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**STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AT THE  
FORTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
WESTERN PACIFIC, OMIYA, JAPAN 10-16 SEPTEMBER 1991**

UNICEF is pleased to participate in the forty-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific. WHO and UNICEF have long worked together as close partners in our joint, world-wide effort to improve the health and well-being of children and women.

In relation to collaboration at the regional level, it might be useful to recall the meeting held between the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office and the UNICEF East Asia and Pakistan Regional Office in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, from 12 to 13 February this year. Our two organizations reviewed the various health sector programmes at this meeting, in collaboration with our Government counterparts. Collaboration at the regional as well as country levels, and the establishment of strategies and joint courses of action for the 1991-1992 period were also discussed. In addition, the health sector programmes in Cambodia were presented by the staff of UNICEF Phnom Penh.

Following are some specific comments on selected issues on the agenda:

AIDS

We recognize this as an emerging problem in some countries of the Western Pacific Region, e.g. Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, etc.

Recognizing the importance of mother to child transmissions, we are becoming increasingly involved in the prevention and control of AIDS, particularly in the areas of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities, counselling, training, particularly the incorporation of AIDS-related issues into relevant curricula, and behavioural research.

UNICEF would like to be involved in the formulation of short-term and medium-term programmes on AIDS, their implementation and the programme reviews following thereafter.

### Polio Eradication

Along with polio eradication, sustainability of UCI/EPI at 90 per cent coverage or more plus reduction of measles cases by 90 per cent compared to pre-immunization levels, are also one of the Goals for the year 2000 adopted at the World Summit for Children, held last September in New York.

While most of the countries in this region have achieved UCI, there are still some countries such as Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Papua New Guinea and the Marshall Islands, where the coverage needs to be improved before eradication can be seriously considered.

### Infant and Young Child Nutrition

Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by one half from 1990 levels is also one of the goals adopted at the World Summit for Children, as well as empowerment of all women to breast-feed their children exclusively for four to six months and to continue breast-feeding with complimentary food, well into the second year. Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child also recommends that all parents and children be informed of the advantages of breast-feeding.

To promote, support and protect the breast-feeding policy, it is very essential to jointly implement the "Baby Friendly Initiative" for hospitals and maternity services, which has been agreed upon by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the Director-General of WHO.

Under this initiative, the newborn would have a chance to be breast-fed within an hour and a half after birth (one of the Ten Steps to Successful Breast-feeding), and also the right to stay with the mother 24 hours a day.

The application of successful breastfeeding could save up to one million infant lives a year.

### Essential National Health Research

Development of essential national research for children is also one of our strong concerns, and UNICEF would look forward to collaborating with WHO in the identification of priority areas in research and in supporting them.

### Malaria Control

After four decades of anti-malarial measures, malaria is still the major cause of death among children and it is still prevalent in many countries of the Western Pacific Region, for example the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Philippines, Malaysia, etc.

In addition to the use of impregnated mosquito nets, we should be looking for some sort of "break-through" in malaria, such as we have seen with ORT in the control of diarrhoeal diseases.

UNICEF looks forward to working closely with WHO in the above areas.