



Check against delivery

Sweden and UNICEF : 60 Years of Special Partnership for the World's Children

Keynote Address by
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I feel so humbled and awed to be addressing this extraordinary gathering in the parliament of one of the world's most advanced democracies, in a country known all over the world for its progressive social policies and enlightened multilateralism.

I was born in a small village in the mountains of western Nepal. As I grew up, my village had no road, no electricity, no telephone, no school, no post office. It took 7 days walk to get to the nearest bus-stop or train station. My father was barely literate and my mother was totally illiterate.

Nobody in my village had ever heard of a country called Sweden.

A series of accidents, a stroke of luck or - as my parents used to say quoting local astrologers - an unusually favourable constellation of stars and planets at the time of my birth, landed me at UNICEF some 33 years ago.

And here I am – and I pinch myself to ascertain that I am really here – addressing this august gathering in the grand **Riksdag** of Sweden, as the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF.

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) exists today to help children in all corners of the world to grow up to their full human potential, not through accident or stroke of luck, but in a deliberately planned manner.

And we count on the people and government of Sweden to be our continuing partners in this noble mission in keeping with Sweden's great tradition of humanitarianism and global solidarity for peace, human rights and development.

Sweden has always been a leader for children, and a great friend of UNICEF.

Indeed, Sweden has all the credentials for taking a leadership role for children and for UNICEF. Your progressive domestic policies on children and family are well known. Your solidarity for

international development cooperation is a model for all. Your commitment to the United Nations and multilateralism is exemplary. Your support for UNICEF so far has been unstinting.

It is truly inspiring to read your *Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development*. We know these are not just beautiful words and lofty promises. Sweden has an honourable track record of keeping its commitments. Indeed in a recently published OECD DAC Peer review of Sweden's development cooperation, Sweden was highly praised for its outstanding good donorship.

We are thrilled by your major initiative on Human Rights, including child rights and democracy in all Swedish Development Cooperation. More specifically, I wish to commend you for the special initiative called "the best interest of the child in Swedish development cooperation" which seeks to mainstream children's concerns in *all* Swedish development cooperation.

We could not ask for more. (But, of course, we will !).

UNICEF and the cause of children have many friends and supporters. But some supporters are more dependable through thick and thin, in good times and bad times. Sweden has always been one of those very dependable allies, a most generous donor and a constructively critical partner.

Besides its generous financial contribution, Sweden has been a great contributor of ideas and principles that have guided UNICEF over the years. Indeed there is a long list of Swedes who have helped shape UNICEF's vision and mission in the world today.

I would like to recall just a few of the great Swedish personalities that have influenced and shaped UNICEF over the years.

The most famous Swede ever to serve the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, was a great fan of UNICEF. He was very fond of Maurice Pate, UNICEF's first Executive Director. Speaking about the place of UNICEF in the UN system, Hammarskjold once remarked that "the work of UNICEF is at the heart of the matter... and at the heart of UNICEF is Maurice Pate".

Dag Hammarskjold helped and guided UNICEF in a variety of ways. Looking here at our beloved Goodwill Ambassador Lill Lindfors, I am reminded that it was Dag Hammarskjold who encouraged and supported Maurice Pate to recruit the legendary Danny Kay as UNICEF's first Goodwill Ambassador in 1953.

Since then we have been blessed with famous artists, sports personalities, and other celebrities – ranging from Peter Ustinov to Audrey Hepburn, Nana Mouskuri to Shakira, from Pele to Roger Federer who have been great advocates for children and helped make UNICEF a household brand name.

Nils Thedin, the founding Chairman of the Swedish National Committee for UNICEF, led Sweden's delegation to the UNICEF Executive Board for over 2 decades. He was a giant, who brought to the work of UNICEF the dimension of child rights, women's rights and human rights – long before the rights-based approach to programming became fashionable.

It was Nils Thedin who first proposed to the UNICEF Executive Board the idea of "Children as a Zone of Peace". At the height of the Cold War, when some governments wanted UNICEF to take sides, and help children in some countries but not others, Nils Thedin stood up and reminded

everybody of UNICEF's solemn commitment that children should be helped wherever they are in need, regardless of the politics of their parents.

Olof Palme's principled stance opposing the war in Vietnam and *apartheid* in South Africa inspired many of us in UNICEF. But Sweden did not only oppose war and *apartheid*, it also offered practical support to their victims partly through UNICEF.

Lisbet Palme continued that tradition and guided UNICEF's work as President of the UNICEF Executive Board and as Chairperson of the Swedish National Committee for UNICEF. We are grateful for Lisbet Palme's contribution as she helped draw the world's attention to the plight of children, **highlighting sexual exploitation, child pornography and children** in armed conflicts, such as the horrendous genocide in Rwanda.

Jan Eliasson has been a friend of many UNICEF leaders. Both as a Swedish diplomat and in his many capacities at the UN, including as the Secretary-General's special representative and trouble-shooter in many conflicts, he always paid special attention to the plight of children.

UNICEF collaborated closely with Eliasson when he was appointed as the first UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. As UNICEF is often the first on the ground in times of emergencies, we had a great stake in Eliasson's success.

I recall my boss Jim Grant offering Eliasson all of UNICEF's support to build an effective emergency coordination mechanism at the UN.

We are all grateful for Jan Eliasson's leadership as President of the General Assembly and guiding the complex negotiations at the historic World Summit last year and putting in motion many crucial initiatives for the reform of the UN system.

Children, and UNICEF have a lot at stake in UN reform. We will be counting on Sweden to ensure that a reformed UN becomes a better guardian of the best interest of children, and that UNICEF is allowed to remain a fearless advocate for child rights.

My own closest association with Sweden was in 1990 when UNICEF helped organise the first ever World Summit for Children, which became the largest gathering of world leaders in history until that time.

The Summit for Children was a brain-child of Jim Grant, UNICEF's visionary leader at that time.

When he first proposed the idea of a Summit for Children, it sounded like an outlandish idea. Summits among leaders are held on serious issues like war and peace, disarmament, trade and finance, and issues of momentous political importance. How can anyone seriously suggest a Summit of world leaders on the cute little subject of children?

Even the daring Jim Grant was afraid that his proposal might be laughed out of court.

But then, Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson became the first world leader to endorse the idea and agreed to serve as an Initiator for the Summit. He assigned Hans Dahlgren as his Personal Representative to help make the Summit a success.

I was the senior UNICEF official designated to help with the substantive preparation of the Summit. It became my privilege to work closely with Hans Dahlgren and help him draft the World Declaration and Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children which was adopted by 71 Heads of State and Government.

One of my most treasured possessions of that historic Summit is this copy of the Declaration and Plan of Action autographed by Ingvar Carlsson, Lisbet Palme and Hans Dahlgren – 3 of my favourite Swedes.

And a very nice personal letter from Ingvar Carlsson to me dated 4 October 1990. In the letter, besides saying a few flattering things about my contribution, Prime Minister Carlsson speaks of how the whole idea of a World Summit for Children was a great challenge, both political and organizational.

He considered the Summit to have been “an overwhelming success”. And he believed that few, if any, international meetings have resulted in such a clear commitment as the World Summit for Children.

Indeed the Summit for Children was the trend-setter for all other great Summits of the 1990s – on environment, population, women, and social development – culminating in the Millennium Summit of 2000.

Sweden and UNICEF can feel proud that most of today’s Millennium Development Goals derive directly from the goals for children that we carefully formulated at the Summit for Children.

A decade after the first Summit for Children, UNICEF was once again asked to help prepare another Summit – a UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. And once again, Sweden ended up playing a leading role and I got the opportunity to work closely with another great Swede, Thomas Hammarberg, who served as Prime Minister Goran Persson’s Personal Representative.

Thomas is a passionate advocate of child rights. We at UNICEF are grateful for his contribution to the cause of children - as leader of Save the Children, Amnesty International, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on human rights.

UNICEF itself employs a large number of Swedes. Over the years, many of them have provided great leadership to UNICEF’s work whether it is in programme implementation in the field or in policy-direction at our headquarters and regional offices.

Among them, I want to single out two Swedes who have left their lasting mark in UNICEF: Karl-Eric Knutsson and Urban Jonsson.

Karl-Eric was a distinguished anthropologist, academic and a development expert with world wide contacts and a fine reputation. He was a founder-director of SAREC, the pioneering Swedish research agency, which provided support for research, analysis and action in all parts of the world. He brought all this rich experience to enrich the work of UNICEF.

I recall Karl Eric as a humanist with humility.

He was a man ahead of his time. Back in 1989 he spoke about what we call today a global movement for children. “I have this dream”, he said, “that the next decade and the next century will see – if we want it to happen – a global political, professional and popular movement around the child and across the world”.

He dreamed of “a movement of international solidarity which will combine the realism of real development and the energy of a revitalized peace movement - a peace movement not any longer *against* something but *for* something, where the child and its future will provide the ultimate goal”.

To reach that goal, Karl Eric said, “The real resource for this work is solidarity that binds people together, rather than money that blinds people forever”.

Urban Jonsson was another Swede who served UNICEF with great distinction. Based on his practical experience in the Iringa project in Tanzania, he articulated a nutrition strategy that has become not only a gold standard for UNICEF but for all others in the UN system and beyond who are trying to tackle childhood malnutrition.

More than anyone else, Urban was the person who first raised UNICEF’s consciousness on the potentially disastrous consequences of HIV/AIDS on children. His advocacy led to UNICEF making HIV/AIDS a prime corporate priority.

Urban Jonsson is also remembered in UNICEF as our guru of human rights-based approach to development. Thanks to his scholarship and passionate advocacy, UNICEF is seen today as a pioneer of the rights-based approach to programming.

As you can see, UNICEF has been blessed with the wisdom and commitment of Swedes from all walks of life – not just politicians, diplomats and development experts – but even Swedish school children who raise funds as part of our National Committee’s campaign called “a drop of water”, to Swedish engineers in UNICEF staff drilling wells for water in the far-flung deserts of Africa and Asia.

Even members of your royal family are deeply engaged with UNICEF’s work. We had Her Majesty Queen Sylvia passionately campaigning against trafficking and sexual exploitation of children at UNICEF-organized conferences.

And currently we have Princess Madeleine doing an internship with UNICEF in New York. She has, among other things, supported the finalization of UNICEF Guidelines on the protection of child victims of trafficking.

What is so special about this organization – UNICEF – that so many Swedes over the years have contributed so much to?

To understand this fully, I want to take you on a short guided tour of the history of this remarkable organization.

My friend Birgitta Dahl has already spoken about some highlights of the history of UNICEF and Sweden’s role in its evolution over the past 60 years. Let me complement Birgitta’s remarks by sharing with you some other interesting aspects of UNICEF’s past, present and future, as we celebrate its 60th anniversary.

UNICEF was established on 11 December 1946. It was the very first of the “funds and programmes” created by the United Nations. There were no other funds or programmes as part of the UN system in those days. UNICEF was, therefore, a unique creature in the architecture of the United Nations.

To fully understand the historical, the philosophical and the humanitarian imperatives for why UNICEF was created, we need to flash back to the First World War and the League of Nations.

During the First World War, a remarkable Englishwoman named Eglantyne Jebb had founded an organization called Save the Children Fund in London. SCF had defied the British blockade of Germany during WW1, and had sent relief supplies for children throughout continental Europe.

There was a court case in Britain against Jebb, accusing her of indirectly helping the enemy by providing relief supplies to their children during war time.

To that accusation, Jebb had famously replied “My Lord, I have no enemy below the age of 11”.

This principle that there was no such thing as an “enemy” child, had an even earlier antecedent in the Geneva Convention, ratified in 1864, that conferred neutrality upon voluntary relief workers tending to the wounded, dying, prisoners of wars – out of which grew the Red Cross movement.

As we will see later, the founders of UNICEF were inspired by these principles of humanitarian neutrality and sanctity of childhood espoused by the Red Cross and Save the Children.

UNICEF also owes Save the Children another important heritage. It was the Save the Children International Union also founded by Eglantyne Jebb in Geneva that first drafted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which was later adopted by the League of Nations as the World Child Welfare Charter in 1924.

That Charter laid down some key principles which endured the test of times, and which eventually culminated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guides the work of UNICEF today.

I am happy to acknowledge that Sweden was among the first countries in the world to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child without any reservations.

When the League of Nations collapsed, and the Second World War broke out, the devastation it caused was horrific. Not only millions suffered and perished in concentration camps, but millions of men, women and children were displaced by war.

To respond to this humanitarian crisis, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt took the lead to launch a massive relief operation in countries that were most devastated by the Second World War. They established the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration or UNRRA in 1944 even before the United Nations was established.

UNRRA provided life saving help to the survivors of the concentration camps and to millions of men, women and children displaced by war.

The most touching part of UNRRA’s work was its help for children. It meant a matter of life and death for millions of children.

I should acknowledge here how Sweden played an exemplary role in the protection and well-being of children, including saving Jewish children from the Nazi regime, and the extraordinary role of Raul Wallenberg.

The good work of UNRRA needed to be continued somehow after the War. So one part of its work, dealing with refugees and displaced persons was assigned to the International Refugee Organization, which later became UNHCR.

The other part of the work, the feeding and protection of children was to be entrusted to a new organization called the UN's International Children's Emergency Fund or UNICEF.

The original mandate given to UNICEF was to help with child health and rehabilitation of children in countries devastated by the War. It was to provide assistance "on the basis of need, without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality, status or political belief".

Please recall that by 1946 the UN was already divided by the poisonous atmosphere of the Cold War and the East/West rivalry. Everything was coloured by politics. So it was a huge challenge to create a UN fund which had to work on both sides of what became known as the Iron Curtain.

The first and founding Chairman of UNICEF's Executive Board was Dr. Ludwick Rajchman of Poland. Rajchman had been the chief medical official of the League of Nations. He was an epidemiologist by training, and a brilliant pioneer of international public health, a medical visionary, who played a major role in setting up of both WHO and UNICEF.

The first Executive Director of UNICEF was a gentleman named Maurice Pate, an American, who had worked with former US President Herbert Hoover at UNRRA.

But when Maurice Pate was first offered the job of heading UNICEF, he said he would only accept the job on one condition. That UNICEF should be allowed to help children in need everywhere, including in the so-called "enemy states".

Please recall that article 53 of the UN Charter speaks about the "enemy states" referring to the Axis Powers during the Second World War. But for Maurice Pate, just like it was for Eglantyne Jebb, there was no such thing as "enemy" children.

Helping children in need everywhere regardless of the politics of their parents, has become an extremely powerful and sacrosanct principle for UNICEF's work throughout its 60 years.

It allowed UNICEF not only to help children in Germany, Japan and Italy, but in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War. It allowed UNICEF to work in all parts of Indochina during the Vietnam War.

In Cambodia in the 1970s when the government in Phnom Penh was not recognized by the United Nations, UNICEF became the only UN agency allowed to work inside Cambodia, along with the Red Cross.

As I said earlier, Sweden's Nils Thedin often spoke about "children as a zone of peace". That concept has been a precious asset for UNICEF, long preceding the principle of the "responsibility to protect" that was approved by the World Summit at the UN General Assembly in September 2005.

Going back to the origins of UNICEF, along with his letter of appointment as the first Executive Director of UNICEF, Maurice Pate got a cheque of \$550,000 left over funds from UNRRA, as seed money to launch UNICEF.

So UNICEF's initial capital was \$550,000. Today, as you know UNICEF is a \$2.5 billion organization. We have come a long way!

And Sweden has been one of UNICEF's most generous donors. For many years Sweden was UNICEF's second largest donor, after the United States. Even today Sweden is the second highest per capita donor to UNICEF, after Norway.

Besides the amount of funding, we greatly value the fact that most of Sweden's contribution is in the form of unrestricted funds, which gives us much flexibility to respond to the real needs of developing countries.

UNICEF's earliest programmes were relief operations for children in Europe.

Our first programme in Asia was in China.

Remember at that time China was represented at the UN by the Kuomintang-led government of Chiang Kai Shek. Following the principle of helping children in need impartially, part of the funds approved for China was specifically designated for children in the Communist held areas.

This was a first example of the principle of non-partiality upheld by the Executive Board. It was quite remarkable that China's Kuomintang government delegate on the Executive Board went along with this decision.

The early UNICEF programmes focused on providing powdered milk to children. That is how many older Europeans, Japanese, Koreans and Chinese – perhaps some of your parents - remember UNICEF to this day.

Now a days we talk much about national capacity building to ensure sustainability. UNICEF was aware and alert about it from its earliest days. From very early on, the Board asked UNICEF to help build national capacity for indigenous production and conservation of milk. So UNICEF, working with FAO, helped milk conservation and dairy industry development programmes in many countries, including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia.

One of the largest and most innovative such programmes was in France. UNICEF helped France to develop a milk conservation programme. Besides providing milk to the French children, it became one of UNICEF's earliest advocacy projects.

Legislation was passed in France to outlaw the sale of non-pasteurised raw milk in cities where UNICEF equipment was installed. Later the programme expanded to ban the sale of raw milk in all towns in France with a population exceeding 20,000 people.

In India, UNICEF assisted the famous Amul-Anand Milk Union, a cooperative inaugurated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru himself. It was the world's first and largest dairy industry processing buffalo milk. And it continues to operate even today.

Besides milk supply, the earliest UNICEF supported programmes involved control of tuberculosis. UNICEF and the Scandinavian Red Cross supported the largest mass vaccination campaign against TB in history in the early 1950s. By 1955 the campaign had tested 155 million children and vaccinated 60 million with BCG.

While TB is still a big problem in developing countries, it has largely been brought under control in Europe because of these early efforts by UNICEF and the Scandinavian Red Cross.

As UNICEF was completely voluntarily funded, fund-raising was always a major challenge. But Maurice Pate was a very skilful fund-raiser.

The US was the biggest donor, but every year UNICEF had to lobby hard to secure US funding, especially during the McCarthy period when the US Congress was turning increasingly anti-UN.

To lobby the Congress, friends of UNICEF founded the US Committee for UNICEF, a citizens' group which encouraged a letter writing campaign from constituents to influential Congressmen on behalf of UNICEF.

Thus began the national committees for UNICEF, with hundreds, and now thousands, of volunteers which we now have in 37 donor countries.

The NatComs are a great asset of UNICEF. They help raise nearly one-third of UNICEF income today. They engage with civil society, the private sector and the media in their countries and play an important advocacy role.

Besides fundraising and advocacy, our NatComs also sponsor development education programmes to make children in the industrialised countries aware of the situation of children in developing countries and to inculcate in them a sense of global solidarity for development.

As we heard from Birgitta, here in Sweden we have a very active National Committee for UNICEF. I want to take this occasion to pay tribute to the wonderful work of the Swedish Netcom.

One of the fund-raising activities of our Netcom's involves selling the very popular UNICEF's greeting cards. It all started with a little Czech school girl who used to regularly drink UNICEF-supplied milk. One day she painted a nice little "thank you" card and sent it to UNICEF through her teacher in Prague. This became the first UNICEF greeting card.

Today we sell 130 million cards and raise over \$150 million dollars per year.

Another interesting innovation in fund-raising was "trick or treat" for UNICEF. During Halloween in North America children go from door to door to ask for candies. In 1950 a Pennsylvania priest came up with a bright new idea. Instead of asking for candies, he asked his Sunday school students to ask for nickels and dimes for UNICEF. That year they raised \$17. Since then children in the US and Canada have raised over \$130 million by trick-or-treating for UNICEF.

Yet another innovation was raising voluntary private sector contribution to UNICEF. With the support of the first Secretary-General of the UN Trygve Lee a programme was developed to ask all salaried people to contribute 1 day's pay every year for programmes for of children.

The idea was first tried out in Norway, as “UN Appeal for Children”. In 1948 the appeal was held in 45 countries and 30 territories and raised an astounding amount of \$30 million. One-third of it was allocated to UNICEF with the rest going to SCF, Red Cross and other charities for children.

Encouraged by the first trial, in December 1948, the GA passed a resolution to continue the “UN Appeal for Children” but with *all* proceeds going to UNICEF.

Quite a few UNICEF Natcoms have continued this practice in one form or the other, making UNICEF the only agency of the UN system that secures a substantial part of its income (one-third at present) from sources other than governments.

The Swedish Natcom’s “global parent” project follows this tradition.

Many of you are aware of other recent successful fund-raising initiatives for UNICEF, such as the *Change for Good* led by our airlines partners, *Check-Out for Children*, run by hotel chains, and many other corporate sponsorship programmes for children.

We heard about some other innovative fund-raising activities here in Sweden from Bridgitta Dahl.

UNICEF was off to a good start with all such innovations and good work. But as it had been established as a temporary emergency fund, its mandate had to be reviewed for renewal or termination in 1950.

As Europe had largely recovered from the worst devastation of the war, thanks largely to the Marshall Plan, the original rationale for UNICEF’s establishment was no longer valid. So there was a serious proposal to disband UNICEF in 1950.

Several key donors, and some of the UN Specialized agencies that felt UNICEF encroached on their sectoral territory, were ready to terminate UNICEF’s mandate and existence.

To the rescue came the recipient countries, supported by a few enlightened donors. They made a strong case that they valued the type of *material* assistance that UNICEF provided to children, that no other UN agency did.

The Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN made an eloquent and passionate plea that while the worst of the post-war emergency maybe over in Europe, countries of Asia and developing countries in other regions were suffering from a *permanent* emergency. It was the emergency of poverty, disease, illiteracy, malnutrition that stalked millions of children. UNICEF and the United Nations had a responsibility to assist such countries.

This argument carried the day, and UNICEF’s life was extended for 3 more years in 1950.

At the same time, UNICEF’s mandate was also expanded to address the long-term needs of children and mothers in developing countries.

When the 3 year lease of life was over and UNICEF’s future was reviewed again in 1953, the Executive Board, ECOSOC and the General Assembly all concluded that UNICEF deserved to be continued indefinitely. The words “international” and “emergency” were dropped from its name.

But it retained the original acronym UNICEF, which now stood for the United Nations Children's Fund.

UNICEF's focus of action shifted dramatically in the 1950s.

In 1946-49 UNICEF support was focused on children in Europe. But by 1953 UNICEF support was largely directed to Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Africa got little attention in those days as it was seen as the responsibility of the colonial powers who ruled much of Africa at that time.

As you know, we have come a long way since then. Today half of UNICEF support goes to sub-Saharan Africa, one-third to Asia, and about 6 % each to Middle East/North Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. And UNICEF resumed assistance to children in Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Throughout the 1950s UNICEF focused its work on health, including campaigns against malaria, tuberculosis, yaws, trachoma, small pox eradication, nutrition, including milk distribution, and maternal and child health and family welfare services.

And wherever emergency struck, UNICEF was always there with its humanitarian relief mandate.

The decade of the 1960s, led to major transformation of UNICEF. As many countries in Africa gained their independence from colonialism, and the membership of the UN expanded, UNICEF adapted to the changing situation.

In 1964 UNICEF convened a round table conference on planning for the needs of children in developing countries, in Bellagio, Italy.

Until that time the wellbeing of children was largely seen as a charitable enterprise. And UNICEF was seen as a good, small U.N. agency providing relief aid for children in emergencies.

The Bellagio conference changed all that. Its outcome firmly established that the wellbeing of children was the essential foundation of national development and that UNICEF needed to become a development agency.

Accordingly, UNICEF's fields of action expanded to include long-term development programmes, in addition to its traditional role as a humanitarian relief fund.

For the first time UNICEF became involved in education and vocational training programmes for children and youth. It also began to engage with governments on social development policies.

The good work of UNICEF earned it the Nobel Peace prize in 1965. Unfortunately Maurice Pate died just before the Nobel Prize was awarded. His successor Henry Labouisse accepted the prize in his stead.

Harry Labouisse was a fine patrician diplomat. He brought his own imprint to UNICEF. Under his leadership, UNICEF refined its country programming approach to one of the best recognized tools in the UN system.

UNICEF pioneered the basic services approach in the 1970s. The hallmark of this approach was capacity building using community-based para-professionals to deliver basic services that are readily accessible, acceptable and affordable to people.

Perhaps the best illustration of this was the primary health care approach that UNICEF and the World Health Organization introduced at the Alma Ata conference in 1978.

The 1970s also saw UNICEF expanding its support for drinking water and sanitation programmes. As waterborne diseases are a major cause of childhood morbidity and mortality, UNICEF support in this area was seen as an essential component of basic services.

Sweden was one of the earliest supporters of drinking water and sanitation programmes. Swedish support through UNICEF was instrumental in the great progress made in water supply in India and other parts of Asia. I am delighted that the Swedish Natcom has adopted water as one of its main themes with its “a drop of water” campaign involving Swedish children.

The fact that the drudgery of fetching water is a major burden on girls and women, and thus provision of safe drinking water can be a liberating experience for them was not lost on UNICEF.

Indeed the advocacy of the empowerment of women as a worthwhile area for UNICEF’s support was amply recognized in the 1970s. As was increased support to basic education for children, especially girls.

Here again, Sweden has been a pioneering donor to UNICEF. Currently Sweden is a great supporter of girls’ education. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of girls’ education as the best investment in human development.

Harry Labouisse’s tenure as Executive Director was capped by the International Year of the Child in 1979. UNICEF was designated as the UN’s lead agency for IYC and its follow-up.

It was a year of extra-ordinary mobilization for children. Non-Governmental Organizations were particularly active at that time.

We should recall that UNICEF has historically cultivated a strong partnership with NGOs. We have a large number of NGOs accredited to UNICEF and an active NGO Committee for UNICEF that offer us policy advice and guidance at the Executive Board.

In the field UNICEF works very closely with NGOs and civil society organizations.

In 1980 Harry Labouisse was succeeded by James P. Grant as UNICEF’s third Executive Director.

Jim Grant came to UNICEF like a tornado. It was as if all his life he was preparing to come to lead UNICEF. UNICEF seemed to provide the perfect bully pulpit for him to espouse his ideas and vision.

Before coming to UNICEF, he had been a champion of the school of thought which we now call human development. Development, he argued, had to be measured not by the gross national product of a nation but by the physical quality of human life.

Infant mortality rate, life expectancy, literacy rates and other social indicators were far more important measurements of a nation's development than its economic wealth or military might, he argued.

Jim Grant quickly assembled a senior management team of high intellect and extraordinary communication and mobilization capacity.

Beyond UNICEF staff, he reached out to the media, the academia and the development think tanks of the world, to help craft a new vision for UNICEF's work building on its considerable inherited strengths.

Early on Grant came up with the idea of a Child Survival Revolution. It was unconscionable, he argued, that 40,000 children were dying everyday when there were many low-cost, readily available interventions to prevent such deaths.

Like the Green Revolution that multiplied agricultural production in Asia, he argued the CSDR could drastically cut down child mortality and unleash a virtuous cycle of child well-being and human development.

Growth monitoring, Oral rehydration therapy, Breastfeeding, and Immunization, were proposed as cutting edge interventions, supported by female education, family planning, and food supplements – known as GOBI-FFF.

Grant promoted CSDR with an infectious passion. He initiated the publication of an annual *State of the World's Children report* to promote his revolution. Arguing that morality must march in tandem with capacity, he persuaded leaders of the world to raise immunization rates from single digits to 80 percent in their political lifetime.

While Grant was single-mindedly focused on CSDR, he was also very deeply committed to the broader aspects of development. He got his Deputy Richard Jolly and colleagues to challenge the orthodoxy of the Bretton Woods institutions with a clarion call for "Adjustment with a Human Face".

Grant also championed debt relief for child survival and called on reduction of military expenditure in favour of basic services for children.

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Least Developed Countries got UNICEF's special attention and increased priority in the 1980s and 90s, and they continue to do so even today.

To reach children in situations of conflict, with life-saving basic services, UNICEF promoted the concepts of "Days of tranquillity" and "corridors of peace" which actually led to humanitarian cease-fires in countries like El Salvador, Sudan, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. As I said before, our Swedish mentor Nils Thedin's concept of *Children as a Zone of Peace* continues to guide UNICEF's action for children in times of war and conflicts.

Jim Grant gave the decisive push to the long languishing negotiations on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and saw it come to completion and into effect in 1989. He then pushed hard for its ratification making it today the world's most universally embraced human rights treaty.

Jim Grant's crowning achievement was the convening of the World Summit for Children in 1990. As I said before, Sweden played an instrumental role in making that Summit a grand success and planting the seeds of today's Millennium Development Goals.

Grant was succeeded by Carol Bellamy in 1995. Bellamy brought about many needed reforms and modernized UNICEF's management and operations. She helped promote the rights based approach to programming. She highlighted issues of child protection, girls' education, and recognized the extraordinary challenge of HIV/AIDS on children.

Today UNICEF is led by our new Executive Director Ann Veneman. While it is too early to dwell on her legacy, it is already evident that like her predecessors, she brings enormous energy, a strong commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, and a conviction that UNICEF needs to nurture and strengthen partnerships with others, for it to maximize results for children.

Ann Veneman is also taking a strong interest and playing a leadership role in UN reform, so that UNICEF and the rest of the UN system can make the most effective contribution to achieving the MDGs, which after all are all about children.

Dear friends, having recapped some key highlights of UNICEF's history, let me now dwell on what are UNICEF's current and future priorities, and how can we continue to keep UNICEF a strong organization to help countries and communities build a better world for future generations.

For the foreseeable future, UNICEF will be guided by 4 sets of roadmaps.

First, in the short to medium-term, UNICEF will be guided by the Medium Term Strategic Plan approved last year by the Executive Board. This plan outlines 5 organizational priorities: Young Child Survival and Development, Basic Education and Gender Equality, Combating HIV/AIDS, Child Protection, and Policy Advocacy for Child Rights. In addition, UNICEF will continue to give strong support to children in emergencies.

UNICEF is a highly decentralized organization, and its programmes respond to country priorities. A second roadmap for UNICEF action would therefore comprise National Programmes of Action or other national policy and programme instruments developed by governments to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Special Session on Children.

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals provide us the third roadmap and a broad developmental landscape within which UNICEF will pursue child specific goals, targets and actions for at least the next 10 years.

And finally, the 4th roadmap for UNICEF is the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A hundred years from now, if UNICEF still exists, we will still be striving for the full implementation of the rights enshrined in the Convention. Because many of the rights are progressive, not absolute – such as achieving the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing - rights are forever and must be pursued in every society.

Thus we have our work cut out for both the short term and long term.

Is UNICEF up to these challenging tasks? My rather biased view is that it is, provided it continues to get strong support from countries like Sweden and other Member States.

We have a major UN reform exercise going on right now which will potentially have great impact in bringing about greater coherence, consistency and enhancing the effectiveness of the UN development system.

In recent years, UNICEF has been an active player, and often a leader, in improving inter-agency coordinating mechanisms and bringing greater coherence to the UN development system.

UNICEF is recognized as having made large and lasting contribution to the UN reform effort. It is credited to have contributed more to inter-agency coordination than any other organization in terms of staffing, time, and resources allocated.

UNICEF's role in promoting human rights-based approach to programming is widely acknowledged, as is its contribution to simplification and harmonization. UNICEF has often provided leadership in developing CCAs and UNDAFs, and guidelines for joint programming.

Working with our sister agencies, we are deeply engaged in supporting the Secretary-General's UN reform proposals. We are all for common premises, shared services, joint programming and a strong UN Country team helping governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Recently Ann Veneman has issued a think paper on UNICEF's position on UN reform that has been acknowledged as positive, proactive and specific.

UNICEF is all for simplifying and harmonizing our processes, reducing transaction costs and being responsive to country-led development efforts in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

But in the name of harmonization, it would be a mistake if we were led to homogenizing the character of UNICEF to such an extent that it becomes indistinguishable from other organizations.

I'd say, harmonization –yes, homogenization -no!

UNICEF is not just one among many other UN entities. In many countries it is the most widely known and respected agency. In many industrialized countries, hundreds, if not thousands of volunteers work for UNICEF National Committees, making it truly the people to people arm of the United Nations.

Our national and global goodwill ambassadors passionately champion the cause of children and give it great visibility. The cause for which UNICEF stands resonates well with your people and I hope with your parliamentarians.

In developing countries, and countries in transition, UNICEF has a substantial presence. In many countries, UNICEF has a presence at the sub-national level, not just in the capital city. UNICEF probably touches the lives of more people than any other UN agency.

So when the Tsunami struck Southeast Asia, we did not have to fly people to Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia or the Maldives. We used our existing staff in the field for early assessment and assistance as we gradually beefed up our capacity.

In most developing countries, UNICEF is often there before, during and after an emergency. Most UNICEF's actions for children are relevant both during emergency and in normal development setting.

It would therefore be a big mistake, and a disservice to children, if attempts were made to fit UNICEF's structure and functions into an emergency, a development and an environment compartments as envisaged in some UN reform proposals.

UNICEF is highly decentralized. Local authorities in developing countries find it relatively easy to access and seek support from UNICEF. UNICEF Reps can often respond to requests on the spot, whereas many agencies need to refer to their regional offices or headquarters.

UNICEF employs a large number of national professionals – more than any other UN agency, or any other donor agency, in most countries. They speak the local language and are sensitive to local culture and customs.

UNICEF's programming is firmly rooted in country realities. Unlike some other agencies and donors we do not develop project proposals by visiting team of consultants but by resident staff who are in constant interaction with national counterparts.

UNICEF can speak out forcefully in the name of children when others may feel constrained by diplomatic protocol.

If UNICEF's ability to advocate for child rights were compromised and if its ability to act swiftly in times of emergencies were to erode, that would be a real loss for the world's children and for the United Nations.

UNICEF's widely-known and respected brand name is an asset to the UN and it should be harnessed for the benefit of developing countries.

It is with this in mind that we at UNICEF are proactively working on UN reform with our sister agencies, particularly the UNDG ExCom members, to ensure that collectively we maximise the benefits of greater harmonization, simplification, better coordination and responsiveness to the needs and priorities of developing countries, while retaining the precious brand equity of UNICEF.

If the loss of UNICEF's brand name were to make UNICEF's National Committees less successful in private sector fund-raising – which accounts for one-third of UNICEF's income – that would not only be loss of revenue for children in developing countries, but a serious setback for an amazing movement of solidarity for children in the industrialized countries.

Speaking at the time of the last round of his UN reform proposals, Secretary-General Kofi Annan was wise and far sighted when he said, that he wanted the UN funds and programmes to work like a team – not a rowing team in which everybody has to stroke at the same pace but a football team in which there is room for individual brilliance, even as the team is pursuing a common goal.

Now that we are all pursuing the Millennium Development Goals as our common agenda, I would hope that we would all be challenged to show results by working in harmony as an effective team and enhancing the comparative advantages of each agency to support country-led efforts to achieve the MDGs.

We hope Sweden will see to it that the next round of UN reform proposals will lead us all in this direction.

Currently, we are all focused on achieving the MDGs, and rightly so. But let us remember that even if all MDGs are miraculously achieved in the next 10 years, we will still have a world in which half a billion people would be living in poverty, 4 million children would still be dying every year, hundreds of millions of people would still be without access to water and sanitation, the millions of children who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS cannot be un-orphaned, and millions will remain with their rights violated and human potential unfulfilled.

That is why our long-term goal for children must go beyond MDGs to work towards the full implementation of child rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A crude way to put it would be that, the reality of children in Sweden today is our dream for the children of the world for tomorrow.

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of UNICEF today, let us look forward to UNICEF's 100th anniversary in 40 years' time when all children will be born into a world like children here in Sweden today - a world where disparity would have been substantially reduced, a world where children would all grow to their full potential, a world fit not only for children, but for all humanity.

And for that we count on Sweden to be in the vanguard to help keep UNICEF a strong, vibrant, effective organization that is able to help member states to protect the rights and nurture the well-being of our future generations.

Thank you.