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# Children Speak

*Vol 3, No.9, February - March '05*

*A Newsletter of the Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights*

## Message from the President

Thirty thousand innocent children will have died of preventable causes by the end of the day. 30,000 more will suffer the same fate tomorrow and every day that follows until we – you, I, our neighbours, our friends, our fellow citizens of the world - do something about it.

These children are not responsible for the circumstances they were born into, nor do they have the resources or power to exit their condition. Through the lottery of birth, we do.

These children hold the same inherent rights as we do to food, clean water, health, education, and protection from poverty and violence. Yet, their plight has been largely met with indifference for decades now. Why? Because we allow it. Because we, as individuals and collectively, have forgotten or relinquished the power we have to impose a resolution to this unacceptable state of affairs.

The fact is that we hold tremendous power by virtue of our own inalienable economic, social and cultural rights and that we exert this power every day through our choices and actions. We can choose, for example, to boycott the products from a company that uses child labour and thereby force it to change its ways. We can also hold our governments, policy makers and elected officials accountable for their actions (or lack thereof) and vote out

those whose decisions go against our priorities, values and rights.

With rights and power also come obligations and responsibilities.

First and foremost among these is not to use this power against each other but in support of each other, nor to entrust or delegate this power to those who would use it for their own selfish purposes.

Indeed, any measure of tolerance for the on-going, systematic violations of the rights of any particular group, such as children, automatically opens the door for the violation of one's own rights. If you do not stand up and fight for the rights of other human beings, who will come to your help when your rights are threatened or ignored? These children, who keep on dying and suffering everywhere in the world, do not need our charity but our voice, support and commitment to uphold their rights as we do our own.

We, as individuals and collectively, must reclaim our power and use it to its full extent to put an end to this shameful state of affairs. In this, as in many other things, we either stand together or hang alone. We have the power to make a difference. Let's use it for the love of our children!



**Riccardo Di Done**



# International Summit on

# Children, Poverty & Violence

Sommet  
International  
Summit  
(2004)



Sur l'enfant  
On the Child



## Declaration & Recommendations

### PREAMBLE

More than fifty years after the formation of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and notwithstanding the ratification by 192 countries of the most comprehensive document on the rights of the child, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children of May 2002 concluded that *"Much remains to be done to secure survival, health, education and protection from exploitation for the nearly two billion children of the world"*.

Children account for over 35% of the world's population and form the largest age group in many developing countries. Their protection should be made a priority. Yet, children keep on dying and suffering everywhere in the world and continue to be denied the most basic rights and level of protection. Children are also victims of family breakdowns, psychological and physical violence, sexual exploitation, suicide, negligence and social disintegration.

Nearly 650 million children worldwide live in extreme poverty – victims of social abuse, child labour, the sex trade and health disorders. Every year about eleven million children die of preventable causes, often for want of simple and easily provided improvements in nutrition, sanitation and maternal health and education. Globally, more than 104 million children

between the ages of six and eleven are not in school, 59 million of them girls.

More money and resources have been spent on war activities during the last 50 years than in the last millennium. Since 1990, almost 80% of the victims of war and conflict have been civilians, mostly women and children. Almost two million children were killed, six million children injured or disabled. Twelve million became homeless in the last decade. The proliferation of small arms, in particular, has caused children to become killers as well as victims of these deadly weapons of destruction.

Thus, poverty and violence are crucial issues for children worldwide. The human, economic, social and health costs of not addressing these issues are already enormous and pose a serious threat to our future.

The Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights (O.P.C.R.), a grass-roots organization that is deeply concerned with the issues related to children's rights, organized an **International Summit on Children, Poverty and Violence** in Montreal on October 22 and 23, 2004. Over thirty recognized specialists and leading experts representing seventeen different countries from Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America and Europe as well as twenty-four students from the English Montreal School Board schools and three youths from Cuba attended the Summit.

Following an overview of the current situation of children globally, Summit delegates analysed the data and identified the main issues, barriers and competing interests that are hampering local, national and international initiatives to improve the condition of children. They prepared a five-year child-rights based plan of action in order to alleviate the worsening situation of children.

We invite local, national and international communities at every level to take this declaration and its recommendations as guidelines for action in the years to come. They are part of an inclusive and participatory process aimed at reclaiming civil society and making it work for the benefit of our children and their families. They are based on the conviction that it is only through the accumulated efforts of many and by developing a synergy between all components of society that we will succeed in furthering the cause of children and creating a material, social and emotional environment in which all children have access to the resources and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

#### *THE STATE OF AFFAIRS*

**Whereas** children are human rights-holders in their own right,

**Whereas** protection from violence, access to food, health and free primary education should be perceived as issues for redress *now* because of children's inherent human rights,

**Whereas** the improvement of the condition of children has failed to meet expectations despite the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international, regional and national child-rights instruments,

**Whereas** additional efforts are needed and more resources must be allocated towards reducing and preventing poverty and violence against children,

**Whereas** the well being of children is intrinsically linked to the socio-economic and environmental conditions of their family, community and country,

**Whereas** special efforts are needed to ensure the rights of children within particularly vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, immigrants, children in minority groups, children with disabilities and socially or economically disadvantaged children and their inclusion in all programming for the prevention and eradication of poverty and violence,

**Whereas** a large number of critical issues facing society, such as rising income inequalities between and within countries, social division and unrest, increasing number of street children and street gangs, and mounting

healthcare and welfare costs, cannot be resolved without first improving the condition of children,

**Whereas** the responsibility for imparting ethical and moral values conducive to the harmonious development of children and society as a whole falls to adults and their institutions,

**Whereas** poverty and violence are complex, multidimensional, diverse and interconnected issues, and that a comprehensive and integrated approach both in the long term and short term is needed to address the root causes of children's rights violations and not only the symptoms,

**Whereas** children who are capable of forming their own views have the inherent right to express those views freely and be heard in all matters affecting them, these views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity,

**Whereas** the main barriers to improving the condition of children worldwide are lack of political will and misdirected distribution of available resources,

#### **WE DECLARE THAT:**

All nations must respect their commitment to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in the case of industrialized nations, to devote 0.7% of GDP to development assistance.

**We, the delegates at the International Summit, recommend the following measures as part of a child-rights based plan of action for the next five years:**

- To promote greater awareness about and respect for the needs, rights and value of children and youth among all segments of society, including decision makers, law enforcement officials, parents, teachers and children themselves, through national **public information campaigns** and targeted community-level educational initiatives;

- To increase and embrace the **meaningful participation and representation of children and youth** in all existing local, national and international political, economic, legal, social and cultural institutions, agencies, bodies and forums whose policies have an impact on the well-being and development of children, starting with the increased involvement of children in the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and enacting similar measures at all levels of society;

*Continued on Page 4*

# Cults On Campus

There are 500 cults in operation in the UK today and according to Ian Haworth, the founder of the Cult Information Centre, it is not loners or those who have narrow views on life who become members. It is especially those with healthy, enquiring minds who make easy targets. This is why cults can be attractive to many young people just settling into university life.

"The easiest people to recruit are those who have an economically advantaged background; an average to above average intelligence, a good education, and those who can be described as idealistic because they are caring and would like to make the world a better place," says Ian Haworth.

## INSIGHT

Eighteen-year-old Annabel is in her second term at university in London and believes that the environment and atmosphere of campus life can be conducive to cults. "University is about broadening your horizons and finding out a bit more about yourself. You will be trying to think in a different way and a different mindset because in a sense you are an adult now. At university a lot of people are by themselves, and unless you are really used to that, it is not a nice experience. People get lonely... you are looking for anything that will make you friends quickly," she says.

For those very reasons, it is often during the first few months of university that young people can be drawn to cults. The enquiring mind and the idealism that many young people have, coupled with the desire to find a new group of friends are what cults play on to recruit new members. Using methods that are often very familiar, they make people feel good about themselves. This often makes it so hard to say no.

*Continued on Page 6*

## International Summit on Children, Poverty & Violence

### Declaration & Recommendations

■ To support and expand an extensive **international network of NGOs and mainstream and independent media** in order to focus public opinion on child rights issues as well as to monitor, accelerate and consolidate governmental and non-governmental initiatives for children at the local, national and international level;



· To create **supportive community models**, that subscribe to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments and base their actions and decisions first and

foremost on the best interests of the child, give children and youth a meaningful voice in all matters affecting them and embody the values conducive to a child-friendly and empowering environment for youth;

■ To make use of positive, **child-friendly cultural strengths and practices** to promote children's rights and identify and abolish cultural practices that are detrimental to children's well-being and/or violate children's rights;

■ To increase support of **natural nurturing systems** already in place, such as parents, the extended family and other community-level caregivers in recognition of their crucial role as the first line of defence and protection as well as role models for children;

■ To foster the development of **community-based children rights' zones** with definite and readily identifiable boundaries that would use the best interests of the child as the primary consideration in all matters and promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a framework for all programs and policies. Knowledge about and commitment to the application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child would be used as criteria for joining. These zones could be a city, a school or a neighbourhood but all would gradually ensure the effective representation of children and youth through the establishment of ombudsmen, children councils and their inclusion in all policy- and decision-making bodies;

■ To build and propagate a **culture of learning** through increased promotion, funding, support and availability of educational and vocational opportunities;

■ To establish **international standards of education** that reflect an inclusive, child-friendly, comprehensive and holistic long term approach, which would include the following as part of the school curriculum:

- o Children's rights as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- o Global citizenship and its responsibilities
- o Conflict resolution and peace studies

# International Summit on Children, Poverty & Violence

## Declaration & Recommendations

- o Self-esteem
  - o Respect, tolerance and appreciation for all cultures, races and people
  - o Nutrition and health choices
  - o Preventative programmes dealing with parental responsibilities, discipline, relationships, at risk situations and behaviours, and other related areas of concern
- To encourage the development of a **roadmap for rights**, providing time-bound examples of best practices in making universal principles such as those enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality at the local government and community level.



### Therefore:

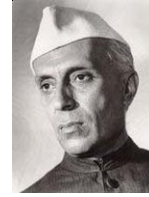
The present declaration and recommendations stem from the acknowledgment that world strategies and programs have failed to redress the worsening situation of children since 1989 and that the most pressing concern of society as a whole must be to work towards alleviating poverty and violence against children. We urge governments and international organizations to fulfil their commitments and take all necessary measures to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children have access to the material, social, psychological and emotional support they need to achieve their full potential. We urge civil society to reclaim its rightful place and power to hold governments, policy makers and elected officials accountable and call for immediate, concrete measures to uphold the best interests of the child as well as for the direct involvement and meaningful participation of children and youth in all matters that concern them.

The present declaration and recommendations were approved by delegates representing the different regions of the world at the Montreal International Summit on Children, Poverty and Violence on October 22-23, 2004.

Riccardo Di Done  
Co-Chair  
International Summit on  
Children, Poverty and Violence  
President, O.P.C.R.

William Rowe, DSW  
Member, International Summit  
Steering Committee  
Co-Chair, O.P.C.R. Scientific  
Committee

## Jawaharlal Nehru



Pandit Nehru was born in Allahabad in 1889. After studying in England, Harrow, Cambridge and the Inner Temple, he returned to India in 1912 and practised law for some years. In 1919, he joined the Indian National Congress and soon became a leader of the Nationalist Movement. He was made President of the Congress Party in 1931, a position he subsequently held for six times.

The first Prime Minister of Independent India, he ruled the country for 17 long years and introduced the nation to democracy, nurturing its institutions - Parliament, multi-party system, independent judiciary and free Press.

## PROFILE

Nehru gave a clear direction to India's role in the comity of nations with the policy of non-alignment and the principle of Panchsheel, the five rules of peaceful coexistence at a time when the rivalries of cold war were driving humanity to its doom. Education to him was the key to internal freedom and fearlessness, and for liberation from the clutches of poverty, superstition and ignorance. Nehru insisted that the world must exist as one.

Nehru was generous and gracious. Emotional sensitivity and intellectual passion infused his writings, giving them unusual appeal and topicality. Jawaharlal was a prolific writer in English and wrote a number of books like 'Discovery of India', 'Glimpses of World History', his autobiography, 'Towards Freedom', which ran nine editions in the first year alone. He was awarded 'Bharat Ratna' in 1955.

Nehru was very fond of children. He saw the future of the nation in them. November 14, Nehru's birthday, is fondly remembered and celebrated as Children's Day in India. He was fondly called Chacha Nehru by children and contemporaries. □

Continued from Page 4

## Cults on Campus

According to the National Union of Students, a cult is a highly manipulative group that exploits its members and can cause psychological, financial and physical harm. It dictates, in great detail, the behavior, thoughts and emotions of its followers.

A cult won't have a sign informing you that they are trying to manipulate you and destroy your freedom of thought. A recruiter would seem genuinely friendly, and they might not make it clear what they expect of you or what the nature of the group is. They might ask you if you are interested in answering the big questions of life, such as "Does God exist?" and "Why am I here?" Once you say you are interested, you are invited to come to a meeting to hear the answers.

Cults then use cleverly disguised techniques to keep new members, even hypnosis.

"Some groups might call it meditation; others might call it a new form of relaxation. People are put into a trance state and are programmed to understand that this particular group that they're now in is the be-all and end-all," says Ian Haworth

Another common technique is called "love bombing". This creates a sense of family and belonging, which is compelling if you have just left home for the first time. In reality it is based on

you being convinced or brain washed into agreeing with everything the cult stands for and having no will of your own.

"The love is based on your obeying them at all times, so it is conditional love. The moment you deviate from what is expected in the group, the moment you question something that is going on, that is the moment the love is turned off."

Approximately 34 campuses in the UK have banned cults from operating on their premises, but the numbers of students being recruited is still on the increase as cults recruit members both on and off the university campus. Cult leaders take advantage of the fact that there is poor education about their methods and the effects of membership in mainstream society.

"I think that more could be done to protect everyone from cults, including young people, if there was more public education on the topic. Public education is the key," says Ian Haworth.

Until education about cults becomes more mainstream and is taken more seriously, young people have to learn to look out for themselves. Our advice is: read up, watch out and spend your money on beer. □

*This story was produced by Samir Pasha, 15 and Ella Parry Davies, 16. It was published on the website [www.childrens-express.org](http://www.childrens-express.org)*

## Summit on Obesity Prevention

Obesity has become an epidemic in the North. The State of California is home to more obese children and adults and spends more public and private money on the consequences of obesity than any other state in the United States. This epidemic is fueled by environmental forces and individual choices that lead to unhealthy eating and physical inactivity among adults and children. Governor Schwarzenegger believes California must provide leadership in preventing obesity and has called for a Summit to serve as a catalyst for change.

*The Governor's Summit on Obesity Prevention* will be held in Sacramento on February 9 and 10, 2005. The Summit will bring together 100 private and public sector leaders, by invitation, from health care, business and industry, transportation, education, government and the community. The Summit planning process includes a series of three pre-Summit sessions in Northern and Southern California, including one at the Childhood Obesity Conference in San Diego in January.

For more information on the listening sessions, visit: [www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/upcoming.html](http://www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/upcoming.html)



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