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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Forty-fifth session  
Item 13 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF A CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Note by the Secretariat

The attention of the Commission is drawn to the attached concerning the Conclusions and Recommendations of the meeting of parliamentarians from Central America on the subject "Rights of the child, towards peace and development in Central America", organized by the Congress of Guatemala in co-operation with UNICEF and sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Annex I

MEETING OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
(Guatemala City, 1 - 3 December 1988)

A Workshop on the subject "Rights of the child - towards peace and development in Central America" was held in Guatemala City from 1 to 3 December 1988. The Workshop was organized by the Congress of Guatemala in co-operation with UNICEF and was sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union\*. Members of Parliament from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua took part.

His Excellency Roberto Carpió Nicolle, Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala, solemnly opened the Workshop and Mrs. Raquel Blandón de Cerezo, First Lady of the Republic, spoke at the inaugural meeting. For three days, parliamentarians from the five Central American countries worked with UNICEF experts and observers from international organizations to draft the following text which was adopted unanimously:

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We, parliamentarians from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, participants of the Meeting of Central American parliamentarians on the Rights of the Child, held in Guatemala City between 1 and 3 December 1988, have agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations.

General considerations:

Considering that the situation of the child in Central America is a reflection of the social, economic and political conditions prevailing in this region and that childrens' conditions of health, education and development have thus been particularly affected,

Concerned with the infant mortality rates in Central America which continue to be unacceptably high, causing the death of 100,000 children per year in the region from preventable causes such as malnutrition, diarrhea, measles, whooping cough and tuberculosis,

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\*: There are currently 110 national Parliaments represented in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of which the European Parliament is an Associate Member.

Also deeply concerned that over 50 per cent of the children who survive the first 5 years, live in extreme poverty, without having their basic needs met (food, housing, clothes) and without having any access to public services such as health, education, sanitation and other basic services which, in addition to the consequences of armed violence, constitute an inadmissible waste of valuable resources which will not be available in the future for the peaceful development of the region,

Concerned by the fact that armed violence affects mostly and increasingly women and children,

Recognizing the important role of Central American women in ensuring the child's survival and health, and the fact that their education and health are, thus, directly linked with the child's well-being,

Aware that peace is the essential condition for the survival and the full development of children, who are in turn the bridge for peace in Central America,

Reaffirm the need for an effective implementation of the Esquipulas II Agreement, which grants high priority to the problems of children, as a means of achieving a firm and long-lasting peace as well as development in Central America,

Recognize the initiative undertaken by the Central American First Ladies, who met in Costa Rica in September 1988, in the Central American Conference on Care of Children Affected by Violence, and are happy to note its recommendations, in particular the creation of a Central American Commission for the Care of Children Affected by Armed Violence,

Also take due note of the interest expressed by the international community with regard to the region's problems and are aware that its support and solidarity are absolutely essential to achieve its goals,

Further recognize the urgent need for the important programmes for the child, particularly the global awareness campaign of the United Nations Fund for the Child (UNICEF), in confronting the "silent emergency" of 15 million avoidable child deaths each year,

Consider that this Meeting of parliamentarians is proof that the parliamentarians of the region are willing and able to meet and accomplish fruitful work, as well as of the need for an appropriate forum, such as a Central American Parliament, where problems of the region and matters relating to its economic and social development could be debated, and also consider that such a Parliament would be the ideal forum for evaluating the follow-up of this meeting and encouraging future action,

Conscious that as parliamentarians, representatives of the people, promoters of legal protection, and guardians of national Constitutions, we have a special responsibility to support family and community efforts in protecting our children.

Plan of action:

In view of the above, the participants recommend the following Plan of Action:

1. To create, within the legal framework of each country, a parliamentary body - a committee, a sub-committee or any other entity - for child protection, with the commitment that such a body would be operational within a year;
2. To review present national legislation and adopt new legal measures aimed at ensuring a better and more wide-spread protection of children, especially those in particularly difficult circumstances;
3. To expand the curriculum of primary and secondary education so as to include health education and, in particular, the basic elements of child survival;
4. To promote educational projects aimed at peace and respect of human rights;
5. To encourage each of the Central American countries to develop and/or to continue developing an effective programme primarily aimed at health care which would include operational aspects such as:
  - Universal immunization aimed at reaching the target set for 1990;
  - Oral Rehydration Therapy;
  - Maternal breast feeding;
  - Growth and development monitoring (establishing the use of control records);
6. To promote action aimed at literacy training and functional education for women (instruction related to diseases);
7. To promote health measures for women such as: pregnancy check-ups and improved nutrition, (reduction of anemia, etc.), as well as other measures aimed at improving their emotional well-being;
8. To take measures to improve the laws and, if necessary, promote adequate action to prevent children from being victims of exploitation, especially in processes of adoption;
9. To appeal to the member States of the United Nations promptly to finalize the preliminary draft Convention on the Rights of the Child, work for its adoption by the United Nations' General Assembly in 1989 and speed up its subsequent ratification by each Central American country;
10. To expedite the ratification process of the two Additional Protocols of 1977 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions concerning the protection of victims of international and non-international armed conflicts;

11. To promote, within Central America, the concept of "Children as a Zone of Peace", to receive special protection from all parties engaged in armed conflicts;
12. To ensure that the budgetary resources for health, education, nutrition, drinking water provision and sanitation be maintained or increased in relation to other non-productive expenses;
13. To guarantee that the economic, political and social adjustment measures imply an adjustment with a human face and guide development, according to the internal and external possibilities of each country;
14. To call upon the donor communities to support these initiatives at regional, national and local levels;
15. To support the creation of a "Central American Fund for Technical and Financial Co-operation for Care of Children Affected by Armed Violence", and to call upon the international community to help with its funding and implementation, and in particular, Spain, to play the role of an intermediary;
16. To increase efforts to speed up, with the support of competent international organizations, the repatriation of war-displaced children and their families to their country or place of origin, under conditions of absolute respect for their fundamental rights;
17. To give priority to preventive aspects regarding street children;
18. To promote, especially through massive and permanent campaigns, a more humane treatment of street children;
19. To ensure better living conditions for street children and young single mothers, providing them with better access to health, food, housing and educational services;
20. To promote and support the efforts of public and private institutions and associations dedicated to dealing with street childrens' problems;
21. To ensure the respect of culture and traditions of youngsters of indigenous communities and peoples as an indispensable element for their adequate development;
22. To promote the creation of a national and Central American "Grand Alliance", including all sectors of the society, in order to turn them into promoters and defenders of children, as well as into collaborators in all programmes benefiting children.

Follow-up measures:

We, the participating members of the Central American Parliaments, commit ourselves to:

1. Submit the conclusions of this Meeting to our respective Parliaments and to actively promote their effective implementation;
2. Give wide publicity, in each of our countries, to these conclusions and channel them to the media, as well as to the official institutions, non-governmental organizations and charitable child protection associations;
3. Facilitate contacts between our Parliaments and UNICEF representatives in order to promote the implementation of the recommendations adopted;
4. Further develop the contacts established in this Meeting, exchanging, through National IPU Groups, information regarding steps taken and results obtained, and also transmit this information to UNICEF and the Office of the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union;
5. Promote, among Central American countries, the development of the exchange of information, experience, specialized knowledge, and material resources which would allow better care and development of children in Central America.

Word of thanks:

We are grateful to UNICEF and to the experts from various international organizations for their co-operation, to special guests for their attendance, and to IPU for its support in the holding of this Meeting. We would also like to express our special thanks to the National Group and Authorities of Guatemala for their interest and warm hospitality, and urge the aforementioned organizations to continue providing their valuable support to the cause of peace, democracy and development of Central America.