

Mr. Chairman,

I welcome the opportunity to speak to you on this group of agenda items which, this year, have taken on a special significance. Among these important topics is the Draft Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the General Assembly must consider and, hopefully, adopt.

Mr. Chairman,

Seventy-five years ago, the League of Nations, adopted the first Declaration of the Right of the Child, commonly referred to as the Declaration of Geneva. This instrument provided that has guided the international community's work in the field of the rights of the child. The Declaration states that "mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give". Sadly, one has only to read newspapers or UNICEF's report on The State of the World's Children to know of the world's failings in protecting and promoting the well-being of the child. But where misery and conflict exist, there is also hope. For many, that hope has focused on the United Nations and its efforts to define and protect the rights of the child and on the obligations of states to the world's children.

The fulfilment of that hope continues to be a fundamental objective of this Organization. This year, for example, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the adoption by the UN of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. We also mark the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Child. It is my hope that this year we will create an even more fundamental milestone through the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr Chairman,

It has been ten years since the working group of the Commission on Human Rights commenced the drafting of the Convention. In so doing, the working group sought to address some of the most pressing problems facing children today. Provisions of the Convention deal with the very survival of the child, in obligating states to ensure that basic minimum health and nutritional standards are met. The problems of exploitation of the child are addressed in several articles, dealing with all forms of such exploitation including sexual, economic and drug abuse. Other important issues dealt with in the Convention are the child's basic civil rights, including the freedoms of expression, thought, conscience and religion, association, and the right to privacy. The question of adoption and appropriate