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QUESTION OF A CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Written statement submitted by Jaycees International, a non-governmental  
organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

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To have enterprising young people, we need to draw up a convention not only on the rights but also on the duties of the child.

We must never forget that tomorrow's world is being built today and that the way our children live will depend on the spiritual heritage, means of existence and living environment that we leave them.

To speak of young people and children in relation to their rights or duties, their environment and society, it is first necessary to examine the behaviour of adults and the value they attach to the human person.

The adjustment of young people to the social and technological environment in which they live or will live is contingent on respect for youth. The fact of not regarding young people as underdeveloped adults and understanding their feelings, lack of experience and sense of justice already gives them confidence in their surroundings. Imparting a sense of humanity and solidarity by showing an example will enable them to adjust to a life which is increasingly community-oriented.

The ability to live in harmony with others is the major determining factor in the future role of young people and children in all continents as far as the promotion and protection of the rights and duties of children are concerned, for all our social structures will be subjected to strong economic pressures in coming years.

We should ready young people for this situation by stimulating the community consciousness which tomorrow will enable them to assume their social responsibilities. This does not mean snuffing out individuality or sacrificing the individual to the cult of the group, but, rather, coming to a realization that, in a society where basic physical and security needs are provided for, the primary requirements are belonging and self-fulfilment. Our society has evolved, and the human needs which yesterday were regarded as least important are those which man is most anxious to fulfil today.

Tomorrow's society will have to be based on a spirit of enterprise and a new form of civic responsibility, both of which are inconceivable without fulfilled and self-assured individuals.

A spirit of enterprise, since new social relationships are possible and an emerging new economy awaits us.

A spirit of enterprise for all those who want to go on living freely in a democratic society.

A new form of civic responsibility involving a charter for the rights of the child but also an activism based on deeds and solidarity, the promotion of participatory democracy and the reduction of inequalities of all kinds.

Nowadays, however, our society and living environment are formed not just by men but also by a mass of technological aids. The world view of the 12 year-old who marvelled at a steam engine cannot be the same as that of his counterpart who mechanically puts his calculator back into his satchel. Technology is not the plus it once was, and technological achievements have come to be accepted as routine.

A convention on the rights of the child must take account of the world's need for free men capable of mastering a technological environment. We must enable each individual to achieve the vital balance between his family, professional and social life, bearing in mind the demographic and geographical peculiarities of each country.

Freedom and responsibility must first be expressed in the setting of family relationships, and family policy must primarily be a reflection of our recognition that the child is a new asset who must be protected.

Our future life-style will depend on our ability to make economic changes. Consequently, without neglecting the common elements of our life in society, the school must cease to be an instrument for reproducing the values of the past and become an institution for training enterprising, imaginative and creative people.

It is our desire for solidarity that will prevent society from splitting apart, but it must be given a moral and cultural base because mankind is perpetuated by the maintenance of spiritual values.

It is not suggested that we should identify an ideal model for tomorrow's man but, rather, that we should try to muster the widest possible support for certain proposals designed to ensure that every individual is fulfilled, open to the world, aware of his environment and ready to work for his community.

Under the universal theme of our Organization, "Jaycees - Young People for World Peace", with the subtheme "Let us develop youth", we undertake youth activities: The best youth leader - Ambassador of youth - Choosing an occupation - Anti-drug campaign - Youth Parliament/Council - Public speaking competition for young people - Young people and employment - Peace Symposium.

The Jaycees declare themselves in favour of genuine peace and organize local programmes for youth accordingly.

The first event of our movement is the organization by Jaycees International of the first international model simulating the United Nations General Assembly. The aim of this event is to discuss and draw up a resolution concerning the rights of the child for submission to the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-third session in 1989, the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

The promotion and protection of the rights of the child require support by the largest possible number of countries for various proposals designed to ensure that every child is fulfilled, open to the world, aware of his environment and ready to work for his community in a spirit of total peace, an ambition within the reach of those who have faith in man and his future.