

WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

From 8 to 10 May 2002, more than 7,000 people participated in the most important international conference on children in more than a decade, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children.

The Special Session culminated in the official adoption, by some 180 nations, of its outcome document, 'A World Fit for Children'. The new agenda for - and with - the world's children titled the Agenda for the Future focuses on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education for all; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

All of society is called upon to join a global movement to build a world fit for children, based on a 10-point rallying call:

1. **Put children first.** In all actions related to children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. **Eradicate poverty: invest in children.** We reaffirm our vow to break the cycle of poverty within a single generation, united in the conviction that investments in children and the realisation of their rights are among the most effective ways to eradicate poverty. Immediate action must be taken to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.
3. **Leave no child behind.** Each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and rights; therefore, all forms of discrimination affecting children must end.
4. **Care for every child.** Children must get the best possible start in life. Their survival, protection, growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition are the essential foundation of human development. We will make concerted efforts to fight infectious diseases, tackle major causes of malnutrition and nurture children in a safe environment that enables them to be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.
5. **Educate every child.** All girls and boys must have access to and complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality as a cornerstone of an inclusive basic education. Gender disparities in primary and secondary education must be eliminated.
6. **Protect children from harm and exploitation.** Children must be protected against any acts of violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination, as well as all forms of terrorism and hostage-taking.
7. **Protect children from war.** Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict. Children under foreign occupation must also be protected, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law.
8. **Combat HIV/AIDS.** Children and their families must be protected from the devastating impact of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS).
9. **Listen to children and ensure their participation.** Children and adolescents are resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all. We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.
10. **Protect the Earth for children.** We must safeguard our natural environment, with its diversity of life, its beauty and its resources, all of which enhance the quality of life, for present and future generations. We will give every assistance to protect children and minimise the impact of natural disasters and environmental degradation on them.