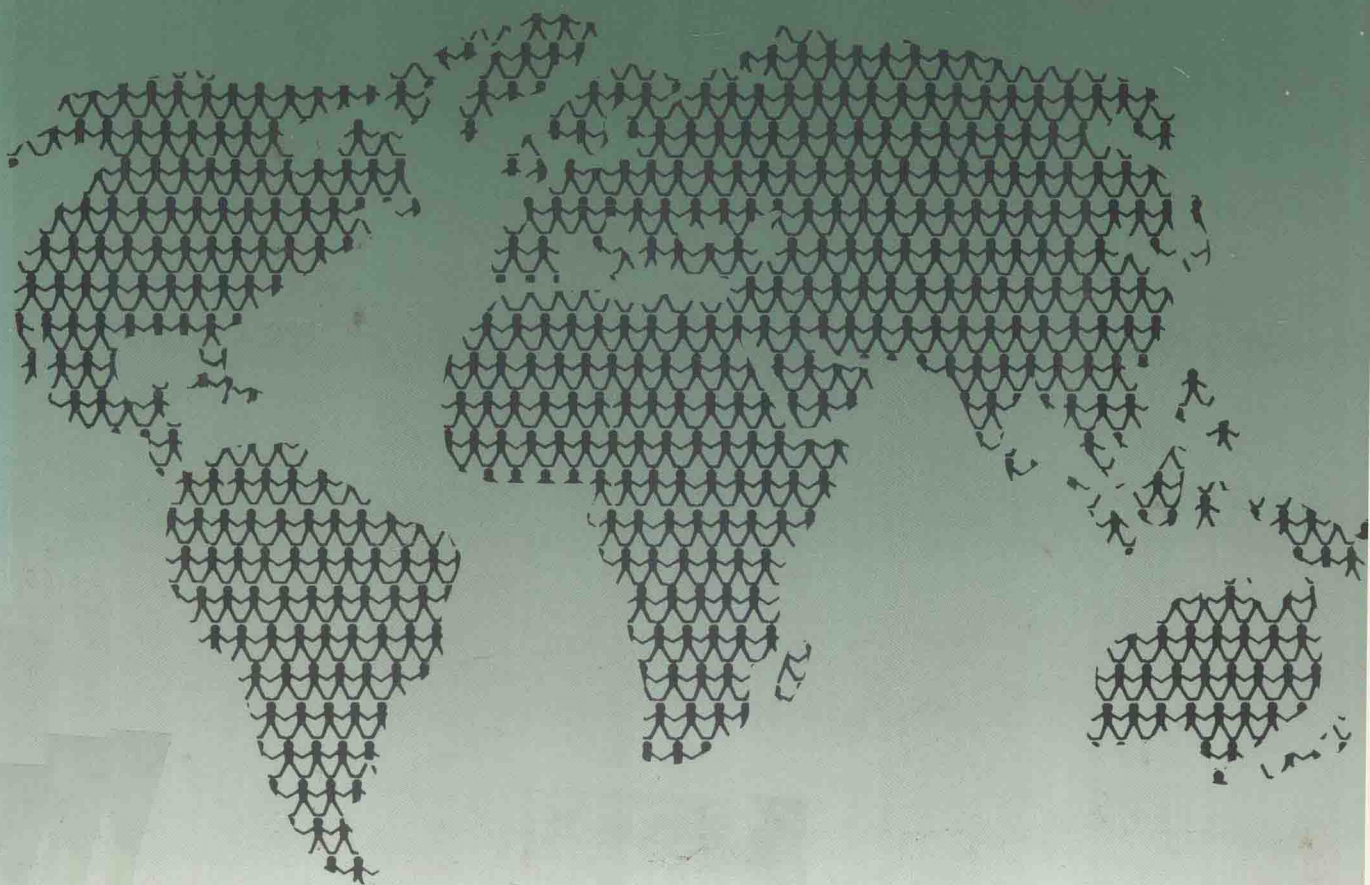


# THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 1992



United Nations Children's Fund  
(UNICEF)

# THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 1992



James P. Grant  
Executive Director of the  
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(UNICEF)



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**T.A.L.C., Box 49,  
St. Albans,  
Herts. AL1 4AX  
U.K.**

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PUBLISHED FOR UNICEF

Oxford University Press

*Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford  
OX2 6DP, Oxfordshire, U.K.*

*Oxford, New York, Toronto, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta,  
Madras, Karachi, Pealing Jaya, Singapore, Hong Kong,  
Tokyo, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Cape Town, Melbourne,  
Auckland and associated companies in Beirut, Berlin,  
Ibadan, Nicosia.*

*Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press  
Published in the United States by Oxford University  
Press, New York.*

*Any part of The State of the World's Children may be  
freely reproduced with the appropriate acknowledgement.*

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
The state of the world's children 1992  
1. Children - Care and hygiene  
613' 0432 R7101  
ISBN 0-19-262228-5*

*ISSN 0265-718X*

*The Library of Congress has catalogued this serial  
publication as follows:-  
The state of the world's children - Oxford  
New York: Oxford University Press for UNICEF v..ill.;  
20cm. Annual. Began publication in 1980.  
1. Children - Developing countries - Periodicals.  
2. Children - Care and hygiene - Developing countries -  
Periodicals. I. UNICEF.  
HQ 792.2.S73 83-647550 362.7' 1'091724*

*UNICEF, UNICEF House, 3 U.N. Plaza, New York,  
N.Y. 10017 U.S.A.  
UNICEF, Palais des Nations, CH. 1211  
Geneva 10, Switzerland.*

*Cover and design: Miller, Craig and Cocking, Woodstock, U.K.  
Charts: Stephen Hawkins, Oxford, U.K.  
Typesetting: Duncan Carr Desktop Publishing, Wallingford, U.K.  
Printing: Burgess & Son (Abingdon) Ltd., U.K.*

*Edited and produced for UNICEF and Oxford University  
Press by P & L Adamson, 18 Observatory Close,  
Benson, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 6NU, U.K.  
tel 0491-38431, fax 0491-25426*

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN  
1992

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## SUMMARY OF ISSUES

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The political and economic changes of the last three years have made it clear that a new world order is emerging. This year's State of the World's Children report seeks to contribute to the agenda of that new order from the perspective of a worldwide organization which comes into daily contact with some of the greatest failings of the old.

*The report puts forward 10 specific propositions:*

- 1 That the promise of the World Summit for Children should be kept and that a new world order should bring an end to malnutrition, preventable disease, and illiteracy among so many millions of the world's children.

*Fact: A quarter of a million young children die every week; millions more live on with malnutrition and almost permanent ill health. Approximately half of all cases of malnutrition, disease, and early death are caused by five or six specific illnesses which can now be prevented or treated at very low cost.*

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- 2 That the principle of 'first call for children' - meaning that protection for the growing bodies and minds of the young ought to have a first call on societies' resources - should become an accepted ethic of a new world order.

*Fact: In many nations of the developing world, the lack of this principle has meant that the debt crisis of the 1980s has been translated into rising levels of child malnutrition and falling levels of school enrolment. In many nations of the industrialized world, the lack of this same principle has meant that the rising affluence of the 1980s has been accompanied by a sharp increase in the proportion of children living in poverty.*

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- 3 That if the issues of malnutrition, preventable disease, and widespread illiteracy are not confronted as a new world order evolves, then it will be very much more difficult to reduce the rate of population growth and make the transition to environmentally sustainable development.

*Fact: Reducing child deaths gives parents more confidence in family planning. Most of the developing nations are now entering or approaching the stage at which further declines in child deaths are associated with much steeper declines in birth-rates. Doing what can now be done to protect the health and save the lives of millions of children will therefore help, not hinder, efforts to slow population growth.*

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- 4 That the growing consensus around the importance of market economic policies should be accompanied by a corresponding consensus on the responsibility of governments to guarantee basic investments in people.

*Fact: On average, only about 12% of government spending in the developing world is devoted to basic investments such as primary health care and primary education for the poor majority.*

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- 5 That increases in international aid should be based on a sustained and measurable commitment to meeting minimum human needs and for maintaining, in difficult times, the principle of a first call for children.

*Fact: Less than 10% of all aid is allocated to meeting the basic needs of the poor for health, primary education, clean water supply, and family planning.*

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**6** That international action on debt, aid, and trade should create an environment in which economic reform in the developing world can succeed in allowing its people to earn a decent living.

*Fact: The continuing debt crisis means that the poor world is now transferring \$50 billion a year to the rich nations. Protectionism in the rich world costs the poor world a further \$50 billion a year in lost exports.*

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**7** That a process of demilitarization should begin in the developing world and that, in step with that process, falling military expenditures in the industrialized nations should be linked to significant increases in international aid for development and for the resolution of common global problems.

*Fact: The amount now spent on the world's military exceeds the combined annual incomes of the poorest half of humanity. The goals of the World Summit for Children - including drastic reductions in malnutrition and disease and a basic education for all children - could be met by reallocating 10% of military expenditure in the developing world and 1% in the industrialized world.*

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**8** That the chains of Africa's debt be struck off and that the continent be given sufficient external support to allow internal reform to succeed in regenerating the momentum of development.

*Fact: Africa today is only managing to pay about one third of the interest due on its debts. Even this is absorbing a quarter of all its export earnings and costing the continent, each year, more than its total spending on the health and education of its people.*

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**9** That a new world order should oppose the apartheid of gender as vigorously as the apartheid of race.

*Fact: More than a million girls die each year simply because they are born female; the cause of death is the disease of discrimination.*

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**10** That the responsible planning of births is one of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving the quality of life on earth - both now and in the future - and that one of the greatest mistakes of our times is the failure to realise that potential.

*Fact: Over 50,000 illegal abortions are performed each day. Several million children die each year because they were born too soon after a previous birth or because they were born to mothers who were too young to give birth safely. Over 100,000 young women die every year because they do not have the knowledge or the means or the right to plan the number and spacing of their pregnancies. If all women could exercise that right, the rate of population growth would fall by approximately 30%.*

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THE STATE  
OF THE WORLD'S  
CHILDREN  
1992

James P. Grant

Agenda for a new order

Keeping the promise

First call for children

Fewer deaths, fewer births

Investing in people

Aid and need

The economic environment

Disarmament

Setting Africa free

The apartheid of gender

Planning births

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The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) is the number of children who die before the age of five for every 1,000 live births. It is one of the principal indicators used by UNICEF to measure levels of, and changes in, the well-being of children. The U5MR also governs the order in which countries are listed in the statistical tables annexed to the *State of the World's Children* report.

Figures given for the U5MR of particular countries, in both the text and statistical tables, are derived from data produced by the United Nations Population Division and the United Nations Statistical Office.

For most developing countries, estimates of under-five deaths are derived from periodic household surveys rather than from the comprehensive civil registration systems used in industrialized countries. The latest U5MR estimates for developing countries are based on surveys for which the data was collected in 1987-88. These surveys reflect the actual situation in the mid 1980s. The 1990 U5MR estimates which appear in the statistical tables of this report are the result of extrapolating these data on the basis of trends in the early 1980s or earlier. Any change in the trend during the second half of the 1980s (resulting from, for example, the reaching of the 80% immunization target, the spread of oral rehydration therapy, or the increasing prevalence of AIDS) is therefore not reflected in the 1990 under-five mortality estimates. This also explains why the U5MR data given in the statistical tables (which must be based on internationally comparable data), may differ from individual (and possibly more recent) national estimates. Efforts are now being made to provide more recent estimates of under-five death mortality rates for all countries.

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| <i>Introduction:</i><br>Agenda for a<br>new order | The political and economic changes of recent years have made it clear that a new world order is evolving. UNICEF submits ten propositions for the agenda of that new order - from the point of view of a world wide organization which comes into daily contact with some of humanity's most acute problems.<br><br><i>page 1</i>             |
| 1. Keeping the<br>promise                         | The 1990 <i>World Summit for Children</i> made a great promise to the children of the 1990s. It was a promise, among other things, to drastically reduce child deaths and child malnutrition, and to ensure that all children have at least a basic education, by the end of the century. That promise must now be kept.<br><br><i>page 5</i> |
| 2. First call<br>for children                     | Protection for the growing minds and bodies of children should have a first call on the resources of the adult world - and children should be able to count on that commitment in good times and in bad.<br><br><i>page 15</i>  |
| 3. Fewer deaths,<br>fewer births                  | The effort to protect the lives and the health of millions of the world's children is in synergy with, not opposition to, the effort to slow population growth.<br><br><i>page 21</i>   |
| 4. Investing<br>in people                         | Today's consensus on a 'market friendly' approach to development should be accompanied by a corresponding consensus on the need to guarantee basic investments in people and particularly in the health and education of children.<br><br><i>page 24</i>  |
| 5. Aid and need                                   | Increases in international aid should be based on a sustained and measurable commitment to meeting minimum human needs.<br><br><i>page 35</i>   |
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6. The economic environment	Action by the industrialized nations to lighten the burden of debt and to open markets is essential if economic reform in the developing world is to succeed in allowing its people to earn a decent living.	<i>page 40</i>
7. Disarmament	Demilitarization in the developing world, and reduced military spending in the industrialized world, should be linked to increases in the resources available for development and the resolution of common global problems.	<i>page 45</i>
8. Setting Africa free	Most of Africa's debts should be forgiven and internal economic reform should be given a chance to succeed by increased external support.	<i>page 48</i>
9. The apartheid of gender	A new world order should oppose the apartheid of gender as vigorously as the apartheid of race.	<i>page 57</i>
10. Planning births	The well informed planning of births is one of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving the quality of life on earth.	<i>page 58</i>
Statistical tables	Basic indicators, nutrition, health, education, demographic indicators, economic indicators, women, less populous countries, the rate of progress.	<i>page 69</i>

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## Agenda for a new order

This report is issued at a time when the world order which has dominated the political and economic life of the 20th century is visibly dying. It is offered, from the particular perspective of UNICEF's experience in working with some of humanity's most acute problems, as a contribution to the debate on the new world order which is struggling to be born.

In the blink of an historical eye, the world has witnessed the beginning of the end for apartheid, the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe, the ending of the 40-year cold war, the beginning of significant reductions in arms expenditures, the virtual abandonment of the idea of state economic monopoly, the narrowing of ideological divides, the strengthening of the economic heartbeat of Asia, the turn away from dictatorship in virtually every republic of Latin America, and a new impulse towards democracy, pluralism, and economic reform in Africa.

The period of history that is most difficult to understand is always one's own, but the suddenness and scale of these changes, in a landscape previously considered glacial in its rate of progress, suggests that we are

living through a revolution. If so, it is a revolution significantly different from revolutions past. It is different, first of all, in that its principal agent is not violence but communication. And as ends are often inherent in means, it is also different in that it is a revolution which appears to be transferring power not to the few but to the many.

These are profound differences in the process of historical change, differences which give a new meaning to the idea of the communications revolution. For in the many countries where political and economic change is now unfolding, it is the power of communication that is allowing the judgements, provoking the comparisons, heightening the frustrations and posing the alternatives. After years of somewhat empty talk about the global village, it is as if the first village meeting were being held and people were voting almost unanimously to reject the political and economic autocracies which have deprived them of choice without meeting their needs.

There have been unpleasant reminders of the vulnerability of this process of change, but recent events in the Soviet Union, and

particularly on the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg in August of 1991, have sent a message of courage to peoples all over the world. In many capital cities today, there is an almost tangible sense that some vital balance may be shifting, that the contours of the possible may be changing, that people are finding a new confidence in their own rights and abilities to participate in the management of their own affairs. And it may also be, although it should be said only tentatively, that there is a new nervousness, a new hesitancy, among those who might be tempted to suppress those rights.

This advance for democracy is not exclusively led by, or confined to, Eastern and Central Europe. Ten years ago, most of the 22 republics of Central and South America were gripped by dictatorships; today, all but one have an elected government. It also appears that Africa may now be embarked on a gradual political transformation. The shock waves from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are reverberating through that continent with a particular resonance because they are coinciding with the sudden and painful realization of the moral and financial inadequacies of many of its existing economic and political systems. Simultaneously, the ending of the cold war is raising new hopes that the destinies of many nations in Africa, and in other parts of the developing world, may now be detached from the super-power rivalries which have so distorted international relationships in the post-war era. Those rivalries have had much to do with the over-militarization of the developing world and with the perpetuation of the kind of regimes which, in so many countries and for so many decades, have denied human rights and crushed human hopes.

Despite an international agenda that is crowded with pressing political, economic, and environmental problems, there is therefore more cause for hope on the human horizon than perhaps at any other time in this century. It may be that the years ahead will show such optimism not to have been justified; but what is not in doubt is that a new order is emerging in our times.

## **A new order for children**

This report seeks to contribute to the agenda of that new order from the perspective of a worldwide organization which comes into daily contact with some of the greatest failings of the old.

Those failings were the central issue of the *World Summit for Children* held in late September of 1990 at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The timing of the *Summit*, which brought together 159 nations, more than 70 of them represented by their Presidents or Prime Ministers, could not have been more propitious. The outcome - an agreed programme for, among other things, ending mass malnutrition, preventable disease, and widespread illiteracy before the end of the decade - amounted to a detailed description of a new order for the world's children (panel 1). The emergence of this agreement, at a time when the existing world order is rapidly changing, means that there is today a better chance than ever before of finding a place on the world's political agenda for the rights of children and for meeting the minimum needs of all families.

It is therefore obligatory, at this time, for all individuals and organizations charged

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with responsibility for such issues to enter as fully as possible into the debates that lie ahead. For a new page in world history is being turned, and if the needs of the poorest quarter of mankind, and of the children who are the most vulnerable of all, are again relegated to the footnotes of that page, then the new world order which is written there will be neither worthy of its times nor capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

Amid the many voices and the many clamorous issues that will compete for priority in the debates to come, this year's *State of the World's Children* report is therefore a plea for the inclusion of the issues which tend to be ignored and the voices which are normally silent. It is a plea, particularly, for the inclusion of those voices silenced by poverty and illiteracy, for those who are silenced by the effects of malnutrition and preventable disease, for those who are silenced by being born female, and for those many millions who are silenced by death almost before their lives have begun.

Specifically, the report submits 10 propositions for the consideration of all those - be they heads of state or members of the public - who are concerned to become involved in the discussion of the new world order which will evolve over the next few years. Taken together, they add up to a proposal that ending the absolute poverty of one quarter of mankind - the more than one billion people who still live and die with preventable hunger, disease, and illiteracy - should rank alongside the issues of preserving the peace and protecting the environment as priority items on the agenda of that new world order.

Contrary to widely held opinion, this great cause is far from being hopeless. We have already travelled three quarters of the way towards a world in which every man, woman, and child has adequate food, clean water, basic health care, and at least a primary education. And there is no technological or financial barrier to prevent the completion of that journey in our times.

Reaching these age-old goals is not a discrete cause and does not stand as a distraction from the new challenges of our times. Creating the conditions in which people can meet their own and their families needs for adequate nutrition, health care and education is an essential underpinning of efforts to meet those new challenges. As that investment liberates people's productivity, so it helps to stimulate economic growth; as it includes rather than excludes people from political and economic life, so it helps to nurture the democratic process; as it gives people the confidence and the means to reduce family size, so it helps to slow population growth; and as it gives the poor a stake in the future, so it helps to safeguard the environment.

For almost half a century, the world has been distracted from these great tasks by military conflict and ideological division. War, and the threat of war, have diverted our physical and financial resources, our science and technology, our ingenuity and imagination, and our human capacity and concern. That threat is receding. The time has therefore come for the world to recommit itself to the task of ending the age-old evils of absolute poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, and preventable disease and to build again towards a new world order which will reflect mankind's brightest hopes rather than its darkest fears.

## **The ten propositions:**

1 *That the promise of the World Summit for Children should be kept and that a new world order should bring an end to malnutrition, preventable disease, and illiteracy among so many millions of the world's children.*

2 *That the principle of 'first call for children' - meaning that protection for the growing bodies and minds of the young ought to have a first call on societies' resources - should become an accepted ethic of a new world order.*

3 *That if the issues of malnutrition, preventable disease, and widespread illiteracy, are not confronted as a new world order evolves, then it will be very much more difficult to reduce the rate of population growth and make the transition to environmentally sustainable development.*

4 *That the growing consensus around the importance of market economic policies should be accompanied by a corresponding consensus on the responsibility of governments to guarantee basic investments in people.*

5 *That increases in international aid should be based on a sustained and measurable commitment to meeting minimum human needs and for maintaining, in difficult times, the principle of a first call for children.*

6 *That international action on debt, aid, and trade should create an environment in which economic reform in the developing world can succeed in allowing its people to earn a decent living.*

7 *That a process of demilitarization should begin in the developing world and that, in step with that process, falling military expenditures in the industrialized nations should be linked to significant increases in international aid for development and for the resolution of common global problems.*

8 *That the chains of Africa's debt be struck off and that the continent be given sufficient external support to allow internal reform to succeed in regenerating the momentum of development.*

9 *That a new world order should oppose the apartheid of gender as vigorously as the apartheid of race.*

10 *That the responsible planning of births is one of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving the quality of life on earth - both now and in the future - and that one of the greatest mistakes of our times is the failure to realise that potential.*



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# Keeping the promise

Proposition: *That the promise of the World Summit for Children should be kept and that a new world order should bring an end to malnutrition, preventable disease, and illiteracy among so many millions of the world's children.*

A quarter of a million of the world's young children are dying every week,<sup>1</sup> and millions more are surviving in the half-life of malnutrition and almost permanent ill health.

This is not a threatened tragedy or an impending crisis. It happened today. It will happen again tomorrow. And by any objective standard of scale or severity, this issue would rank in importance with any on the human agenda. But in practice, such problems have had little purchase on priority because they are primarily the problems of the poor and the powerless.

The children who are the victims of preventable malnutrition, disease, and illiteracy are being most shamefully failed by the present world order. But in the last two years, that failure has begun to feature on the political agenda in a way that is unprecedented in UNICEF's 40-year history.

The most important signal of that new priority was the convening of the *World Summit for Children* on 29 and 30 September, 1990. Over those two days, the largest ever gathering of heads of state met to consider the possibility of bringing to an end, in our times, the long-running tragedy described in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

## Closing the gap

The *Summit* met at a point when it was becoming clear that one of the greatest

humanitarian goals of this century - immunizing 80% of the world's children against six major diseases by the end of 1990 - was going to be met (panel 3). That achievement is now saving the lives of over 3 million children each year.<sup>2</sup> It has also demonstrated, after a decade-long effort, that the world now has the outreach capacity to bridge the gap between mass-scale problems and inexpensive solutions.

Influenced by that example, the *Summit* concluded with a commitment,<sup>3</sup> now signed by more than one hundred and twenty heads of state, to begin applying today's accumulated knowledge and inexpensive techniques to a range of basic problems facing the world's children (panel 1).

The immunization achievement had also shown the usefulness of having a quantifiable target as a focus for national efforts and international support. The *Summit* therefore formulated its commitments as a range of specific goals which all nations would strive to achieve by the end of this century. Those basic goals, set out in full on page 61, include: a reduction of child death rates by at least one third (fig. 1); a halving of maternal mortality rates; a halving of severe and moderate malnutrition among the under-fives (fig. 2); 90% immunization coverage (panel 13); a 95% fall in deaths from measles; an end to polio and tetanus; clean water and safe sanitation for all families; a basic education for all children and completion of primary school for at least 80%; the availability, to all couples, of family planning services; and observance by all nations of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

These goals were arrived at by a process of consultation between governments and