



On the Record for Children

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From the AP Editorial Desk

Editorial: Still a Long Way to Go

Over the last five weeks, government delegations to the Third Preparatory Committee have made three attempts to reach agreement on the all-important Outcome document (also known as 'A World Fit for Children') and have come up short. They have now taken a huge gamble and agreed to meet again in the last week of August (August 27-30), in hope of wrapping up the discussions.

Why is this a gamble? Because around 30 percent of the document is still in brackets, and because some of the toughest issues are still the subject of fierce disagreement. These include the death penalty, children in war, child labor, reproductive rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The chemistry of conferences suggests that the longer they keep talking, the harder it becomes for governments to surrender ground without losing face. It is now entirely possible that the PrepCom will end in August without agreement on some of these issues.

That could raise the nightmarish prospect of heads of state at the Special Session negotiating about whether or not to ban the death penalty for crimes committed by children, or whether 'reproductive health services' does or does not include abortion.

Virtually everyone will want to avoid this, but to do that they will have to summon up the political will to reach agreement in August. They will have to put aside politics in the best interests of the child.

These next two issues of 'On the Record for Children' suggest that it will not be easy. Yet it is important to note that there is, in fact, a very large consensus around most of the controversial issues. All but two governments have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, so it can safely be assumed that they would be happy to see it placed at the center of the Outcome document. And 107 governments have ratified the International Labor Organization's (ILO's) Convention 138, which outlaws child labor below the age of 15.

Several major international conferences have concluded that adolescent girls must be empowered if they are to be protected from the many threats that they face: AIDS, trafficking, poverty, violence, and war. One way to protect them against sexual violence and disease is to provide them with access to reproductive health services. There is no mystery or controversy here.

Why then do these proposals threaten the entire Special Session? The reason is that a small number of players – governments and lobbyists – are more concerned with making a political statement than with protecting children. In so doing, they are taking extreme, unrepresentative views and trying to impose them on the rest of the world.

Sadly, they are led by the United States. There is little about the US position to suggest a passionate concern for children or a willingness to adopt bold new initiatives. All we hear are dark warnings and base fears.

What is it about child rights that scares the US government, when the statistics shout out the need for more protection of children? Why does the United States choose to believe that participation by children will erode 'family values' when all the evidence shows that young people must be involved for solutions to succeed? Why maintain that sexual abstinence is the principle safeguard against the spread of AIDS when it is clear that the disease flourishes in a climate of violence against adolescent girls – and poverty?

We know that the US positions being advanced at this conference are not representative of American opinion. So why, we ask, is the United States trying to force them in the rest of the world? Until that becomes clearer, we fear for the Special Session.

This issue of 'On the Record for Children' contains news from the NGO Committee for UNICEF (which sponsors this newsletter) and several perspectives from some of our reporters. The next issue, which goes out tomorrow, will analyze some of the disputed issues.

Both issues are being sent out by e-mail to subscribers and will be posted on the web site of the NGO Committee for UNICEF. They are not being distributed in hard copy.

'On the Record for Children' will cover the final session of the PrepCom in August. It will then resume on a daily basis for the Special Session. Subscription details and editorial policy can be found at end of this issue.

From One of Our Young Reporters: A Thanks

From the Editors:

Young journalists were very much involved in the production of 'On the Record for Children.' Every day during the PrepCom, members of our editorial team held a workshop for young writers to help them contribute to the newspaper. By the end of the week almost 20 young writers had published articles, some of which were good enough to feature on the front page. One of our young star reporters, **Yelena Ovcharenko**, 15, asked that this letter be published in this issue:

'Four days and seven years ago, approximately, I had a dream that one day I wouldn't be judged by the color of my skin but by the quality of my writing. That day came during this third UN PrepCom when I asked myself 'to be or not to be' as I looked at the nongovernmental organization (NGO) side events schedule and saw 'Workshop for Youth Journalists.'

'As I walked into the Boss Room on the eight floor of the Church Center, I felt all alone until people started piling in. Then, Iain 'Einstein' Guest walked in and presented his formula for precise news writing: (Article + fact x caption)².

'It was an honor and a privilege to meet and work with Iain, 'Doctor' John, Nazli, Weston, Shani, Alberta, Vadim, Mark, Miki, Jovan, Ying Ying, 'the Koreans', Olandina, Tania, Yvonne, Kasha, Richard, and all of those other wonderful people that I've met during this period of time and somewhere over the rainbow.

'We the children of the UN newspaper would also like to thank Ingrid and the rest of the patient and hardworking staff for putting up with our amateur writing and our attitudes. We can't forget the wonderful paparazzi that took a picture whenever possible. Persistence is definitely the key to journalism. Throughout the week we developed a strong bond and can truly say: 'all journalists for one and one for all.' And now we would like to thank you from the bottom of our feet (since we can't go any lower) for giving us the best days of our lives.

'CPACIBO – (thank you in Russian) – for being willing to work with us because together we have made a difference.'

- Yelena Ovcharenko is originally from Russia. She now lives in the United States.

Kids to March on New York City!

From the Editors:

Child advocates are organizing a large march by children in New York on September 18, the day preceding the Special Session. **Alam Rahman**, from the group Kids Meeting Kids, has issued the following invitation:

'Dear Friends,

'Throughout the world, millions of children are denied their fundamental rights. Hundreds of millions of children don't have the chance to learn to read or write. Countless children suffer unspeakable physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. Many children are denied access to the health care that could save their lives. Most children from minority groups face discrimination every single day. Very young children are being exploited as cheap and disposable child laborers.

'So what are we going to do about it?

'The world that children live in is the world that we have made. With all our technological and scientific advances, and our trillions and trillions of dollars to spend, there is no convincing reason why we can't make sure that every child enjoys a decent childhood and a bright future. But how do we make this vision a reality?

'On September 19-21, the UN will be hosting the most important children's event since the 1990 World Summit for Children. Heads of state and top officials will be meeting in New York to decide on the international community's commitments for children for the next decade.

'Many of the promises that sparkled so brightly in 1990 have gone unfulfilled. Now, instead of looking for ways to finally live up to those promises, many governments would like to simply forget them.

'But we won't let them! We will be organizing a march to the UN on September 18 to remind all governments that the promises made to children are a sacred trust. We will show the world that we care about the rights of all children, and we want them protected. We will especially call on the U.S. government to pull up its bootstraps and finally ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

'Will you join us at this historic event? On behalf of Kids Meeting Kids, the Child Labor Coalition-USA, the Global March Against Child Labour, and many other groups, we are calling upon everyone who cares about children's rights to become involved.

'The march will start at 4:30 pm on September 18 and converge on UN Headquarters in New York. It will be followed by a rally and candlelight vigil for the children of the world. The event will be a memorable experience for everyone involved and a clear message to the world. We hope that we can count on your participation and support to make this event a stunning success.

'If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

'In Solidarity for Children's Rights, Alam Rahman'

- To take part in the September 18 march, contact Alam at the March for Children's Rights: C/O Kids Meeting Kids, 324 West 96th Street (Basement), New York, NY, 10024.

Tel.: 212-662-2327 Fax: 212-222-1416 or by email

NGO Participation at Special Session Threatened by Space Squeeze at UN

NGOs are concerned that an interactive exhibition to celebrate their achievements in protecting children and advancing child rights may fall victim to a lack of space and tight security at the Special Session.

The NGO Committee for UNICEF is currently negotiating with UNICEF to find space within the UN complex for the planned exhibition and for NGO side events. The goal of the exhibition will be to showcase successful NGO programs, particularly from Asian, Africa, and Latin America. It will also afford an opportunity for government delegates and media to meet with NGOs.

UNICEF is clearly struggling to accommodate the many demands for space at the event, which will attract at least 70 heads of state. One prominent area that was used by NGOs during the PrepComs – the corridor outside the Vienna Café in the heart of the UN conference building – will reportedly be given over to a large exhibition by youth.

The most likely outcome is that many if not all of the NGO events will have to be held away from the UN, which could seriously weaken their impact. The NGO Committee for UNICEF is hoping to hire a coordinator to manage NGO events at the Special Session.

- Details about the exhibition and side events, together with applications forms, will be posted on the NGO Committee website as soon as they are available.

NGO Praise for 'On the Record for Children'

This newsletter, 'On the Record for Children,' has been commended for excellence by 45 of the 94 NGOs who were asked to evaluate the activities of the NGO Committee for UNICEF at the Third PrepCom.

In response to the questionnaire, which was sent out following the June 11-15 session, 31 NGOs described the newspaper as 'good' and 12 as 'fair.' Two respondents described the paper as 'poor.'

The newspaper received a higher number of 'A's' than the 15 other services that were evaluated, with the exception of security.

Belgium Takes Over EU Coordination

Belgium has assumed the presidency of the European Union (EU), and with it the lead role in negotiating at the Special Session on behalf of European governments. The task will start at the resumed session of the Third PrepCom at the end of August.

Two diplomats are working on the Special Session process at the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations in New York: Ambassador Michel Goffin and Councillor Birgit Stevens.

Tel.: 212-378-6300.

Belgium is also one of several European governments that have appointed special representatives to the Special Session (Ambassador Claire Kirschen).

It is understood that Ambassador Thomas Hammerberg of Sweden, who has served as the EU's lead negotiator at the last two PrepComs, will continue to act as an unofficial EU negotiator on sensitive child rights issues.

NGOs Form New Working Group on Nutrition

A new working group on nutrition has been formed by NGOs to lobby for more emphasis on nutrition at the Special Session and in follow-up programs.

The new group held its first informal meeting at the PrepCom on June 14 and has since selected two co-chairs and a rapporteur.

The group believes strongly that nutrition was high on the agenda at the 1990 World Summit but that it has been since downgraded and overshadowed by such issues as HIV-AIDS. Its goal is to reverse this trend and refocus attention on the damaging impact of malnutrition as well as the vital importance of nutrition and micronutrients (vitamin A, iron, and zinc) in the cognitive and mental development of children.

The group plans to explore a number of difficult policy issues, including the link between breastfeeding and HIV-AIDS, discrimination as a cause of malnutrition, and the link between food and water and environmental pollution. It will lobby for support of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes 'as the main instrument of infant's nutrition.'

- Contact Chris Mulford (co-chair).

'Controlled Participation' Concern Raised by UNICEF's Under-18 Forum Proposal

An ambitious plan by UNICEF to organize a three-day forum for 250 children before the Special Session is leading some to ask whether the event will be a carefully controlled event, or whether it will give children a real chance to make an impact on the outcome of the Special Session.

The dates of the forum have been set for September 16 and 18. The first day's meetings are expected to take place at the UN, after which they will move to another venue, most likely Columbia University.

The plan was first unveiled by UNICEF during the recent PrepCom. It caused some concern among some members of the NGO Committee for UNICEF because UNICEF did not consult with the committee – its natural ally when it comes to NGO activities – in advance. UNICEF has since invited three members from the NGO Committee, including the two co-chairs of the committee's under-18 taskforce, to join a group that will help to organize the forum.

The first day of the forum will be devoted to orientation, including a guided tour of the UN. The second two days will take the form of ten workshops on the ten points of the Rallying Call for

Children (which is also driving the Global Movement). Participants will be asked to develop an action kit based on the ten points of the call.

UNICEF officials say that the Forum will also elect six young delegates to participate on the three panels that will be organized during the Special Session. Each panel will be co-chaired by two heads of state.

Some NGOs are worried that the proposed formula will allow governments to select the children. Governments and NGOs are being invited to suggest a maximum of two children from each delegation up to a total of 250. But if, as seems likely, governments are given the first call, this could drastically limit the number invited by NGOs.

Nor is it clear how independent the young participants will be if they are chosen by governments. Only 15 governments included children on their delegations to the Third PrepCom, and many governments have expressed reservations about the participation of children in the Special Session process.

Another concern is that that the formula could make it very difficult for children to participate on their own terms. According to a background note put out by UNICEF, the forum is being planned in such a way as to learn from the lessons of the three PrepCom meetings and also other international conferences. The note concludes that children 'need to have a clear role' and that they 'need to be able to meet in their own space, time and ways appropriate to their age and adults should accept this.'

The UNICEF note goes on to say that the forum will give children a chance to explore the issues of the Outcome document, discuss the document's implementation, and also identify ways in which they can lobby their governments for programs 'designed to benefit children.'

The one notable absentee from this agenda concerns the Special Session. The UNICEF note says nothing about children contributing directly to the session or lobbying delegates. Yet many feel it has been one of the most exciting aspects of the participation of children at the PrepComs – and the most visible demonstration of empowerment. Not only were children participating at the recent session, but they were formulating alternative texts, forming their own groups, and lobbying their governments.

It is far from clear whether this would be possible at the proposed forum, and this raises the concern that the event will be celebratory rather than participatory. No doubt these will be among the many questions to be resolved by the organizing committee of NGOs that will assist UNICEF to prepare the forum.

Satellite Link Brings Children from Central America and Finland to the PrepCom by OTR staff with Vadim Pungulescu

In an effort to make the proceedings of the Special Session more accessible to children who are unable to attend the actual conference, PLAN International is hoping to make it possible for children from several countries to talk to their delegates through a live telecast.

PLAN International, which is a member of the NGO Committee for UNICEF, was able to organize a hook-up at the Third PrepCom for children in Finland, El Salvador, and Honduras. Based on this, PLAN officials are sufficiently encouraged to feel that it can be very useful at the Special Session.

Under one idea currently being discussed, Guatemalan children will gather at the National Theater in Guatemala City and do a live telecast with the Guatemalan delegation at the Special Session, which will be headed by the Guatemalan president.

PLAN is also hoping to make it possible for participants to a three-day youth forum, which UNICEF is organizing before the Special Session, to conduct a videoconference with children in several different countries.

Yet another proposal is that Belgian children (representing the Belgian Children's Parliament) would address delegates to the Special Session, with the Belgian ambassador in New York serving as the facilitator.

PLAN's satellite hook-up at the third PrepCom occurred after lunch on the second day. The children appeared on a large video screen in the conference hall as they put questions for about 15 minutes and then listened to the answers. The children from El Salvador asked about education, those from Honduras were interested in poverty, and the Finnish children wanted to know about participation.

The original idea was to include children from Senegal, Togo, Philippines, Colombia, and Bolivia, but this was narrowed down to Finland, El Salvador, Honduras, and the African country of Togo. PLAN officials selected children based on their experience and interest. For example, those from El Salvador run their own radio shows in El Salvador. PLAN also invited some Togolese children who had escaped from trafficking in the hope that they could talk of their experience. Unfortunately, the French telecom system lost the satellite signal from Togo, so it was not possible to talk to the Togolese children.

Graeme Thompson, from PLAN's Regional Office for Central America and the Caribbean, explained the arguments for pursuing the satellite link. He said that PLAN had hoped to bring many more children to the PrepCom, but that it was too expensive and also difficult to get them visas: 'Many of the children participating in our programs are from rural communities. They usually don't have passports and some have never seen a computer in their whole life. If we had brought them here, they might have been very shy at the conference and unable to express their thoughts and ideas when surrounded by other children.'

'These children have never been on a plane before or to a major city like New York. Most of them have never even been to their own capital. Nor do they know English.'

But, said Mr. Thompson, the satellite hook-up allows such children to lobby the Special Session at a fraction of the cost: 'They can appeal to their delegations and governments through a live chat just as well as if they had been here. A plane ticket from South America costs around \$800

for one child. Yet the videoconference that we had here in the PrepCom cost about one thousand dollars.' This excluded the cost of bringing the children to the camera locations, he said.

Mr. Thompson said that the children had asked 'pointed questions' to their diplomats but received 'very diplomatic answers.'

Nonetheless, he said, it was an important to make the effort. 'Adults here want to listen. Children should take advantage when they have the chance. Let's talk. Let's communicate. That way we can share our ideas and our success.'

Overall, the experiment seems to have been a success. Two television channels in El Salvador picked up the telecast from the Third PrepCom – bringing invaluable free publicity.

But one important improvement needs to be made. According to PLAN officials, the children should have a chance to talk with their delegates before they both 'go live.' This might remove some of the spontaneity, but it would mean that the valuable telecast is not taken up with introductions.

- Contact Hugh Minor (Public information manager for the U.S. office of PLAN International): 401 738 5600.
- Vadim Pungulescu, 17, is editor-in-chief of 'Children's Thoughts and Voices,' the magazine of Save the Children Romania.

Pentagon Objections Weaken Senate Push to Ratify Child Rights Protocols by Adam Frankel

Opposition from the Pentagon is hampering efforts by the Bush administration to secure ratification of the two optional protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on sexual exploitation and child soldiers before the Special Session in September.

Administration officials understand that it would be prudent for the United States to endorse the protocols before September so that the United States can be seen as a constructive actor for child rights at the Special Session.

The two optional protocols of the CRC are said to be listed as 'urgent' or 'very important' on the Bush administration's treaty priority list, and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, which has the final say when it comes to all international treaty obligations, expects to receive the treaty priority list from the State Department sometime in the next two weeks.

The list will urge 'swift consideration' of the protocols in Senate committee and a move to the Senate floor for a vote on ratification, according to congressional sources.

In spite of this, sources tell 'On the Record' that the administration's support for the protocols still seems lukewarm. Staffers for Senator Paul Wellstone, a Democratic Senator from Minnesota

who is leading the ratification effort in the US Senate, said that instead of pushing hard for ratification, the administration is 'not objecting.'

One reason is that the protocol on child soldiers has met opposition from the Pentagon. The protocol bans soldiers under age 18 and there are several thousand 17-year-old soldiers in the US armed forces. Some officials worry that if the United States were prohibited from recruiting 17-year-olds, the armed forces might revert to an involuntary draft to maintain its numbers.

Even with the Administration's tacit support, ratification is not a sure thing. Joseph Biden, a Democratic Senator, has taken over the chairmanship of the Committee on Foreign Relations from Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), which increases the chances for ratification.

But at the same time, the Democratic Party (which recently became the majority party in the US Senate) is reorganizing its priorities and this will take time. Senator Biden also faces a large number of 'backlogged' issues that he wants to address. It could be months before the two optional protocols come up for consideration.

'We're lucky if we can get ratification [of the two protocols],' said Charlotte Oldham-Moore, a staffer for Senator Wellstone.

Supporters of child rights in Congress certainly feel that ratification of the protocols might also give succor to efforts to ratify the CRC. 'It puts the CRC back on the agenda,' said Ms. Oldham-Moore. 'Hopefully grassroots [organizations] will use discussion on the protocols to push discussion on the CRC. Our efforts to push the protocols might bring more focus on the CRC.'

Dispute Over Reproductive Health Services Revives Cairo and Beijing Abortion Controversy **by Gabrielle Engh**

A dispute at the PrepCom over the provision of 'reproductive health services for adolescents' has revived claims that the Beijing and Cairo conferences promoted abortion.

The Third PrepCom was suspended amid disagreement over whether the Outcome document should retain language found in the 1994 Cairo and 1995 Beijing agreements on the right of adolescents to 'reproductive health services.' Many expect that this will continue when the PrepCom resumes at the end of August, and even at the Special Session itself.

The dispute is between a small number of delegations, led by the United States and the Holy See, and a larger group of governments. These include the 18 Latin American governments known as the Rio Group, the EU, and Switzerland.

The United States and the Holy See argue that providing adolescents with reproductive services is the equivalent of encouraging sexual promiscuity and the right to an abortion. In a letter that has been circulated to delegations O me! O life!... of the questions of these recurring; of the endless trains of the faithless –of cities filled with the foolish; what good amid these, O me, O life? and made available to 'On the Record for Children' – the Holy See has proposed substituting

reproductive health services with 'comprehensive health care which addresses the needs of all children, including adolescents.'

But advocates of child rights argue that viewing 'reproductive health services' as tantamount to abortion is a gross distortion. They point out that 179 and 189 governments agreed to Cairo and Beijing, respectively, and that 'reproductive health services' provides a broad framework for public health. This provides family planning but is also part of a strategy to empower adolescents and protect them from the ravages of sexually transmitted disease and sexual violence.

At the start of the recent PrepCom, the Outcome document contained clear and unambiguous language on sexual and reproductive rights (found in the first two and the fourteenth bullets of paragraph 33). This was opposed by the United States and a bloc of Catholic and Muslim countries, who were able to exploit a personal comment by a member of the Canadian delegation to the effect that sexual and reproductive health services meant abortion (see OTR, Vol. 2, No. 5).

Defenders of reproductive services were thrown on the defensive by the Canadian controversy. Once they recovered, the Rio Group countries joined the EU, and Switzerland in making it clear that any deletion of the Cairo and Beijing language was not an option. During informal negotiations, one spokesperson from the Rio Group described Cairo and Beijing as 'a common effort of all of our governments.'

He added: 'We feel that this is the basis for all our negotiations and we are not going to have a debate unless we can agree on this common ground.'

In the language of Cairo and Beijing, 'services' are repeatedly defined as information, education, and counseling that should help adolescents understand the changes in their bodies and the kinds of behaviors that will help them make responsible decisions, avoid unwanted pregnancies, and remain free from disease. The agreements clearly state that abortion 'should not be promoted as a method of family planning' and 'every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion' through services that educate and provide information so adolescents can make responsible decisions.

Many NGOs believe that Cairo and Beijing have made a real contribution to saving women's lives and addressing the spread of sexually transmitted disease and HIV-AIDS. Every minute 11 people, five of whom are between the ages of 15-24, are infected with HIV-AIDS, 90 percent of whom live in developing countries.

One 1998 survey of 114 developing countries by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) found that almost half the countries surveyed had improved the availability and quality of reproductive health care in line with the Cairo Plan of Action. Some 91 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa claimed improvements in the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents as a result of education, school-based programs, and counseling services. Fifty-five countries reported 'significant gains' for adolescents.

'There is broad support for Cairo and Beijing,' argues Jennifer Butler, an associate with the Presbyterian Church at the UN (an NGO). But, she said, this is not always evident at the PrepComs. 'The preponderance of interest groups allied on conservative issues can create a one-sided climate. NGOs who support Cairo and Beijing should begin to reorient themselves to the process so that their voices are also heard.'

Mary Purcell, a former President of the American Association of University Women and a founder of the Working Group on Girls at UNICEF, says that if conservatives get their way, 'it will hurt the outcome document and it will hurt UNICEF because there is an audience that doesn't understand that these [Cairo and Beijing] were two very long processes where language was hammered out late into the night. They really moved things forward for women and girls. Without them we stand to lose a lot of momentum.'

Religious conservative groups disagree strongly. To them, Cairo and Beijing represent a 'dangerous social ethos that seeks to promote abortion as an international human right.' These groups include the Family Research Center, the National Council on the Family (both on the US delegation), Real Women of Canada, the American Life League and the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-Fam).

They argue that Beijing and Cairo have encouraged the breakdown of the family, teen pregnancy, violent crime, school violence, promiscuity, and the rise in HIV-AIDS infection. And they are convinced that references to sexual and reproductive health 'services' are a code word for abortion.

'When the documents say services it means abortion' argued Austin Ruse, the President of C-Fam, 'and Western financial institutions and government agencies hold international financing hostage unless developing countries comply and offer these services.'

'If more Americans knew about Cairo and Beijing they would be up in arms over such radical treatises,' added Mr. Ruse.

This is hard to believe in the light of a 1998 survey by Wirthlin Worldwide for the United Nations Association of the USA. Eighty percent of respondents had no objections to the use of US aid for foreign family planning programs – strongly suggesting that they would not object to the two major international agreements that emphasize the relationship among health, population growth, and development.

Joan French, Chief of the Gender Partnerships and Participation Program Division at UNICEF, says that 'Cairo and Beijing made advances for children, particularly adolescents, and broke new ground in recognizing the difficult issues children face. Knowledge about sexual and reproductive health is important because it empowers adolescents to protect themselves,' she emphasized. 'At UNICEF, our framework for action lies in internationally agreed human rights instruments. We have to recognize that not all governments are equally committed to these documents, but we do support the UN's commitment to human rights, of which Cairo and Beijing are a part.' There is much speculation about how, and when, the dispute will resurface at the PrepCom. In background discussions with 'On the Record,' some delegates predicted that 'much

like the Beijing+5 review process in June 2000, governments would wait until the last possible moment to discuss the most contentious issues allowing them greater leverage to get the language they want.'

NGOs are concerned at this possibility because of what they perceive as the influence of the United States. They cite the fact that the United States is currently UNICEF's largest country donor. They also note the influence of religious conservative groups on the US delegation to the Third PrepCom. Although religious conservatives account for only 10 percent of the US electorate, they are a well-organized, well-resourced constituency that has been mobilizing around Republican administrations since the 1970s, according to Ms. Butler, who also co-chaired the Religions Caucus, which represents religious bodies at this PrepCom.

Many NGOs thought it interesting that Susan Roylance from the Mormon-based United Families International (UFI) was given the floor during a briefing by the US delegation after US delegates were unable to explain why the United States had wanted to remove specific language on the girl child. UFI was not a member of the US delegation.

In an interview with 'On the Record for Children,' Ms. Roylance did not think it was notable that she spoke for the delegation because she works closely with them and 'worked hard to get Bush elected because he supports the family.'

'I have frequently attended briefings in Washington, DC, where my experience from attending 23 international conferences was used,' said Ms. Roylance.