



On the Record for Children

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From the AP Editorial Desk

From the Editors: About On the Record for Children

On the Record for Children is the newsletter of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, a network of 125 nongovernmental organizations that work closely with UNICEF while remaining independent.

On the Record for Children has covered the run-up to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children since January 2001. It will be produced in email form until the Special Session, which will be covered daily in email and hard copy versions. One issue will be produced by young journalists for the Children's Forum.

Anaga Dalal is the principal writer and Colleen Malone serves as copy editor and manager. AP will also be working with Young People's Press, a Toronto-based organization that trains and works with young journalists. Naomi Lightman, 16, from YPP, serves as youth editor for On the Record for Children.

The material in On the Record for Children is reviewed by an editorial group of the NGO Committee prior to publication. The editors welcome ideas for articles, letters, and opinion pieces, although they might be edited for length.

The material in this issue will be posted on the website of the NGO Committee, together with photos where appropriate. The website is currently being revised.

Drafting on Outcome Document Set to Resume April 29

Governments will resume drafting on the critical Outcome document, also known as 'A World Fit For Children' on April 29. Many observers are concerned that they may fail to reach consensus by the opening of the Special Session.

The Outcome document is intended to serve as a mission statement for the Special Session and was the main item of business at the second and third meetings of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) last year.

UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director Kul Gautam told a meeting of the NGO Committee on UNICEF that 80 percent of the document has been agreed, and is particularly strong on health,

nutrition and protection. He also predicted that it will contain 'appropriate references' to the most controversial issues, which have yet to be resolved.

These issues are understood to be the Child Rights Convention; reproductive rights; child labor; the treatment of refugee children; and the follow-up and monitoring of the Outcome document itself.

These issues have caused so much trouble at meetings of the Preparatory Committee that many are concerned that they could spill over into the Special Session and overshadow the meeting. As a result, child rights activists will be keenly interested in what is meant by appropriate references.'

UNICEF officials clearly expect these references to be significant as well as appropriate, even though Mr. Gautam made it clear that he does not expect the Special Session to lead to the sort of breakthrough on reproductive rights of the sort that occurred at the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference.

Meanwhile, the Child Rights Caucus, a coalition of NGOs, is finalizing an alternative Outcome document text that will place the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the center not just of the document, but of any action plan agreed at the Special Session.

NGO Anger as Western Governments Try to Dilute High Level UN Study on Child Violence

Some Geneva-based NGOs are furious that the United States, Britain and Australia are working to dilute a major UN study of violence against children, by excluding corporal and capital punishment from the scope of the study and by weakening the emphasis on child rights.

The idea of a UN study into violence against children - state-sponsored as well as domestic - has been proposed to the UN Secretary-General by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The study would be modelled on the Machel study on Children in Armed Conflict.

The idea was accepted in principle by the General Assembly in December (GA Resolution 56/138). Significantly, however, the resolution avoids specific language about who would conduct the study. It also ignores many of the Committee's recommendations about the issues that should be monitored. Last year, the Committee held two 'discussion days' on violence, which called for an end to the use of corporal punishment against children, and an end to the death penalty for crimes committed under the age of 18.

Reports say that the UK and Australia are lobbying hard to prevent any high-level UN study from reviewing corporal punishment, which is still permitted in both countries. The United States, for its part, is strongly committed to retaining the death penalty for crimes committed before the age of 18, which is expressly outlawed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This wrangling could affect the UN agency that would serve as the institutional home for the study. UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have all been mentioned. UNICEF served as midwife to the Machel study on Children in Armed Conflict, and is said to have the support of the United States. But some NGOs feel that the High Commissioner's office would be more appropriate, and apply a stricter child rights approach.

This political manoeuvring has infuriated NGOs in Geneva who work on child rights. These NGOs are also angered that several governments at the current session of the UN Human Rights Commission are trying to keep any reference to the study out of the text of a resolution on child rights that will be drafted and adopted by the Commission.

The United States is not on the Commission, but it has apparently convinced some of its allies, who are on the Commission, into supporting a vaguely worded procedural resolution that could not possibly be used as ammunition by child rights advocates at the Special Session.

Prospects for Financing Children's Programs Boosted by Monterrey, Threatened by War Against Terrorism

UNICEF officials are hoping that some of the positive momentum from the recent UN Monterrey meeting on finance for development will carry over into the Special Session for Children and make it easier to win agreement on how to finance an ambitious program to end child poverty.

The Monterrey conference ended on March 22 with a commitment by 171 governments to double development aid and halve poverty by the year 2015, in line with the goals of the Millennium Summit. According to some estimates, this will require \$50 billion of development assistance over and above the resources generated nationally by governments themselves. Although current levels of aid fall well short of these daunting targets, the United States and European Union have both made significant pledges. President Bush surprised the conference by agreeing to a 50 percent increase in US aid (from \$10 billion to \$15 billion) by 2006.

UNICEF officials will likely argue that the Special Session offers governments a concrete opportunity to turn the rhetoric of the Monterrey Consensus into specific programs and plans for children. With this in mind, UNICEF has now started an internal review to work out precisely how much it would cost. This would involve working with governments to set some precise timetables, targets and milestones down to the local level.

Pulling in the other direction is a growing concern that more and more governments are using the war against terrorism as an excuse to pour money into security, and that this can only detract from child programs. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, military expenditure has been rising steadily since 1998. In 2000 (the latest available figures) total military expenditure stood at \$798 billion. This corresponded to a world average of 130 dollars per capita and 2.5 per cent of the world gross domestic product.

11 Million Young Deaths Could Be Prevented Each Year, Says UNICEF and WHO

Eleven million children and adolescents - eight million of them babies - die every year from preventable or treatable causes.

These shocking statistics were discussed at a global consultation on Child and Adolescent Health that was convened on March 12-13 by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) in Stockholm, Sweden. They are also a stark reminder that infant mortality will be high on the agenda at the forthcoming Special Session.

Pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, measles, HIV/AIDS and malnutrition are the primary causes of death. But poverty also plays a leading role, according to conference participants. Worldwide, 600 million children live on less than US \$1/day and malnutrition is the reason for at least 60 percent of all deaths in childhood.

Preventable deaths among adolescents can be attributed to substance abuse, poor reproductive health, suicide, injuries, and violence. Adolescents also account for approximately fifty percent of all new HIV infections.

Participants at the Consultation focused on low-cost solutions that included the mass distribution of low-cost antibiotics, inexpensive oral re-hydration kits and sleeping nets that are treated with insecticide (to kill malaria-carrying mosquitoes). The Consultation also drew up a commitment, in an effort to generate more support and political will.

- For more information about the Consultation or to sign on to the Stockholm Commitment, which was agreed upon at the meeting, visit the website or write to: Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, World Health Organization; Tel: (41) 22-791-32-81; Email: Ms Chandrika John.

International Criminal Court to be Born April 11, Promising Greater Protection for Children From War Crimes

Child advocates are hoping that the creation of an international criminal court, which now appears imminent, will reduce some of the appalling cruelties that are perpetrated against children in war.

The statute of the court was drafted at a conference in Rome in 1998, and sixty ratifications are required for it to come into existence. The UN has announced that a ceremony will be held at the UN on April 11, when the sixtieth ratification will be deposited. As many as four governments - Cambodia, Ireland, Jordan and Romania - are jostling for the honor. They may well be joined by Bosnia, Bulgaria, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Greece, Latvia, and Niger.

The sudden rush is explained by the fact that the first sixty governments to ratify will have a hand in choosing judges and prosecutors, as well as participating in budgetary decisions. The treaty will enter into force three months after the sixtieth ratification is received. Setting up the court is expected to take about a year.

The statute states that children under the age of 18 cannot be prosecuted for war crimes. This is in spite of the fact that child soldiers have committed terrible atrocities in recent wars, notably in Sierra Leone and Mozambique.

A broad coalition of NGOs has campaigned hard for a Criminal Court, and is now urging advocates to use April 11 as an opportunity for outreach on behalf of the new court and international law.

- For ideas and information, visit the Coalition website or email the World Federalist Movement in New York.

Opinion:

By Naomi Lightman (Young People's Press, Toronto)

Children Should Be Dancing!

'If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution.' These were the words of Emma Goldman, a famous American anarchist and feminist who sought exile in my home town, Toronto. It is worth recalling her words as the UN prepares for the Special Session on Children. Only when we as youth start to work together and make our voices heard, can we truly begin dancing towards a better future.

Two years ago, when I was at the anti-globalization demonstrations in Quebec, Canada, I was truly amazed at the energy and passion expressed by the enthusiastic protestors of all ages. In spite of the cold and rain, and the terrifying riot police with their constant barrage of tear gas, thousands of people came together and would not be silenced.

It baffles me that here in Toronto, Canada, one of the richest cities in the world, one child in three is living below the poverty line. And I am acutely aware that in many parts of the global South, situations are so much worse, with millions of young people's lives being shattered by malnutrition, AIDs, abuse, armed conflict, sexism and discrimination.

Opportunities like this Children's Session don't come along too often. Heads of State and government officials, NGOs, children's organizations and advocates are coming together at the UN.

Because we are the very focus of discussion, it is imperative that youth be present so that we can voice our perspectives and our views. Everyone wins when we as a society take care of our children - the cultural, social, economic and emotional returns are innumerable.

The Special Session is a forum for all of us to voice and document our goals and our achievements and I feel honoured and excited to be a part of this process.

In the weeks preceding the Special Session we are asking young people around the world to tell us how YOUTH in your community are organizing for social change or about what YOU would say if you had the opportunity to address world leaders at the Special Session. It's a chance for

you to gain recognition, learn from others and share your ideas! Please send your 150-200 word mini-articles to the Young People's Press newsroom.

Let's get creative!

- **About the author:** Naomi Lightman, 16, is a Canadian editor and journalist who is associated with Young People's Press in Toronto, Canada. Born and raised in Toronto, Naomi is a youth activist and aspiring journalist who feels that today's generation of youth is ready to make big changes and shake up the world. She believes in the power of the written word to bring about progressive political and social change. Ms. Lightman will be covering youth participation in On the Record, and joining the team at the Special Session.

Young writers who want to contribute to On the Record for Children are urged to contact her directly.

About the Special Session

May 8 Child Rights March Planned for New York

'Kids Meeting Kids,' a New York-based NGO, is hoping to attract as many as 5,000 children for a march to the UN by children on the opening day of the May Special Session. If they receive a permit, the organizers hope that the parade will begin at 4 pm. It will run along Third Avenue from 14th Street/Union Square to the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza at 46th Street.

A candlelight vigil and a rally for speakers will be held when the parade ends. Organizers are planning to have puppets, mimes, dance groups and bands lined up along the parade route. They also hope that an American hip-hop artist will compose a rap on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some are urging city officials to declare May 8 'Children's Rights Day' in New York City.

Children marching in the parade will be displaying posters about children's rights or about their own organizations. The Child Rights Caucus and one youth group from the Democratic Republic of Congo are planning to display oversized red hands to draw attention to the issue of child soldiers. Young speakers from around the world will also address issues such as child labor, the girl child, HIV/AIDS, child prostitution, poverty and child soldiers at the rally that follows the march. Adult speakers will include Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labor Organization.

It is hoped that at least one child representative for each of the 186 member countries of the United Nations will be represented. 'We want to show the world that kids have voices,' says 16 year-old Leidy Regaldo, from Kids Meeting Kids.

- For more information about the march, to provide financial support or to join the New York-based planning committee call (212) 663-6338 or email.

Commitment Chart Planned for Special Session

NGO organizers are compiling a table of commitments to children's rights by governmental leaders and civil society actors. The chart will be displayed prominently during the Special Session, when conference participants will be encouraged to add new pledges to the list. Organizers are hoping to secure space in James Grant Plaza, Dag Hammarskjöld Library or the main floor lobby of the UN Secretariat building for a 'Commitments' table with an interactive display.

256 NGOs Register for Special Session

According to UNICEF, 256 NGOs and 699 NGO representatives have pre-registered for the Special Session.

From the NGO Committee:

UNICEF NGO Committee Regroups, But Members Fail to Pay Dues

The NGO Committee on UNICEF is facing a severe shortage of funding, even as it adopts a more democratic and representative form of governance and looks forward to a 'revitalized' relationship with UNICEF.

These conflicting trends were on display on March 19, as leading members of the Committee met at UNICEF headquarters to refocus the Committee on the up-coming Special Session.

The Committee currently comprises 125 members. It will be directed by a 'Global Forum' consisting of 15 NGOs, of whom six are international and nine are chosen from each of the regions where UNICEF has a regional office. The nine regional representatives will be elected from the bottom-up by community-based organizations, so as to ensure that small NGOs in the Global South have a greater say in directing the Committee.

Bani Dugal-Gujral of Baha'i International, from the Committee, said that this structure would open 'new channels of communication between our increasingly global membership and UNICEF. As this revitalized collaboration develops, a joint strategy will emerge that more effectively addresses the needs of young people everywhere.'

The Global Forum will elect Committee officers from among its members. Two will be based in New York, where they can supervise a Secretariat of paid and volunteer staff that would manage the organization's day-to-day operations, compile regional reports, and raise funds for the NGO Committee. The secretariat is currently run by **Hourig Babikian**.

The ultimate goal, say organizers, is a structure that has minimal bureaucracy, and communicates through email newsletters, web spaces and interactive discussion lists.

Ironically, as the Committee struggles to become more democratic, it faces a cash crisis. Only 25 percent of the Committee's members have paid their annual dues (U.S. \$100), and the Committee

has \$6,500 in its bank account. Organizers warned the March 19 meeting that the Committee will find it hard to pay salaries, let alone continue beyond the Special Session.

Reminder to NGOs - Reconfirm NGO Side Events!

Only 30 of the 85 NGO side events at the Special Session have been reconfirmed by the deadline of March 31. The NGO Committee is asking NGOs that wish to hold an event to reconfirm as soon as possible. UNICEF and the NGO Committee are drafting a comprehensive list of side events, which will be posted on the NGO website as soon as it is finalized.

From the Campaign

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict to Release Draft Reports on Burundi and Angola

The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict will release reports on Burundi and Angola in advance of the Special Session.

The Watchlist is an NGO initiative whose goal is to promote the protection and rights of children and adolescents in specific armed conflict situations. Among the NGOs supporting the project are the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, World Vision, the Save the Children Alliance, CARE International, and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

The Watchlist provides a structure to improve the monitoring, documentation, reporting, and flow of information to inform decisions that have an impact children in situations of armed conflict, including prevention, protection during conflict, and post-conflict action.

It will work to influence relevant policy decisions and actions taken by the United Nations Security Council, United Nations agencies, member states of the United Nations, and other bodies that impact the situation of children in armed conflict.

The group will also aim to strengthen local, regional, and international networks of NGOs working with children to share information, provide a channel for pooled information to inform international decision-making, and increase effective influence on decisions at all levels to protect the security and rights of children.

The Watchlist completed its pilot report on Afghan children in October 2001 and an update to that report in November 2001. Subsequent reports will cover the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan and other conflict areas around the globe.

- For more information about the Watchlist, copies of reports, or to get involved with the initiative, visit **CRIN** or the **Women's Commission** or contact Julia Freedson.

Geneva NGOs Create Sug-Group on Child Rights to Lobby the UN Human Rights Commission

The Geneva-based NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child has created a new sub-group, or caucus, to help them better coordinate and lobby on child rights issues during the current session of the UN Human Rights Commission, which is meeting in Geneva between March 18 and April 26. The new group is coordinated by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The NGOs hope that their lobbying can continue beyond the Commission.

- For more information, email. For an overview of child rights at the Commission on Human Rights, visit the website of the Child Rights information Network (CRIN).

Also Noted:

- The government of the United Arab Emirates has launched a new website to collect signatures from 50 million children worldwide in support of a global plea for peace. Known as the 'Pupils' Plea for Peace,' the project is expected to take a year. A hard copy of the one-page memorandum and signatures -- which organizers predict could weigh nearly five tons and stretch 300 kilometers -- will then be presented to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, among other world leaders. K.V. Prakash, an Indian lawyer who has masterminded the project, described it as 'a global initiative by children for attaining world peace.' He cited UNICEF's estimates that more than 30 million children have suffered as a result of wars and conflict during the past 10 years alone. 'They have become victims to those perils by way of death, disablement, becoming homeless, orphaned or being psychologically traumatized,' he said. 'Now it is the children's turn and they have to take [the] lead to bring peace to this world ... they have to start where the elders have failed' (Nadim Kawach, Gulf News/Financial Times, March 28).
- NGOs are finalizing an action handbook on children in armed conflict which can provide a lobbying and mobilizing tool for NGOs. For a copy, visit the CRIN website. To propose changes, email Sandrine Valentine.
- The **Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud** issues a regular update on health and human rights which contains important information on child rights. To subscribe, send an email with the words SUBSCRIBE HHCONFERENCE as the message (subject can be left blank) or contact Catherine Briggs).
- The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) issues regular reports on child rights globally. The CRIN website also contains essential background information including reports from the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and NGO submissions to the Committee.
- 32 countries could fall short of universal primary school enrollment by 2015, according to UNESCO.

**From the Editors:
About On the Record for Children**

On the Record for Children was sent out via e-mail daily during the Second and Third PrepComs and will be produced during the Special Session. To subscribe, send a blank email.

On the Record for Children is produced by the Advocacy Project a group that seeks to build the information capacity of community-based campaigns.

Editorial Policy: Editorial responsibility for this publication rests with the editorial team, although all material is reviewed before publication by an editorial advisory group of the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS! We welcome letters to the editors, although publication will depend upon the space available, and letters may be edited. Opinion pieces may also be considered. Send comments and contributions or contact the NGO Committee on UNICEF

(212-824-6394).