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QUESTION OF A CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Written statement submitted by the International Movement A.T.D. Fourth World,  
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).

[23 February 1983]

The International Year of the Child, 1979, highlighted the dramatic situation of children from the most deprived sectors of communities throughout the world, and the need to increase the various forms of development aid and solidarity among peoples and among different social classes.

Since 1979, however, all evidence clearly points to the fact that international - and in many cases national - solidarity has declined.

It is officially recognised that the economic recession is worsening, that it affects countries at all stages of development, and that the development process has virtually halted in all parts of the world. Practically speaking, the need to survive has overtaken the wish to develop, and has become the foremost priority in the least privileged developing countries. It has been officially recognised that the international development strategy for this decade is doomed to fail.

At the same time, it is recognised that there is justified concern regarding the declining will to maintain the level of international co-operation needed to reach constructive solutions to current problems. At present, there is a growing wave of protectionism and the emergence of a hardening attitude with regard to aid policies. As a result, the level of development aid through multilateral channels has already diminished in disquieting proportions. In these circumstances, it should be stressed that there is not only protectionism on the part of nations - i.e. by the industrialized nations vis-à-vis the developing countries. Protectionism also exists on the part of certain population groups or sectors towards the most deprived of their respective countries.

In this officially recognised situation of increasing restrictions on the world economy and on that of individual nations, and of a decline in international and national solidarity, the de facto neglect of millions of the world's most deprived children is more and more alarming.

Consequently, it is absolutely necessary that efforts directed towards the practical implementation of the rights of the child focus first and foremost on the least privileged, since this will automatically improve protection from all forms of inequality for all children. The most deprived children must be protected from lack of interest and virtual abandonment at all levels; only in this way will concern for each and every child be ensured. The Convention on the Rights of the Child should be able to provide the appropriate guarantees to this end. For history demonstrates that if there is no explicit will to give priority to the most deprived children, such priority will not be effectively granted. In addition, experience has proved that fundamental rights are never absolutely respected once for all, nor are they granted on an equal basis and without excluding people.

These actual facts being stated, the International Movement ATD Fourth World has confidence in the willingness of national statutory and non-governmental organizations to support this request for a more precise definition of intent to be incorporated in the statement of two basic principles:

- the need to give absolute priority to the most deprived children in implementing the Rights of the Child;
- the need to institute the means to carry out the continuous and public evaluation of efforts made to implement the Rights of the Child, with special regard to the situation of the most deprived children.

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These two principles could be incorporated in the introductory statement of the Convention, as follows:

"The States parties to the Convention shall ensure in particular that the rights of the child contained therein are without exception implemented with regard to the most deprived children."

"The States parties to the Convention shall ensure that ways and means are instituted to evaluate continuously, publicly and compulsorily all pertinent legislation, measures and institutions towards children with regard to the egalitarian nature of the implementation, the proper functioning and the effective results of the principles contained in the present Convention."