



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

BY

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Madam Chairperson
Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy
Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, let me associate my delegation with those offering words of hope to the people of India and Pakistan in their time of great distress.

I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Guatam for his excellent presentation of the end of decade review. As was evidenced in his presentation, the region has achieved notable progress over the last decade in meeting the goals set during the World Summit for Children. The achievements gained since 1990 are due in large part to the Commitment of governments in the region to elaborating and implementing effective programmes to improve the living conditions of children. This commitment has been demonstrated in the five Ministerial meetings held at the regional level to monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of the World Summit goals.

The Fifth Ministerial Meeting on *Children and Social Policy in the Americas* which was held in Kingston, Jamaica, from October 9-13, 2000, was the first of such meetings for the 21st Century and provided a unique opportunity not only to assess the lessons learnt during the 1990s but also to set future goals and policy priorities for the next ten years.

This meeting was attended by delegations from all countries throughout the region, including the United States and Canada. The meeting also had in attendance several Non-Governmental Organisations, and children from throughout the region who were allowed to participate for the first time.

The Ministerial Meeting also had the participation of Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF and Mr. Harry Belafonte, Goodwill Ambassador of UNICEF.

Reports submitted by Heads of delegation on the progress reached on the goals in their individual countries clearly demonstrated that the situation of children, adolescents and women in the region has improved in remarkable ways since 1990. Important strides have been made in the areas of health, nutrition, education and sanitation. Among the successes achieved, it is worth highlighting the fact that most countries in the region have managed to reduce infant and child mortality rates by over 20%. It is also noteworthy that vaccination rates are over 90% for the major immunization diseases; net primary school enrolment has surpassed the 90% level and sanitation coverage has increased considerably, particularly in rural areas.

In spite of this progress, however, the region continues to face significant challenges, including the need to ensure that those goals of the World Summit which have not been met are given priority attention in national plans of action. In the same vein, the challenge of sustaining the advances that have already been made must be a central theme in the implementation of existing and new strategic policy directives. Every

effort must be made to continue to address the ongoing problems of social and economic inequalities, the paucity of indicators to assess the fulfilment of child rights; lack of access to quality health services and health information; the exploitation of children in all forms; and the need to integrate children in the decision-making process.

We recognise that in spite of significant progress in implementing social policies and programmes in favour of children and adolescents, there are still weaknesses in areas relating to support for families, community organisations and the administration of juvenile justice. Additionally, the economic challenges faced by countries in the region as a result of globalisation, poverty and deepening inequities have impacted negatively on the ability of national governments to achieve the level of social progress required to fulfil effectively the needs of our children.

Despite the challenges, however, the National Reports submitted during the Fifth Ministerial Meeting give reason for optimism. National governments have, in spite of the odds, demonstrated their willingness to take action at the highest political level to improve the well-being of all children.

It is in this context that the "*Kingston Consensus*" which has emerged from our deliberations, highlights the determination of governments in the Americas to develop and implement programmes which will facilitate maximum progress in fulfilling the goals of the World Summit.

In an effort to achieve this, the region has committed itself to action in a number of areas including those aimed at ensuring greater protection of children from all forms of abuse, continuing progress towards universal access to health services, improved access to education and public participation and securing children's right to dignity, security and self-fulfilment.

The broad consensus of future action embodied in the Kingston Consensus which was forwarded to the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee has now been circulated as a document of the General Assembly and will serve as a substantive contribution to the work of this Committee.

Reports presented by Technical Working Groups, the NGO Forum and the Children's Workshop during the Ministerial Meeting will also form part of the overall report on the Conference to be presented to the Preparatory Committee in June.

In concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all donors, contributors and the UN Family, led by UNICEF, for their assistance in making the meeting a success.

I wish to express our deep appreciation to the members of the Inter-Agency Committee of the United Nations and the Caribbean Executive Committee that gave guidance and support to the Coordinating Unit. Their contributions made it possible for us to achieve our objectives for the Conference.

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