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news release

Last chance for children

We now have the largest generation of children and young people in history. For the millions living in extreme poverty, missing out on schooling, affected by HIV or caught up in war, this is the last chance to put things right warns Save the Children in a major global report – ***Children's Rights: A Second Chance*** launched today.

The warning comes as governments plan to meet in New York next month for a special UN meeting (the UN Special Session on Children) to put the human rights of children at the top of the world agenda. Save the Children is calling for a radical shift in approach which recognises that the international community, governments and big business must work much more closely together to achieve a real and positive change in children's lives, which will:

- ensure universal primary education for all children
- introduce and enforce legalisation to protect all children from exploitation and abuse
- hold those to account who violate the rights of children during armed conflict, in particular by recruiting and using them as child soldiers
- ensure that all children under five in developing countries have access to basic and affordable health care to tackle the most common life threatening diseases
- recognise the particular needs of children and take these into account in the design and implementation of all policies.

Burkhard Gnärig, Chief Executive of the International Save the Children Alliance says today:

“There is no excuse for what has happened – collectively we have the resources, knowledge and capacity to ensure that commitments to children are met. But to do so will require a concerted shift in policies, attitudes, and the allocation of resources. Children deserve a better deal and the Special Session must offer radical solutions which will once and for all tackle the root causes of their problems”.

With the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 and the World Summit for Children in 1990 it appeared that the right of all children to a safe and secure childhood was finally being taken seriously by governments and the international community.

More/...

At the World Summit for Children, leaders made important promises to the world's children. But most of these promises have not been kept says Save the Children. Few of the commitments made in 1990 have led to significant improvements in the everyday lives of millions of the world's children, and ten years later the scale of failure is overwhelming:

- over 10 million children still die every year, often from problems that could easily be dealt with
- 150 million children are still malnourished
- over 100 million children are still not in school
- 250 million children are working
- 600 million children live in extreme poverty
- 2 million children were killed in armed conflict in the 1990s and 35 million displaced from their homes
- 30 million children are being bought and sold into exploitation and abuse
- half a million children have died of AIDS.

Save the Children will not be a silent witness to unfulfilled promises to children. Save the Children believe that children must be recognised for what they are: equal citizens with inherent rights and vital social economic and cultural roles. Following the UN Special Session, Save the Children will be holding governments and the international community to account.

This is perhaps our final chance to put things right for the largest generation of children in history. The world cannot afford to waste it.

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For further information:-

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Note to Editors

- The International Save the Children Alliance is the world's leading children's rights organisation with Save the Children members in 32 countries and operational programmes in over 100 countries.
- Save the Children fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives world-wide.
- A broadcast quality video containing three short films presented by children is available from Save the Children on request.
- www.savethechildren.net
- Broadcast quality interviews via ISDN line from Save the Children's media Unit can be arranged.