

U.N. Special Session on Children



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Newsletter

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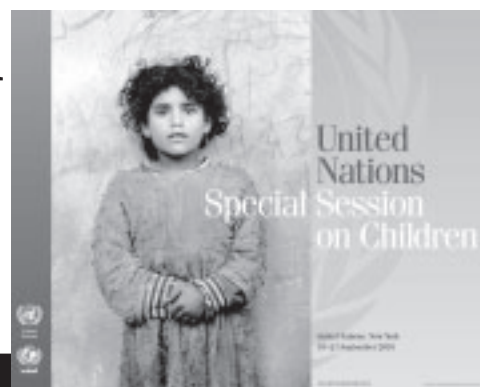


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RECORD NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND HEADS OF STATE AND/OR GOVERNMENT AT UPCOMING SPECIAL SESSION

More than 300 children and young people under the age of 18 have registered so far to take part in the landmark United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, from 19 to 21 September 2001. 133 of them will be part of Government delegations (from 72 countries), 178 will be members of accredited NGO delegations from all around the world. More are expected to sign up in the coming weeks.

This is the first time such large numbers of young people will actively participate in deliberations at a major U.N. conference – a truly historic breakthrough. That will form an intriguing and youthful counterpoint to about **80 Heads of State and/or Government** that have so far committed to attending.

It will be the highest number of such leaders ever to attend a conference on children and one of the largest gatherings of world leaders in history.

The children's attendance, along with the expected participation of **more than 1,000 representatives from child-focused Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** from around the world, promises to broaden the meeting far beyond the traditional core of official government representatives.



Credit: UNICEF/5248/Nicole Toutoumji

"It may seem like common sense to invite young people to a conference completely dedicated to their well-being. But this is a radical change for such high-level meetings. Children will literally be rubbing shoulders with presidents and prime ministers. They will have a chance to voice their concerns and influence the debate." Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

WHAT DOES THE SPECIAL SESSION HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

The Special Session has two main objectives:

- To review the progress made since the World Summit for Children in 1990, when specific goals were set for the year 2000;
- To renew commitment to reach the outstanding goals and ensure support for further action for children over the coming decade;

The outcome of the Special Session, **"A World Fit for Children"**, will include a Declaration and a Plan of Action for the next ten years. The document has been discussed and negotiated in the last year at the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session.

The preparation of this document has been informed by the report of the U.N. Secretary-General **"We the Children"** which reviews the progress made over the past decade in fulfilling the goals set at the 1990 World Summit for Children in the World Declaration and Plan of Action.

The report assesses the decade's achievements and its setbacks, highlights best practices and lessons learned for the future, describes the obstacles to progress, and makes recommendations for further action. An accompanying 'Statistical Review' presents the most recent data on children's rights and well-being, based on an exhaustive data from 150 countries.

Both documents are available in English at the UNICEF web site (www.unicef.org/specialsession). French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian versions are also available (see web addresses on page 8).

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PROGRAMME OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

Following the opening ceremony on the morning of 19 September, the official programme will divide into three major sections:

DEBATE

The Debate in the General Assembly Hall will include statements by heads of official delegations, heads of UN entities, and a limited number of NGOs.

AD HOC COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

UN entities, regional organisations and – time permitting – a limited number of NGOs can use the Ad Hoc Com-

mittee of the Whole as an opportunity to share their views on children's issues.

ROUND TABLES

Three separate round tables will discuss one overall theme: **“Renewal of commitment and future action for children in the next decade”**. The format will be as interactive as possible, given the limited amount of time available. Each round table will have two co-chairs, as follows: *Round table 1* – H.E. Mr.

Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, H.E. Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania; *Round table 2* – H.E. Mr. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, H.E. Mr. Alfonso Portillo, President of the Republic of Guatemala; *Round table 3* – H.E. Mr. Kim Dae-jung, President of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Mr. Frederick Chiluba, President of Zambia. Each round table will have a maximum of 71 participants. Two children will deliver opening addresses in each Round table.

“New challenges and the “unfinished business” of the World Summit warrant a new commitment from our leaders ... a new commitment that will engage all members of society to meet the basic needs of children and support the realisation of their rights”.

Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session on Children

SIDE EVENTS

Many events will take place around the Special Session, organised by governments, UN entities, international and national NGOs.

Major events being planned include:

- A Children's Forum
- A First Spouses Forum
- Voices and Visions: a celebration of leadership for children
- Public-Private Partnership Dialogue
- Parliamentarians Forum on Children
- Meeting of leadership from major religions
- Signature and ratification of human rights treaties for children
- Workshops and conferences organised by UN entities and NGOs on issues pertaining to child health, nutrition, sanitation, basic education, HIV/AIDS and protection of child rights.

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE SPECIAL SESSION

The genuine participation of children and young people in the Special Session is one of the things that makes it unique. Their dynamic contribution to the preparatory process demonstrated their need for a central role in the Special Session itself. As those with the greatest stake in the success of the Special Session, children and young people will take part in many of its most important events:

- Children will be included in many Government and NGO delegation throughout the Special Session;
- Child delegates from both official and NGOs delegations will take part in the Children's Forum (16-18 September);
- Two child delegates from the Children's Forum will address the plenary of the Special Session;
- Two children or young people will address each of the three official round tables;
- Children and young people will address the First Spouses Forum (20 September);
- Other child-centred events will be organised by UNICEF and NGOs, including web debates, discussion groups and media workshops;
- Children will be encouraged to participate in other events organised by governments, UN agencies and NGOs.

Children's Forum: 16 to 18 September

Children and young people who have taken part in the preparatory process for the Special Session have made two things very clear: they want to be treated as partners and they want their views taken seriously by the adult delegates. In addition, they want to be able to meet in their own space, their own time and in their own style. That is why UNICEF, in collaboration with other UN agencies, and with NGOs and children's groups, is supporting a three-day Children's Fo-

rum from 16 to 18 September. The Forum, taking place in New York right before the Special Session, will give the under-18s who are part of the official government as well as NGO delegations the chance to share their ideas before the Session actually begins.

Purpose of the Forum: The Children's Forum will celebrate children's rights and will give participants the chance to explore the issues highlighted in the outcome document of the Special Session, "**A World Fit for Children**". They will discuss ways in which they, as children and young people, can be actively involved in the implementation and monitoring of the goals outlined in the outcome document. And they will identify constructive ways in which they can influence their governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other decision-makers as they design programmes to benefit children.

Expected outcome: The outcome of the Children's Forum will be presented at the plenary of the Special Session by at least two child delegates selected by the Forum itself. This will be the first time in the history of the UN that children will address the General Assembly.

Child participation

Children and young people who will not be at the Special Session can still take part, through UNICEF's **Voices of Youth** web site. By logging on at www.unicef.org/voy, they can share their ideas on how to build a world fit for children. Their comments will be shared with participants at the Children's Forum.

Children and young people who do not have access to the internet can also send their views by mail or fax, to the Children Participation Unit in UNICEF (see address page 8).

NGO PARTICIPATION IN THE SPECIAL SESSION

NGOs will be in New York, in their hundreds to attend the Special Session. The Session represents a unique opportunity for civil society to take part in a governmental process on the universal issue of child rights at every level – national, regional and global. As part of the process leading up to the Special Session, NGOs have mobilised themselves around child rights issues, formed partnerships in the Global Movement for Children, lobbied governments and actively contributed to the draft outcome document.

The NGO community, spearheaded by the NGO Steering Committee, is organising a number of events in collaboration with UNICEF to highlight the substantive work of NGOs around the Special Session:

- **Reception (18 September):** Welcoming reception for all NGOs attending the special session. Government delegates and special guests will be invited;
- **Exhibition (19 to 21 September):** The NGO exhibition will highlight the diverse work of NGOs. It is expected to be a showcase of NGO best practices and challenges, with strong emphasis on NGOs from the developing world;
- **NGO plenary session (19-21 September):** This interactive dialogue on "how to advance the goals of the special

session" will take place from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. every day during the Special Session. NGOs will review and discuss the themes of the outcome document; regional approaches and the role of the under-18s in advancing the goals of the Special Session.

- **Other side events:** More than 100 side events will be organized by NGOs prior to, and during, the Special Session. For more information, visit the NGO Committee on UNICEF web site at <http://ngosatunicef.org>

SIGNING AND RATIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES FOR CHILDREN

The U.N. Treaty Section and UNICEF are encouraging governments to sign and/or ratify a range of human rights instruments for children during the Special Session. These include two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. First, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Second, the Optional Protocol outlawing the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Each Optional Protocol requires ten ratifications before it comes into force. It is UNICEF's goal to achieve these numbers by the end of the Special Session. A special event will take place to make this possible.

The U.N. and UNICEF are also inviting Member States to approve the Amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention – which would increase the number of members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18.

FIRST SPOUSES FORUM

The spouses of Heads of State that attend the Special Session on Children will hold their own forum to exchange ideas, experiences and best practices relating to the themes of the global *Say Yes for Children* campaign on 20 September.

The First Spouses' Forum will discuss the 10 principles and their capacity to promote, protect and fulfil child rights. The Forum, hosted by Mrs. Nane Annan and co-organised by



Credit: UNICEF/HQ94-1385/Philippines/Little

UNICEF, will also explore action that first spouses can take in their countries to sustain and build on the momentum generated by *Say Yes* and by the re-

lated Global Movement for Children. Many first spouses are actively involved in children's affairs at national and regional levels, and some have taken a leading role in the *Say Yes for Children* campaign.

SAY YES FOR CHILDREN

People from all walks of life and of all ages, in more than 100 countries, are celebrating *Say Yes for Children* – the global pledging campaign to mobilise mass public support for 10 principles for child well-being. Tens of millions, children and adults, are expected to cast their votes for the three principles they see as most important, promoting priority for children's rights on a national and global scale.

"The Special Session will indeed be a special moment in history – a time for world leaders to commit themselves to specific actions to help the children of the world. Say Yes for Children is an opportunity for all of us to show them the way, and to give visibility and a voice to the children who need it most." U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan

Children and young people, citizens, community leaders, and also heads of state, celebrities, NGOs, media are rallying around *Say Yes* by promoting the campaign, initiating dialogue and debate on children's rights, and by creating and strengthening partnerships for children.

Devised by a team of children's organisations, the 10 principles are:

- Leave No Child Out
- Put Children First
- Care for Every Child
- Fight HIV/AIDS
- Stop Harming and Exploiting Children
- Listen to Children
- Educate Every Child
- Protect Children from War
- Protect the Earth for Children
- Fight Poverty: Invest in Children

The results of the first phase of voting will be presented to world leaders at the Special Session. People can pledge support for the 10 principles online at www.gmfc.org, or by e-mail to pledge@netaid.org



Credit: UNICEF/HQ00-0283/South Africa/Giacomo Pirozzi

"Here is an opportunity to let leaders throughout the world know that we expect them to act, sooner rather than later, to ensure the rights of every child... And to each one of you who is hearing about this campaign, I remind you of your own power and obligation to make the world a better place for children." Nelson Mandela

VOICES AND VISIONS

Voices and Visions, a concert to celebrate leadership for children, will be held 20 September in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. The concert will combine song and spoken word to tell the unique story of the Global Movement for Children, the growing strength of leadership for children world-wide, and the *Say Yes for Children* campaign.

Fifty children aged 4 to 17 will perform – many from the Brooklyn Youth Chorus and the Children's Theatre Company. The concert will honour organisations and individuals that have made an outstanding contribution to child rights and will end with a presentation of the first-phase results of *Say Yes* to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel, President Kim Dae-jung and other prominent leaders.

REGIONAL PREPARATIONS

Many regional events have taken place since the previous issue of the Newsletter, all of them adding to the momentum for the Special Session.

IN AFRICA...

Summit of the Organisation of the African Unity establishes a "Committee on the Rights and Welfare of Children"

Zambia, 9-11 July 2001

The 37th OAU Summit held in Lusaka in July was not only a significant milestone for Africa, making the formal end of the OAU and the birth of the African Union in the

presence of 41 Heads of State and 7 Heads of Delegation. It was also an event where children's issues dominated, with many countries making eloquent and passionate calls for the protection of children and greater investment in their future.

The Secretary General of the OAU reported on the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children and the "African Common Position" adopted in Cairo in May 2001 gave rise to a lively and constructive debate.

The Summit made a major breakthrough by deciding to

establish a Committee on the Rights and Welfare of Children and agreeing that Member States should report to this Committee every two years on their progress in child rights and well-being. The 11 members of the Committee were elected.

A resolution, initiated by the Heads of State themselves, urged countries that have not yet ratified the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child to do so.



Credit: UNICEF/HQ96-1166/Zambia/Giacomo Pirozzi

World Youth Forum adopts the “Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy”

Senegal, 5-10 August 2001

The World Youth Forum of the UN System brought youth groups and representatives of UN agencies together for five days of debate in Senegal in early August. The Forum, hosted by the Government of Senegal, aimed to support the empowerment of youth to participate more effectively in every aspect of society, and adopted the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy. Among its recommendations, the Strategy called for the establishment of an Education and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) fund to promote North-South and South-South co-operation.

Other recommendations addressed youth concerns in 10 areas: education and information and communications technology, employment, health and population, hunger poverty and debt, environment and human settlements, social integration, culture and peace, youth policy, participation and rights, young women and girls, and youth, sports and leisure. Douty Lady, a participant from Togo, commented on the importance of education, saying: *“The education of children is a right, not a privilege. For the young women and girls of Africa, we demand that efforts be made to prioritise their education by making their studies free.”*

The Dakar Strategy, which also outlines the responsibilities of youth, governments and civil society to combat HIV/AIDS, will be presented at the Special Session. (see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/forum/>)

Launch of Girls’ Education Movement

Kampala, Uganda, 15-17 August 2001

For the first time in history, girls from across Africa have taken the lead in the debate on the barriers that exclude girls from the education system. At the launch of the Girls Education Movement (GEM) in Uganda in mid-August, girls from across Africa sat down with Education ministers and prominent education experts to discuss ways to create girl-friendly education. The Movement recognises that girls’ education is one of the most effective development investments that a country can make and will focus on efforts to create girl-friendly schools and education systems.

The girls also prepared a GEM Platform for Action, which addresses safety and security, particularly in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; gender in the curriculum; the digital divide; excluded children; decentralisation and financing; as well as the best practices and models of excellence that can be promoted and shared throughout the African continent.

The launch was hosted by the Government of Uganda together with UNICEF, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), and girl delegates from across Africa.



Credit: UNICEF/HQ99-0121/Uganda/Giacomo Pirozzi

IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA...

An Arab World Fit for Children – Conference on the Rights of the Child

Egypt, 2-4 July 2001

The Arab High Level Conference on the Rights of the Child brought together some 150 delegates from all 22 member countries of the League of Arab States at the League’s headquarters in Cairo in July. The delegations, most of them led by ministers, included civil society representatives, experts, and 33 young people, who met separately before the conference in order to prepare themselves.

One Tunisian girl summarised the young people’s rec-

ommendations: “We say ‘No,’ to discrimination, and ‘Yes’ to equal rights and opportunities, to respecting other opinions but reserving the right to differ and be independent, ‘Yes’ to optimism and to Arab unity.”

The Conference concluded with the adoption of *An Arab World Fit for Children: Mechanisms for Joint Arab Action* and an *Arab Common Position*, in preparation for the region’s participation in the Special Session on Children.

The documents review the progress made for children in the region over the past decade and identify gaps and future challenges. They also cover key strategies for future action for children and establish follow-up mechanisms, such as plans for children from the League’s Ministerial Councils on Health, Education, Social Affairs and Information, an annual report on the State of Children in the Arab World, and greater collaboration with civil society.

It was also suggested that Childhood should be a standard agenda item for every future Arab Summit and that another Arab High Level Conference on Children should be convened after the Special Session. The Conference also declared 2002 the *Year of the Child in the Arab World*.

IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC...

Child Rights Award

Malaysia, 11 July 2001

The first Child Rights Award was launched in July by the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), the Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Association of Asia (CASBAA) and UNICEF. This is the first-ever regional award for television programming on child rights and recognises the important role that broadcasters play in the Global Movement for Children.



Children and Young People’s Forum

Laos PDR, 23-27 July 2001

Some 37 children and young people from 10 countries met at the East Asia Pacific Children and Young People’s Regional Forum in Vientiane, Laos PDR in July. The Forum selected young delegates for the Special Session and drew up guidelines for their involvement. The Forum was organised by the East Asian and Pacific Regional Committee for Children.

Those taking part in the Forum reviewed the Beijing Declaration and “A World Fit for Children”. Their joint recommendations urged National Action Plans to follow-up to the Special Session, saying: “*Together, we want governments, NGOs, children and young people to develop and implement the National Action Plan for children in each country ... We*

want more budget allocation for social services that benefit children, people and their families”.

The children also planned activities to follow-up on the Special Session, including the organisation of a third regional forum to be held in late 2001 or early 2002.

They emphasised their right to achieve their full human potential and enjoy the full range of human rights, identifying HIV/AIDS, disintegrating families, child trafficking and prostitution, school dropout and lack of birth registration as the main issues in the region. And they also suggested solutions to these problems, including the introduction of reproductive health education into the school curriculum, the banning of corporal and capital punishment and improvements in resource management.



Credit: Vientiane/Laos PDR/photo 01.jpg

IN SOUTH ASIA...

Symposium of Early Childhood Experts

Maldives, 2-4 July 2001

A three-day symposium on early child development in the Maldives in early July called for more support for early child development programmes. South Asian experts called for stronger advocacy for investment in integrated child development. They stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to children’s programmes to enhance the capacity of families and communities to provide good quality care in every area including health, nutrition and early learning. Participants also discussed the role parents, grandparents and other family members can play in the development of very young children.

The specific recommendations made at the symposium included the sharing of best practice through regional networks. Several examples were reviewed, including child development communication initiatives in Pakistan and Maldives, community-based child development in Nepal, improved home-based care for young children in Sri Lanka, and the Integrated Child Development Services of India. The symposium also recommended the creation of a regional early child development web site and the training of programme staff in the latest thinking on early child development and on its links to health and nutrition.

The meeting was convened by the Government of Maldives and UNICEF’s Regional Office for South Asia.

The Rawalpindi Call for Partnership and Action — South Asia Girl Child Symposium

Pakistan, 23-25 July

The South Asia Girl Child Symposium met in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in July to share examples of best practice at family and community levels and make recommendations for policies and actions to transform the lives of South Asian girls. The three-day Symposium was attended by 26 girls and 5 boys from six South Asian countries, who were full participants in the meeting alongside the adult delegates.

Some hard questions were posed to participants: *“Is it not a widespread climate of impunity that allows those who traffic girls, who exploit their labour and their bodies, who throw acid, who murder them in the name of honour, to get away with it while society looks the other way? Is it not the norms or legislation that deny women property rights, rights of inheritance, the right to move as they wish, to participate in decisions that affect their lives? Should not investment in health care and education, especially for girls and women, be one of our highest priorities? Too often, it is one of the lowest.”*

The young delegates at the Symposium prepared the *Rawalpindi Call for Partnership and Action* adopted by all participants. The call highlights the need to include girls as equal partners in development, empowering them to take part in decision-making. It also focuses on such critical concerns as equal care in the family, access to quality health services and ending harmful practices. It emphasises education, calling for fulfilment of the right to good quality education, free and compulsory primary education and gender sensitive school curricula.

The central role of young people in the Symposium demonstrated their ability to play a key role in tackling gender discrimination, violence and abuse to create an environment of equal opportunities for girls and boys. They proved that they can assess their own situation and organised themselves to bring about positive change.

The Symposium was organised by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, the Pakistan UNICEF Country Office and the Government of Pakistan.



Credit: P4#3671-31A-Maldives

IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA...

Generation in Jeopardy

Sweden, 18-20 June 2001

Prominent members of parliament, business leaders, representatives of civil society, academia and the media – and young people themselves — from 27 countries gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, in mid-June to discuss the situation of children and youth in the region and to help build a social movement to improve their lives.

The Conference discussed the situation of the transition countries, where growing poverty and inequality, cuts in social spending, the weakening of social safety nets and rising unemployment have put millions of families under pressure, undermining their ability to care for their children.

Participants felt that Governments alone could not ensure the rights of all children. The crisis must also be addressed by families, civil society organisations, the corporate sector, academia and the media – all working together to change the region for, and with, children.

The commitments undertaken by the 200 participants at the *Generation in Jeopardy* Conference are reflected in the *Stockholm Manifesto*, which stresses the need for social policy reform; the recognition of civil society, the private sector and young people as partners in social reform, and the urgency of children's needs for a family oriented upbringing.

The conference added to an emerging consensus that children's rights must be at the centre of policy reform in the transition countries. Corporate social responsibility toward children was one of the key themes of the conference and was, therefore, a contribution to the Global Movement for Children.

IN THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN...

Approximately five million Say Yes votes have been collected in Latin America and the Caribbean, a figure expected to reach around 10 million by the time of the Special Session.

Plans are also being made for follow-up to the Special Session, with each country in the Caribbean pledging to develop a National Plan of Action for Children in line with the commitments made in New York. Early in 2002, Caribbean Heads of State will meet to formalise these plans and create a mechanism for follow-up, developing ideas to link into future Ministerial Meetings for Children.

An Action Plan for Ibero-American follow up on the Panama Declaration of November 2000 is now being prepared for presentation at the Special Session. In addition, a UNICEF/UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean study on the situation of children in the region has just been completed. Building Equity from Childhood will be launched on 18 September, the day before the Session begins.

THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR CHILDREN

The Global Movement for Children will be the driving force that ensures the promises made at the Special Session become action for the rights of children.

This was the vision that came out of a two day workshop in London, 30-31 July, to decide what happens with the Global Movement for Children beyond the Special Session. The participants in the meeting included the original partners in the GMC, together with international and regional NGOs and national and regional coalitions for child rights.

Three key questions were put to the meeting:

- What should be the common actions for the GMC beyond the Special Session?
- What is the role of international players?
- What co-ordination structure is needed?

The meeting gave a ringing endorsement to the need for joint future action for the GMC. There was also overwhelming agreement that the focus for the GMC should be at the national and local levels, where real impact could be made. However the meeting also identified the value

of a truly global movement with international players. Such a movement could provide an international stage for advocacy and a world-wide forum for information sharing and could ensure wider visibility for success at the local level. The meeting also agreed that children should be front and centre of the movement.

The Special Session on Children will be a critical moment for the GMC. Not only will Nelson Mandela be presenting the views of the world to the General Assembly from the *Say Yes* campaign, but the broadest section of civil society will be gathered together in one place. The role of the GMC beyond the Special Session will, therefore, be a critical issue.

Two meetings are planned – a short workshop during the

Special Session on 21 September and a one-day workshop the day after the Session, on 22 September. The organisations involved in the July workshop will present a proposal for joint action at these meetings to gather the widest possible input from civil society.

To read the meeting report, or to get involved, contact CRIN at <http://www.crin.org>



For more information on the Special Session

English: <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/>

French: <http://www.unicef.org/french/specialsession/>

Spanish: <http://www.unicef.org/spanish/specialsession/>

Arabic: <http://www.un.org/arabic/ga/children>

Chinese: <http://www.un.org/chinese/events/children/>

Russian: <http://www.un.org/russian/documen/gadocs/27spec/>

Or contact:

Substantive Secretariat for the Special Session on Children

UNICEF
Three, U.N. Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Fax: (1-212) 303-7992

Intergovernmental Issues

Ms. Nora Galer
Tel. (1-212) 326-7576
e-mail: ngaler@unicef.org

Mr. Hernando Clavijo
Tel. (1-212) 326-7042
e-mail: hclavijo@unicef.org

NGOs Facilitation Team

UNICEF, Ms. Sabeen Rana
Fax: (1-212) 303-7990/ 326-7594
Tel. (1-212) 824-6323
e-mail: srana@unicef.org

NGO Committee on UNICEF

Fax: (1-212) 824-6466
E-mail: ngocommittee@unicef.org

Children's Participation Unit

UNICEF,
Ms. Jeannette Wijnants
Fax: (1-212) 824-6470
Tel: (1-212) 824-6557
e-mail: jwijnants@unicef.org

Media

Media Information

UNICEF
Ms. Patsy Robertson
Tel: (1-212) 326-7270
Fax: (1-212) 326-7518
e-mail: probertson@unicef.org

Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit

UN Department of Public Information
Tel: (1-212) 963-7164
Fax: (1-212) 963-4642
www.unicef.org/specialsession/press/credentials.htm

Communication, Say Yes and Global Movement for Children

UNICEF
Ms. Corinne Woods
Fax: (1-212) 326-7518
Tel: (1-212) 326-7614
e-mail: cwoods@unicef.org

Ms. Sally Burnheim
Tel: (1-212) 326-7566
e-mail: sburnheim@unicef.org