We start the 21st century . . .

. . . with a vision
for the children of the world: that every one of them – without exception – lives a full and healthy life, with rights secured and protected, freed from poverty, violence and discrimination.

. . . with a commitment to spare no effort in making certain that all infants start life healthy, all young children are nurtured in caring environments, all children, including the poorest and most disadvantaged, complete a basic education of good quality and that all adolescents have the opportunities to develop fully and to participate in their societies.
Early childhood care. There is an urgency to working with children and their families during the very early childhood years – a time with the greatest possibilities for breaking through intergenerational cycles of chronic poor health and suboptimal human development. This is when the foundation can best be set to ensure that children are physically healthy, mentally
alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and intellectually able to learn by the time they reach primary school age.

This foundation depends on care and nurturing for the child, good nutrition, including breastfeeding for up to six months, access to safe water and sanitation, and immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases. It also depends on a protective atmosphere that encourages early socialization, stimulation and positive interaction with family and community.

And it requires that mothers are well cared for during pregnancy, delivery and lactation as a way to assure children the healthiest beginnings and to prevent the needless deaths of the 585,000 women who die each year of complications during pregnancy and childbirth.
Education. Education does not begin when the child sets foot in primary school, nor does it end when the school bell rings and class lets out. Learning begins at birth; it occurs in the family, in neighbourhoods, in communities, during play. Life’s teachers are parents, siblings, peers, workplaces, the mass media. A basic, quality education is a human right, yet more than 130 million primary-school-age children in developing countries are out of school. Nearly
60 per cent of them are girls, many saddled with domestic obligations and household chores; many others limited by traditions in which families consider school costs too high to pay when it comes to their daughters; and still others living such long distances from school that travel is a risk to their health and well-being.

Too often, girls and boys must abandon their education when they are forced to work despite their young age or the hazards of their labour, when armed conflict
and other emergencies disrupt their lives, when poverty surrounds them or when adults exploit them sexually or buy and sell them like commodities.

Despite these deterrents, children embrace the opportunity to learn about the world around them and develop their abilities to succeed – critical thinking, self-confidence, problem-solving and working with others. As children grow and develop, these skills will serve them not only to function in their daily lives but also to transform their futures.
Adolescents. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the rights of children up to the age of 18; but adolescents are no longer children in the traditional sense and not yet adults. Working to support their families, fighting their countries’ wars and heading households, adolescents often find that they must fend for themselves, lacking a political voice and without the base of family and community support they had when they were younger.

It is a human tragedy, not to mention a gross violation of human rights, to bring adolescents to the brink of adulthood – and then deny them the opportunity to
realize their full potential. Adolescents need and deserve a chance to finish school and to participate in activities with their peers. They need and deserve ‘safe’ places such as schools, vocational settings and youth centres in which to develop the skills to deal...
with life situations. And they need and deserve services that enlist the support of caring adults and offer a connection with family and community.

A resource of enormous potential – as peers, older siblings or heads of households, as parents or future parents – adolescents contribute to their societies in myriad ways. As partners in advancing a global agenda, adolescents are uniquely poised to change the course of human development.
Leadership in the best interests of the child

At the heart of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the core value that policies be made, structures and processes be established and actions be taken that are, always and invariably, in the best interests of the child. There are many thousands of people around the world who have worked to support that principle. The names that follow are but a few of those people. Identified by UNICEF offices, the list includes a broad cross-section of advocates for children – community workers, medical personnel, grass-roots organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious leaders, writers, journalists, educators, lawyers, government officials and others. We print their names to acknowledge their contributions and also to indirectly acknowledge the many, many thousands more whose names we may never know but whose work on behalf of children continues to move us all towards a more just world.

AFGHANISTAN
Co-operation Centre for Afghanistan
NGO that promotes human rights and reports on human rights abuses.

ARGENTINA
Estela B. de Carlotto
President, Asociación de Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo

AUSTRALIA
Justice Marcus Einfeld
Special Representative for UNICEF Australia

AUSTRIA
Prof. Clemens von Pirquet, M.D. (1874-1929)
Secretary-General, International Union for Youth Welfare to the League of Nations

AZERBAIJAN
Hadi Receblı
Head, Social Legislation Department, National Assembly

BENIN
Monsignor Isidore de Souza (1934-1999)
Archbishop of Cotonou, founding member and honorary President, Institute of Human Rights and Promotion of Democracy of Benin

BOLIVIA
Ana María Romero de Campero
Journalist and Bolivia’s current People’s Defender

BRAZIL
Herbert de Souza (Betinho) (1935-1997)
Involved in the design and launch of the coalition, Pact for Children

BULGARIA
Elena Kostova
President, Future of Bulgaria Foundation

CAMBODIA
Mom Thany
Affiliated with the NGO Redd Barna, built an NGO network in Cambodia

CANADA
Denise Avard
Former Executive Director, Canadian Institute of Child Health

COLOMBIA
Children’s Movement for Peace
Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

CONGO
Thérèse Françoise Engambé
Chief, Projet Plaidoyer pour l’application de la Convention relative aux droits de l’enfant

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
Emery Mpwate Munfe
President, Union de la Jeunesse protestante, National Director, Church of Christ Youth

DENMARK
Peter Sabroe (1867-1913)
Member of Parliament, journalist and editor

EGYPT
Justice Mohamed Abdel Aziz ElGuindy
Former Attorney-General of Egypt, Co-organizer, Alexandria International Conference on the CRC, 1988

FIJI
Justice Nazhat Shameem
Former Chair of Fiji’s Children’s Coordinating Committee

GAMBIA
Amie Joof Cole
Secretary-General, West African Women’s Association
GERMANY
Reinald Eichholz
First ombudsperson for children for the state of North Rhine-Westphalia

GREECE
Antonis Samarakis
Writer, UNICEF National Goodwill Ambassador

GUINEA
Hadja Mariama Diabate
The ‘national mother’ for orphaned, abandoned and underprivileged children

INDIA
Tara Ali Baig (1916-1989)
Social reformer, writer, first Asian woman President of the International Union for Child Welfare in Geneva

INDONESIA
Nafsiah Mboi, M.D.
Secretary-General, National Commission for the Protection of Children (NGO)

JAMAICA
Marjorie Taylor
Special Envoy for Children, former Minister of State for Children’s Issues

JAPAN
Toyoiko Kagawa (1888-1960)
Member, National Council on Child Welfare, inspired government and social action to promote child rights

KENYA
Justice Effie Owuor
Chair, Task Force on child law reform, UNICEF National Goodwill Ambassador

LEBANON
Nayla Moawad
President, Parliamentary Committee on the Rights of the Child, and René Moawad Foundation

MALAYSIA
Raj Binte Abdul Karim
Director-General, National Population and Family Development Board

MALI
Général Amadou Toumani Touré
Founder, Fondation pour l’enfance

MEXICO
Libertad Hernandez (1947-1998)
Director, women’s programme in Veracruz

MOZAMBIQUE
Graça Machel
United Nations Secretary-General’s expert on children in armed conflict

NEPAL
Gauri Pradhan
Founder, Child Workers in Nepal

NIGERIA
Irene Thomas, M.D.
President, Inter-African Committee on Female Genital Mutilation

PAKISTAN
Hakim Mohammed Said (1920-1998)
Established various institutions for children

PANAMA
Dora Boyd de Pérez Balladares
Founder, Pacto por la Niñez Panameña

PHILIPPINES
Feny de los Angeles-Bautista
Executive Director, Philippine Children’s Television Foundation

POLAND
Prof. Adam Lopatka
President, Working Group on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

ROMANIA
Dragos Serafim, M.D.
President, Romanian Association for Child Rights

SENEGAL
Doudou Camara (1941-1998)
Author of Approche culturelle pour la promotion des droits de l’enfant and Droits de l’enfant: Contes et légendes du Sénégal

SINGAPORE
Lim Eng Seng
Director, Rehabilitation and Protection Division, Ministry of Community Development

SOMALIA
Founder, Elman School in Mogadishu

SOUTH AFRICA
Nelson Mandela
Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Founder, Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund

SRI LANKA
Prof. Savitri Goonesekere
Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo

SWEDEN
Thomas Hammarberg
United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia

SYRIA
Hussein Hassun
Minister of Justice, active in juvenile law and justice

THAILAND
Anand Panyarachun
UNICEF National Goodwill Ambassador

UKRAINE
Natalia Petrova
Head, All-Ukrainian Committee on Children’s Rights Protection (NGO)

UNITED KINGDOM
Nigel Cantwell
Coordinator of the NGOs that participated in drafting the CRC

UNITED STATES
James P. Grant (1922-1995)
Executive Director, UNICEF

VENEZUELA
Comité Juntos por una Nueva Ley
Coalition of NGOs that promote child rights

YEMEN
Nageeba M. Haddad
‘Director-General of children’s culture’, Ministry of Culture, writer

ZIMBABWE
Jarios Jiri (1921-1982)
Founder, Jarios Jiri Association for Disabled Children
References

An urgent call to leadership


Box 1


Undeclared war

2. Jain, Sharda, ‘Save before they perish’, and Vaid, Sudershana and Sharda Jain, ‘Nipped in the bud’, both in Family Medicine, India, Vol. 3, No. 4, July-September 1999, pp. 7 and 9, respectively.
4. Ibid., p. 1.
6. Ibid., p. 17.
8. Ibid., p. 2.


26. Ibid., p. 43.


In a single generation


5. “All wars, just or unjust, disastrous or victorious, are waged against the child.” This longer quote is attributed to Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children Fund.


AIDS
acquired immune deficiency syndrome

CEDAW
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CIS
Commonwealth of Independent States

CRC
Convention on the Rights of the Child

DAC
Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

DHS
Demographic and Health Surveys coordinated by the United States National Institutes of Health

ECOSOC
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations General Assembly

ESAR
Eastern and Southern Africa Region

FGM
female genital mutilation

GA
General Assembly of the United Nations

GNP
gross national product

HIV
human immunodeficiency virus

ICCIDD
International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders

ICRC
International Committee of the Red Cross

ILO
International Labour Organization

IMF
International Monetary Fund

NATO
North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO
non-governmental organization

OCHA
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODA
official development assistance

OECD
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ORT
oral rehydration therapy

SIPRI
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

U5MR
under-five mortality rate

UN
United Nations

UNAIDS
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNDP
United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF
United Nations Children’s Fund

USSR
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WHO
World Health Organization

Note: All dollars are US dollars. In all instances, 1 billion is 1,000 million.