

ADDRESS
BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. OTMAR HASLER
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

TO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON CHILDREN

NEW YORK, 8 MAY 2002

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Mr. President
Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Children are the future of our families as well as of our countries. Investing in our children means investing in ourselves. We have a strong moral obligation and an obvious self-interest to make the investments necessary to give every child an opportunity to fully develop his or her personal capacities – both for the sake of the child himself or herself, but also as a contribution to the stability of our societies.

Mr. President

The United Nations has played a commendable leading role in the fight for the rights and the protection of the best interests of children worldwide. Liechtenstein also attaches particular importance to regional cooperation in the common fight for children's rights, especially in the framework of the Council of Europe, and I would especially like to mention a new convention which was adopted last week and which will reinforce the basic right of children and their parents to maintain contact on a regular basis. Today, we look back at over ten years of intensive activities carried out both by States and the United Nations system in the follow-up to the landmark event of the World Summit for Children. A decade ago, there were strong voices of skepticism in connection with the Convention on the Rights of the Child – today, the Convention is the most universally embraced human rights treaty in history. This unprecedented success makes it clear that the Convention has to remain the basis for our activities in this respect. The Optional Protocols to the Convention and other legal instruments such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provide further protection to children in areas where they are especially at risk of being victimized and exploited. Twelve years after the Summit, we have the necessary legal standards – what we continue to lack is their implementation.

Mr. President

The outcome document which will be adopted at the end of this Special Session gives an overview of the problems which children worldwide continue to face. It constitutes a solid foundation for future action: The effects of armed conflicts on children, the different

forms of sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labor, and the special vulnerability of children to the HIV/AIDS pandemic have caught our attention as areas where national and international action is particularly needed. All these issues constitute large-scale crises, which can only be addressed through immediate and concerted action from all of us. But we must also focus on the root causes for the continued vulnerable position of children worldwide and develop long-term strategies in this respect: Education must play a crucial role in protecting the rights of the child, since this is the only way of enabling children to develop their potential and to express themselves. Children must not only be the object of our continued attention, they must also be given their own voice and opportunity to participate in decisions on matters affecting them. Providing educational systems is largely a national responsibility, but the eradication of poverty worldwide will obviously play a decisive role to facilitate such national policies. I also believe that a strong role of families, which constitute the basic unit of society, continues to be an important element in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

Mr. President

The Special Session must reconfirm the outstanding vital role of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and adopt a strong rights-based approach. On other issues in the outcome document, it is my firm belief that the solution to controversial issues is to be found in the progress made in other fora since the World Summit. During the past decade, the United Nations has convened a number of conferences of outstanding significance, many of which have led to important results in different areas. This Special Session, rather than weakening achievements from the past should be an occasion to forcefully reconfirm what we have all agreed to on previous occasions.

I thank you.