



**PERMANENT MISSION OF URUGUAY
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

58TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Item 41:

**“Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children:
report of the Secretary-General”**

**Statement by Mrs. MARIA AMALIA SERENO JUAREZ
MINISTER COUNSELLOR**

New York, October 21, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of Uruguay wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group.

The Declaration and Plan of Action, "A World Fit for Children", adopted at the 27th special session of the General Assembly, represents a commitment by the international community to consider boys, girls and youth as a priority development goal.

This document contains the recommendations to States to implement the necessary mechanisms for providing children with a quality education, protecting them from abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

It is now time to review the progress made towards the achievement of the first goal set forth in this document, which is the elaboration and strengthening of national and regional plans of action targeted to children, and to transform international objectives into national objectives based on local needs and situations, a goal that should be achieved by the end of this year.

For Uruguay, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis and principal normative framework that guides national strategies related to children.

Uruguay has already ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the one on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the other on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Uruguay has increased its social spending on this sector of the population and has obtained good results, such as in the field of health, for example, where the rate of infant mortality has declined from 20.4 to 14.5 per thousand births, and in the field of education, where universal education has been introduced from the age of 4 years.

However, together with progress in the area of policies for the provision and expansion of comprehensive services for children, Uruguay is encountering a series of difficulties as a result of the prolonged economic crisis from which it has been suffering for nearly five years now and which has affected the most vulnerable sectors of society and led to such problems as an increased incidence of poverty among children and child labour.

In order to combat these and other evils that affect our children and to promote the effective enjoyment of their rights, Uruguay has been developing a comprehensive programme for at-risk children, youth and families.

This programme depends on and is coordinated by the Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic and is therefore a reflection of the determination of the Government to assume leadership in this field.

In addition to national counterpart funding in the amount of 4.5 million dollars, the programme will be financed from a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank in the amount of 40 million dollars, repayable over 25 years with a 5-year grace period.

The programme is notable for its participatory and intersectoral design, which was developed jointly by the State, civil society and various groups of youth who are potential beneficiaries.

Its objective is to improve the living conditions and to promote the social insertion of boys, girls and youth in situations of social risk, and of their family group.

To this end, we will work to provide comprehensive care and greater access to quality services for the entire family group, giving priority to preventive action that will have a sustainable impact over the long term.

The programme consists in, inter alia, major components, including comprehensive projects for prevention and care for children by age group, with special modules that provide for the prevention of teenage pregnancy and for the needs of street children and victims of child abuse and sexual abuse.

In this connection, I wish to draw attention to the increase in resources and the introduction of new methodologies for the "Child and Family Health Centres", known as "CAIF", that provide services to households with children up to the age of 4 years.

For children aged 4 to 12 years, the goal is to strengthen the links between the family, school and community, by encouraging healthy lifestyles, promoting for example recreational activities and sports as vehicles for socialization and integration.

In the case of children aged 13 to 17 years, efforts will focus on, among other things, their reinsertion into the formal educational system, so as to permit them to acquire and develop skills that will prepare them for later insertion into the labour market.

Another important aspect of the programme relates to the teaching and widespread dissemination of the rights of the child, in which the goal is to ensure the widest possible dissemination and to promote greater awareness within society at large of the specific conditions of the population to which the programme is targeted and to publicize the contributions made by children and youth themselves to the programme.

The programme is national in scope and is expected to operate for 5 years.

Apart from the elaboration of this programme, Uruguay has embarked on a number of other initiatives aimed at implementing the recommendations contained in the document "A World Fit for Children" and at addressing the problems that affect our children and young people.

In order to combat the problem of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, we have decided to implement a single national sex education programme as part of the school curriculum and health service, which includes the compulsory training of teachers, instructors and health professionals.

The plan also places emphasis on the importance of the family unit, and on educational and health care establishments, as well as on extended social circles such as friends, sporting groups, religious organizations and other groups that can influence the teaching of children and youth.

Parliament is also considering draft legislation for the establishment of a National Council on Guidance and Assistance for Graduates of the National Youth Institute, with the aim of continuing training, care and assistance to these young people.

Another initiative is the so called "Blue Line", a 0-800 lines where children and adolescents victims of abuse or violence of any kind can look for help and counseling.

Mr. Chairman,

It should be noted that all of these actions on behalf of children are being undertaken with the valuable support and tireless work of civil society in Uruguay, especially the national networks of NGOs and children.

The latter include, for example, "*Gurises Unidos*", an organization that works with street children, whose General-Coordinator chaired the caucus of Latin American and Caribbean NGOs during the special session.

These and other plans and projects represent a major challenge for Uruguay. In order to achieve their full implementation, the national authorities are making strenuous efforts in the knowledge that placing children first, eradicating poverty by investing in children, not allowing any child to be left behind, and guaranteeing them the protection, care, health and education that they deserve will permit them to develop into upright individuals and responsible citizens, capable of living in a society that is truly democratic, egalitarian, free of discrimination, with peace and social justice, and one that respects and enjoys all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I thank you.