*
- *Over 100 million of primary school age, the majority of them girls, are not enrolled in school.*
- *Over 300,000 have been recruited as participants in recent armed conflicts;*
- *Over 60 million work in the worst forms of child labour.*

For these and other reasons, the 189-member General Assembly, the highest policy-making body of the United Nations, has convened a **Special Session on Children**. It is scheduled to take place in **New York, 19-21 September 2001**.

The Special Session will be a follow-up to the historic World Summit for Children in New York in 1990. Building upon the progress made since that Summit, the Special Session will further promote, protect and ensure the rights of children worldwide.

The Summit, which was attended by 71 Heads of State and Government, adopted a World Declaration on Survival, Protection and Development of Children and also a Plan of Action to achieve a set of precise time-bound goals.

A major event of profound significance to children took place in 1989, the year before the World Summit: the adoption by the General Assembly of the landmark UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ushering in a new era, the Convention created a momentum that helped

move children and child rights to the top of the world's political agenda ensuring a commitment by the international community to respect, fulfill, promote and protect the rights of children worldwide.

Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session, says the purpose of the Special Session is for leaders to commit to new actions for children.

According to her, during the last 10 years substantial progress has been made in fulfilling the goals and objectives of the World Summit for Children. "However much still remains to be done".

The new commitments will be reflected in a forward-looking outcome document to be adopted at the Special Session.

### WHAT THE SPECIAL SESSION HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH

The Special Session has two major objectives:

- *A review of the progress made in the decade since the World Summit for Children.*

The end-of-decade review combines national, regional and global reports on the status of children. These reviews will

chart the achievements of the last decade and provide a progress report to world leaders as they plan future actions on children.

So far, over 130 national reports have been prepared by UN member states, along with those from UN agencies, on the implementation of the World Summit Plan of Action.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will submit a report to the General Assembly which will spell out the progress made since the World Summit.

This report will be submitted to the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee (June 11-15) as a companion to the draft outcome document.

- *A renewed commitment and a pledge for specific actions for the new decade.*

The Special Session will adopt a global agenda for children with a set

of specific goals and a plan of action for the new decade.

The upcoming Third Preparatory Committee meeting will finalize the draft outcome document before it is submitted to the Special Session for adoption.

As of mid-April, over 25 Heads of State and Government have indicated they will attend the Special Session,

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*"There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace"*

**Kofi A. Annan**  
Secretary-General  
of the United Nations

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Credit: UNICEF/01-005/Susan Markisz

PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT AND THE BUREAU OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE, WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND UNICEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: (left-right), Landon Pearson of Canada, Eeva Kuuskoski of Finland, Sammy Ole Kwallah of Kenya, David Aptsiauri of Georgia, Bureau Member Madina Ly Tall of Mali, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, Claire Kirschen of Belgium, Bureau Member Anwarul Karim Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Bureau Chairperson Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, Tran Thi Thanh Thanh of Viet Nam, Bureau Member Hanns Schumacher of Germany, U.N. General Assembly President Harri Holkeri, Bureau Member Lidija Topic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jarmila Moravek de Cerruto of Bolivia, Jorge Eduardo Navarrete of Mexico, Marie-Thérèse Hermange of France, Alberta Quartey of Ghana, Nada Korac of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Mimoza Hafizi of Albania.

and the number is expected to increase.

Heads of State and Government have assigned 50 Personal Representatives to the Preparatory Committee meetings (see photo above). They include ministers,

parliamentarians, senior policy specialists, and heads of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Besides the variety of national and regional meetings (see calendar, p. 4), the national reports on the implementa-

tion of the 1990 Plan of Action are a key component of the process because they will be articulating a new global agenda for children.

### THE 10 IMPERATIVES FOR CHILDREN

The current draft outcome document calls on all members of society to uphold the following principles:

- Put children first. In all our undertakings, the best interests of the child shall always be our primary consideration.

- Leave no child behind. Because every girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights, all forms of discrimination affecting children must end.

- Care for every child. The survival and development of children is the essential foundation of human development. No effort should be spared to ensure that children get the best possible start in life.

- Educate every child. All girls and boys must receive a compulsory, free basic education of good quality.

- Stop harming and exploiting children. Any acts of violence, exploitation and abuse against children are intoler-

able and must come to an end.

- Protect children from war. Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict.

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

- Fight poverty: invest in children. We reaffirm our vow to break the cycle of poverty within a single generation, united in the conviction that poverty reduction must begin with children and the realization of their rights.

- Listen to children. We regard children as resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. We must respect their rights to express themselves and to participate in decisions that affect them.

- Protect the Earth for children. We must preserve our planet in order to nurture our children; equally, we must nurture our children if we are to preserve our planet.

### YOUNG PEOPLE: THE VOICE OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

The General Assembly has recognized as essential the participation of children and adolescents in the Special Session and the process leading to it.

Governments and NGOs have been urged to include young people in their delegations to regional consultations, to the Preparatory Committee, and to the Special Session itself.

They have also been strongly encouraged to involve young people in the local, national and regional reviews of the implementation of the 1990 Plan of Action and on discussions on the draft outcome of the Special Session.

In order to promote the meaningful participation of young people from around the world, UNICEF has established a website called "Voices of Youth" (<http://www.unicef.org/voy>) as an interactive page where comments on youth-related topics for the Special Session are shared with key decision-makers.

## NGOs: KEY ACTORS IN THE SPECIAL SESSION

The General Assembly has underlined the importance of active NGO participation both at the Special Session and in the preparatory process leading to it.

Along with young people, NGOs have been encouraged to organize activities in countries and local communities in preparation for, or to coincide with, the Special Session.

Both at the national and regional levels, NGOs have continued to sustain a timely dialogue with their respective governments in order to prepare national positions at global meetings.

A number of regional and country-level meetings are currently underway to mobilize NGOs for, and beyond, the Special Session in an ongoing global process to promote children's rights.

Efforts are also underway to arrange video and radio link-ups during the Special Session so that civil society and young people can join in the discussions in New York from their respective countries.

### PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Over 3,600 NGOs have been approved by the Preparatory Committee for accreditation to the Special Session and its preparatory process. The approval of NGO accreditation is now past deadline.

To ensure their active participation, NGOs will be permitted to intervene at the Preparatory Committee meetings and also at the Special Session, through their accredited representatives.

During the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee on 29 January - 2 February 2001, several NGOs organized caucuses to address critical issues such as girls' education, child health and nutrition, global environment, child disability, children in armed conflict and child sexual exploitation. The Child Rights Caucus, comprising over 70 international and national organisations, provided a forum to discuss the draft outcome of the Special Session and prepared an alternative text (available at the Child Rights Information Network web site: <http://www.crin.org>)

For further information on NGO participation, please contact:  
The NGO Facilitation Team  
UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017.  
Fax: (1-212) 824-6466 or 303-7990 or 326-7594.

or

The NGO Committee on UNICEF  
UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017.  
Fax: (1-212) 824-6394  
E-mail: [ngocommittee@unicef.org](mailto:ngocommittee@unicef.org).

## GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN

Preparations for the Special Session are serving to strengthen partnerships for children that will continue in the growing Global Movement for Children.

The GMC is a call to leadership and accountability at every level of society—governments, private sector, media, NGOs, religious and community leaders, and households—to ensure that every child is free to grow to adulthood in health, peace and dignity.

Consensus was reached on the ten imperatives of the Rallying Call for the Global Movement for Children, around which action should be mobilised at all levels. It was launched in February 2001 by six organizations - the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Plan International, Save the Children Alliance, World Vision International, the Netaid.org Foundation and UNICEF.

Through the "Say Yes for Children" campaign, children and adults from around the world will speak out on these ten imperative actions by pledging their support to the Rallying Call.

The results of the campaign will be presented in September 2001 at the Special Session on Children. The Global Movement will then take the message of the Special Session to the world. To get involved in the GMC visit the web sites <http://gmfc.org> and <http://www.unicef.org/gmfc>



LOGO OF THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT



Credit: © Republic of Korea

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES MEET, STRESS CHILDREN'S RIGHTS. Former South African President Nelson Mandela and President Kim Dae-Jung of the Republic of Korea met in Seoul in March to discuss ways to promote peace, poverty eradication, democracy and human rights. Calling attention to children's rights, they emphasized "the vital importance to protect children and youth from disease and abuse and to guarantee their rights for a fuller education." They urged support for the forthcoming Special Session on Children.



## 2001 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*A number of activities are being organized at global and regional levels in preparation for, or related to, the Special Session. Highlights of the forthcoming major events are listed below:*

**11-15 June** Third Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee (New York)  
**19-21 September** Special Session on Children (New York)

### RELATED GLOBAL EVENTS

**14-20 May** Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Brussels, Belgium)  
**6-8 June** Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Special Session of the General Assembly (New York)  
**25-27 June** Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (New York)  
**9-20 July** Special Session of the General Assembly on Small Arms (New York)  
**5-12 August** World Youth Forum - organised by the UN Youth Unit (Dakar, Senegal)  
**31 Aug-7 Sep** World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, South Africa)

### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**2-4 May** Ibero-American Plan of Action Preparation Workshop (Caceres, Spain)  
**30 May-1 June** III Ibero-American Ministerial Meeting on Children and Adolescents (Lima, Peru)

### EUROPE

**16-18 May** Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia (Berlin, Germany)  
**18-20 June** "Generation in Jeopardy" Conference (Stockholm)

### AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

**24-26 April** High-level Conference on Children of the League of Arab States (Cairo, Egypt)  
**24-27 April** Summit on HIV/AIDS of the Organization of African Unity (Abuja, Nigeria)  
**21-23 May** Arab-African Preparatory Meeting on Children (financing the global agenda for children) (Marrakech, Morocco)  
**28-31 May** OAU/UNICEF Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children (Cairo, Egypt)

### ASIA

**14-16 May** 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation (Beijing, China)  
**22-23 May** Regional High-level Consultation "A South Asian Imperative: Investing in Children" (Kathmandu, Nepal)

### For more on the Special Session:

#### Visit the UNICEF Web site

Comprehensive and updated information on the preparations for the Special Session is posted at the following Internet addresses:

*English:* <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/>  
*French:* <http://www.unicef.org/french/specialsession/>  
*Spanish:* <http://www.unicef.org/spanish/specialsession/>  
*Arabic:* <http://www.un.org/arabic/ga/children>  
*Chinese:* <http://www.un.org/chinese/events/children/>  
*Russian:* <http://www.un.org/russian/documen/gadocs/27spec/>

#### Or please contact:

- Secretariat of the Special Session on Children.  
UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.  
Fax: (1-212) 303-7992
- The NGO Facilitation Team  
UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.  
Fax: (1-212) 824-6466 or 303-7990 or 326-7594



JOIN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN AND ADD YOUR VOICE TO THE CALL FOR A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL CHILDREN. The pledges we collect from people all over the globe will be delivered to world leaders at the United Nations Special Session on Children, 19-21 September 2001. Take Action. Be heard. Say Yes for Children. To get involved, visit the [www.gmfc.org](http://www.gmfc.org) or contact the nearest office of the GMC founding partners (BRAC, Netaid.org Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, and World Vision)