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UPDATE

**TO THE STATEMENT OF COIPRODEN TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (GENEVA, SWITZERLAND)**

INTRODUCTION

Members of the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child

Honorable members:

The undersigned, representing the Coordinadora de Instituciones Privadas pro los Niños/Niñas y sus Derechos (the Coordinating Agency of Private Institutions Pro Children and their Rights

(COIPRODEN)), respectfully submit this present update to our statement which was made to the Committee on January 31, 1994 during the V Preparatory Session designated to discuss the case of Honduras.

Our original statement highlighted our central and immediate concerns, made in light of the "Informe Alternativo: Las Niñas y los Niños: El Presente de Honduras" (Alternative Report. Children: The Present Situation in Honduras), regarding the problems of children in our courts, the successes and limitations of governmental and non-governmental response, and our proposed solutions.

This update analyzes these same situations/problems and the various solutions proposed, evaluating the advances made and limitations encountered, over the first seven months of the present government of Doctor Carlos Roberto Reina. Finally it raises priority proposals with regard to the betterment and well-being of Honduran children.

We are grateful to the Commission charged with presenting the report of the State of Honduras before the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and especially to the junta Nacional de Bienestar Social (National Board of Social Well-Being (JNBS)), for having invited us to participate in the elaboration of their report, permitting us to occupy a space within its framework. They demonstrate their desire to move forward, through dialogue and interinstitutional coordination, in the search for common goals, working together to construct a better future for all children and their families.

Olga Mendoza de Pauck
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1. SITUATION - PROBLEM

1.1 CONCERNING THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC-SOCIAL SITUATION

Violations to the rights of children greatly affect their physical, mental and spiritual integrity, and in turn generate a string of subsequent violations in various aspects of social, cultural and moral life. They are their rooted in a situation of structuralized social injustice, brought about by inequalities in the distribution of productive financial and commercial resources. The most apparent symptom of this is the extreme poverty in which more than two million Honduran children struggle and the consequences for all aspects of their existence, as was demonstrated in our Alternative Report of June 17, 1993.

While it is true that recent official reports show a reduction from 73% in 1991 to 70.7% in 1992, and of 64.4% in 1993 of homes with an income that can not cover the cost of a basic food basket, it is important to note that 2596 of these homes on a national level, and 3 7% of those in the principal cities, are headed by women, consequently converting them and their children into the population most affected by the measures of economic adjustment.

Quantitative data do not perfectly reflect what really happens in the daily lives of children and their families. One must take into account the ongoing program of economic adjustment which continues to incite inflation (which is rising by 2.59% monthly), the @oration of real salaries which have lost their buying vower, the increase in the cost of living, the weakening of our currency against the dollar augmenting the price of imports (in January \$1 =L7.4 and in September \$1 =L8.9), the rise in unemployment, the increase in poverty and misery with its subsequent rise in the phenomenon of children forced into the streets and the appearance of various forms of social decompensation, principally common delinquency, violence, prostitution, abuse, and all forms of distortion in social relations that principally affect the population of women and children. In conclusion, the living conditions of more than two million Honduran children have worsened.

1.2 CONCERNING THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ATTENTION TO CHILDREN

The JNBS, the institution responsible on a state level for directing social policy toward children, has traditionally been characterized by the providing of shelter to children in irregular circumstances without emphasizing the prevention of problems or promoting self-sustainable development to Honduran families, nor by engendering a change in social policy toward children. At present it has reclaimed its formal status as director of social policy for all Honduran children, restating its institutional role and undertaking diagnostic studies aimed at administrative restructuring and evaluation of its work. Even though there presently exists major institutional recognition of the above, this has not brought about a preferential place within the state's administrative structure which would permit them in an integrated manner, to attend to all Honduran children who need protection. The JNBS has always faced many budgetary problems, and the consequence of this has been a limited quality of services offered to the children, coupled with marked bureaucratization and extravagant politicizing of all its administrative structures and functioning.

1.3 CONCERNING THE ADAPTATION OF THE JURIDICAL STRUCTURE TO THE TERMS OF THE CONVENTION

There exist many instruments within the national juridical structure which contain elements in opposition to the interests of children, as concerns the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The decrees of various laws and regulations are often opposing or repetitive, contrary to the spirit of the Convention and with differing concepts regarding children. There are, however, also laws containing many decrees which take in the spirit of the convention. They are often fragmented in form and little known by the general population, and even less so by children due to a lack of promulgation, with restriction of this knowledge to a limited circle of professionals in Law.

At the same time, the juridical structure charged with ensuring its application is extremely small, with very limited budgetary support that will not cover even 50% of the existing needs in the country regarding this matter.

Important steps are being taken to bring legislation on minors into conformity with the Convention, but a proposal has still not been presented to Congress, and it is not known if measures will be adopted to promulgate and internalize any changes or if, rather, they will go simply add to the ample legislation already existing and little known.

1.4 CONCERNING THE MONITORING OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONVENTION

Monitoring compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child was not given much importance until 1993 when proceedings appeared at both governmental and non-governmental levels. Indicators to evaluate the success of any application, however, have not been established, and a methodology for follow-up and evaluation has not been well defined.

We believe it is important to mention in this section the existence of some serious problems for children, the solutions for which do not necessitate major efforts, but rather a little political will. These problems are:

a) The absence of promotion on the part of government of awareness and understanding of the principles and decrees of the Convention among the general public, and especial@ the lack of programs for promotion among the personnel of state and private institutions who have direct or indirect relations with children.

b) The absence of recognition of identity (lack of any official documents of identification, e.g. birth certificate) of a large number of children, and until now no governmental initiative which attempts to change this situation.

c) The forced and massive recruitment of adolescents for the National Army, until November, 1993. Since then this has diminished due to the passing of a decree brought about by popular pressure and by the promise made by President Carlos Roberto Reina during his presidential campaign which to make service voluntary, educational and humanitarian. Fear and uncertainty among the population remain, however, as the Armed Forces is opposed to the new decree and the elimination of the traditional form of recruitment. This decree would enter into effect with the next legislature, within three years.

d) Impunity for those responsible for violating of rights of children, which has always been evident but has been worsening lately due to campaign blaming adolescent transgressors as the principal problem of delinquency in the country. With the aim of subjecting them to the same venal code and the same penitentiaries as adults, there is underway in the National Congress an initiative of law which attempts to change an article of the Constitution and reduce the penal age from 18 to 16 years.

e) Child labor in the maquilas (assembly factories), a phenomenon observed in the cities of the northern zone. The work is predominantly in textiles and attracts thousands of adolescent girls under the age of 18 who are subjected to poor working conditions and abuse on the part of their personal supervisors or bosses who violate their rights as children and as workers. The situation has reached crisis, and there have been accusations of unjust dismissals, physical aggression, and denial of the right to unionize which is legate authorized by the Workers' Code.

2. APPRAISAL OF SUCCESSES AND LIMITATIONS

2.1 CONCERNING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY

The Strategy for Economic Development which was applied by Rafael Leonardo Callejas during his four years in government (1990-1993), and known as the "Ajuste Estructural de la Economia" (Structural Adjustment of the Economy), aggravated the general situation of poverty for the great majority of Honduran families and their children by making the payment of the external debt to international credit agencies a priority.

With the programs of "Compensacion Social" (Social Compensation) the general misery suffered by the majority of the Honduran population, including its children, has been palliated to a minimal degree and only in a temporary manner.

The government of Doctor Carlos Roberto Reina recognizes that these programs of social welfare foster traditional paternalism and do not promote development, but rather, paralyze the will of the people to search for their own alternatives to solve the serious problems they encounter.

The FHIS and the PRAF, principal programs of social welfare conceived during the four years of the previous government, have been ratified for the time being for lack of other types of strategies, projects or ideas which could yield more permanent policy, directed toward long-range control of the structural causes which engender and augment poverty.

Within the global framework of the *Politica Social del Estado hacia la Infancia* (Social Policy of the State towards Children) (August 29, 1994), the present government indicated that its strategy of development is to be based on economic growth with social equity and justice. Toward that aim social policy will play a more active role through improved coverage and quality of social programs directed toward children. This important document defines the framework of the state's social policy toward children in a clear manner, coordinated in the majority of its components and based on the -assumption of the universality of rights, and permits us to part with our pattern of attending to children because of their "irregular situation" and take a broader and more integrated approach to the application and protection of the rights of children in their daily lives. The next six months will be decisive ones for the government in which it must put into effect mechanisms of operations and follow-up which will secure the fulfillment of all its promises for the achievement of the well-being of all Honduran children.

"Recently (in July), the first initiative of the Liberal government was put into action with the

endorsement of a "pact of social solidarity" through a "national dialogue", the results of which are uncertain due to the fact that there is no concrete proposal around which to negotiate a long range compromise which would restore to Honduras the confidence undermined by the acute deterioration of its economic and social crisis. "(AAP, Carpeta Nacional, July, 1994)

The subject of children is not mentioned in the present agenda of convergence which confines itself to the document popularly known as "el paquetazo" which elaborates new fiscal measures-to respond to the present demands of the international credit organizations.

The prioritization of human, technical and financial resources dedicated to programs and institutions which attend to children has stagnated. The problem of the "street child" (who forms a minority of the population of children in especially difficult circumstances, and the terminal stage of a problem that could be prepared for) continues to be viewed as principal, detracting from the other groups who need attention and protection, for example disabled children, or of other already functioning programs of a more permanent nature, or of assistance to the majority of the population of children.

2.2 CONCERNING THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ATTENTION TO CHILDREN

During these months the JNBS has realized sorts of internal administrative restructuring with the aim of improving its general functioning; reviewing the services offered by the different centers and Programs which shelter children in difficult situations or work on programs of prevention, informing and sensitizing public opinion to the problem of children in order to obtain their collaboration, reappropriating personnel and eliminating excesses to the extent possible. Other achievements that have been recognized are the following:

- * The JNBS is restating its institutional role and has invited the participation of non-organizations to help in redesigning their future operations.
- * There exists a search for alternatives in order to de-bureaucratize the Institution.
- * There have been inter-institutional meetings and alliances on different specific problems of children. In this spirit, the JNBS endorsed a letter of intent written with the NGO's on April 19, 1994 which will culminate in the next few months in a pact containing guidelines and resolutions of a legal, administrative and technical character and mechanisms of operation with the purpose of a greater scope and better quality of services for children.
- * They have organized a Centro Focal of computerized data for their own use and open to other institutions working with children, updating this information through the information network of the Interamerican Institute of the Child.

We recognize the advances made in institutional investigation and in the definition of guidelines for the Reorientation of the Social Policy of the State toward Children. However, we also note evidence of a lack of agility in decision-making which is needed in order to proceed with an immediate revision of the duplication of functions in the JNBS and other governmental and non-governmental entities, with the aim of redefining specific competencies and attributes and re-allocating resources in order to advance the process of the overall provision of services.

- * The expectations generated during the election campaign of the present government, with its offer to create a Ministry of the Family, were diminished this vast June when leading authorities of the JNBS stated publicly that this was not a suitable alternative and would lead to increased bureaucratization. They suggested the possibility of an Institute of the Child and the Family with a structure which would require less personnel and infrastructure. If this is the option they are considering as most appropriate, it is urgent that a study of the design be realized with the collaboration of all governmental and private organizations who have been participating in the process of modification of institutional attention to the children of this country.

- Regarding other institutions:

- * There is an opportunity for the municipal governments to assume some responsibility in the application of the Convention and the Plan of National Action by signing the Pacto Por la Infancia (the Pact for Children).
- * A department of special investigation for children has been opened in the Public Ministry.
- * Commissions on the Family and on the Child have been created in the National Congress.
- * The Central American Parliaments Commission on the Child has taken a pro-active position on specific problems of children (child trafficking, addictions, child labor).
- * The Department of the Rights of Children of CONAPRODAH has opened a section to receive denouncements of violations of the rights of children.
- * Treaty 169 of the OLT was ratified by the National Congress. They also endorsed an alliance between the Ministry of Education and organizations that work with the aboriginal populations of the country to foster bilingual and cultural education.
- * Through popular mobilization of the ethnic communities, the government endorsed a promise to improve their living conditions, presently called the Emergency Plan.
- * CONAMED, "Consejo Nacional de Atencion a Menores con Discapa-cidades" (National Council for Attention to Minors with Disabilities) was created as an interinstitutional organization to respond to the present demands of these children.
- * The situation of the juridical body responsible for children continues in its usual precarious state: two judges for minors in the entire country.
- * There are no deputies on a national level who follow-up on denouncements of rights' violations made by the various centers/programs of legal defense of some private organizations (NGO's).
- * The process of creating municipal offices of defense and the various covenants established with the municipalities have not been elaborated in a true process of community participation, even though they will be the beneficiaries, but have been handed down vertically.
- * The Department of the Woman and Child Worker in the Ministry of Labor, which was closed in 1993 by the previous government, has not been re-opened.
- * The Honduran Institute for the Habilitation and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Person, an organization created by the state for the coordination and development of integrated rehabilitation, needs to be revised in its structure as well as in the law which sustains it (184/87) if it is to function to its potential and fulfill the expectations for which it was created.
- * The Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI, an organization designed to offer aid to mothers and children in certain circumstances) continues to transfer funds originally designated to finance programs for children to the Ministry of Finance to cover other commitments.

In a meeting of the Council of Ministers on August 24th of this year, Doctor Reina declared that "administrative reform isn't a demagogic phrase or a campaign slogan, but a serious national commitment" and announced the dissolution of the JNBS, PANI and the PRAF, confirming the creation of the Institute of the Child and the Family which will absorb the functions now realized by these three institutions. Although the government proposes to reduce the general budget of revenues and spending of the nation by 10%, representing some L. 600 million, we believe it is an important decision to concentrate efforts and resources, proceeding with the elimination of bureaucracy.

2.3 CONCERNING THE ADAPTATION OF THE JURIDICAL STRUCTURE TO THE TERMS

OF THE CONVENTION

The process of global appropriation of the terms of the Convention of the Rights of the Child into Honduran legislation is incipient, but there is still much work to be done summarizing and analyzing all of the juridical decrees that affect children in the country, all of which is basic to bringing about a global appropriation of the legislation as was originally stated by the governmental sector, but for which, until now, there has been no plan of action.

Governmental and non-governmental efforts have been centered on an open and participative process in the creation of a Code of Childhood and Adolescence, the proposal for which is almost finished and ready for presentation to the National Congress. Many different sectors of Honduran society have participated in this process, including a commission of child representatives from the urban sector of the country.

In order to coordinate this process, a National Coordinating Commission on the Rights of the Child was created by executive decree during the previous administration, presided over by the First Lady of the nation, and with integrated representation. This commission has not functioned, however, and its destiny in the present government is not known.

One of the dangers we have witnessed in this process is the priority given to the elaboration of the Code of Childhood and Adolescence, leaving aside other activities important to advancing the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as:

- Limited promotion of the Convention, either to adults or to children.
- Revision of the social policy of the state with the aim of reorienting it toward children.
- Little preparation and inadequate training material concerning the Convention and its application to different groups in the population, above all to children.

All of us support the Code of Childhood and Adolescence, situated in the most appropriate framework for its application, but we fear that even counting on a good instrument, the juridical context which could guarantee its correct application is absent.

2.4 CONCERNING THE MONITORING OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONVENTION

The middle of 1993 saw the first initiative of civil society to monitor compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, *El Informe Los Niños y Niñas: El Presente de Honduras* (The Report on Children: The Present Situation in Honduras), which we submitted to this Committee.

At the end of that year, the government of Rafael Leonardo Callejas made two decrees: the first was to authorize the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, where diverse sectors of society were formally represented, including a commission made up of children, and which was to provide follow-up on compliance with the Convention; and the second was to name the National Commission for the Protection of Human Rights as the "Protector of the Rights of the Child" with functions of vigilance over actions taken by the State in matters pertaining to the rights of children.

On a governmental level the following advances have been made.

* The creation of the Unit of Social Indicators in the Ministry of Planning as a technical instrument for monitoring compliance with the present "Plan of National Action for Human Development, Infancy and Youth 1990-2000".

* Collaboration of the JNBS and CONAPRODEH in responding to the questionnaire sent by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the child to the Honduran state in preparation for the 5th Ordinary Session.

* In responding to the above mentioned questionnaire, the opinions of the NGO's were heard and respected.

At the level of COIPRODEN.:

* We realized an oral report, presented a written statement, and submitted ample documentation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on January 31, 1994.

* We secured the visit to our country of a delegate of the Committee, Msgr. Luis A. Bambaren, in order that the situation of Honduran children might be directly observed.

* We updated our statement made before the 5th Preparatory Session. (This document).

There is a preoccupation that the executive character of the appointment of the National Commission for the Rights of the Child as well as the appointment of the National Commissioner for the Protections of Human Rights as "Protector of the Rights of the Child" makes them susceptible to revocation at any moment by will of the particular government in office.

- There are no mechanisms for verifying information coming from official sources that is referred to UNIS, the Unit of Social Indicators of SECPLAN.

- Practical methods for incorporating the commission of children into the process of monitoring compliance with the convention have not been developed.

- Since the National Coordinating Commission for the Rights of the Child is not functioning, no information produced can be utilized to monitor the application of the Convention or to make suggestions to improve the lives of the children in the country.

3. PROPOSALS

The following proposals do not pretend to be all the measures necessary to take children out of the State in which they find themselves. However, we present them for consideration, emphasizing that true interest and political will are required to realize them in the present administration.

3.1 CONCERNING THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

We agree with the statement of the Honduran College of Economists in the sense that "it is necessary to change the focus of economic development which, until now, has been short-sighted and has emphasized fiscal and monetary objectives. The facts have demonstrated that this model leaves everything to the luck of a monopolistic and oligopolistic market and has deepened economic and social inequality." "It is necessary that the State recover the discipline of planning so that it can elaborate viable solutions to the problems of poverty, production, generation of energy and unemployment in the moderate and long term, with the central preoccupation being social policy, or the "human faced"; therefore, the economic policy must subordinate itself to these strategic objectives. " (El Heraldo, p. 5., Aug.18, 1994)

The fulfillment of the proposals which are detailed below require political interest and will if they are to be realized in the short or moderate term; for this we suggest the participation of all the various sectors of Honduran society.

* The Social Policy of the State toward children must always maintain the highest interest of the child, emphasizing the provision of services of education, health, housing, recreation, agrarian reforms, and other necessities for survival and development.

To accomplish the above, we suggest:

- That the subject of children be included and given priority in the framework of the National Dialogue.
- The redefinition of the Plan of National Action so that it will be, not an instrument destined to "cushion" the facts of structural adjustment, but a real instrument of economic and social development for the population, with emphasis on infants and youth.
- It is URGENT that the Government adopt measures aimed at securing the pardon of the national debt (through renegotiation, as proposed by the Honduran College of Economics) and transfer funding from military spending to programs with attention to children.

3.2 CONCERNING THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF ATTENTION TO CHILDREN

We propose that an Interinstitutional Team made up of governmental and non-governmental entities and programs be gathered around the JNBS, which, in coordination with the JNBS (or with the institution defined by the state to realize this coordination), could put into practice new strategies of integrated development for the child and family.

We maintain our proposal that the JNBS must convert itself into a true conduit for the Policies of the State toward the family, women and children, and that they must be permitted major decision making capacity and accorded a place of major importance within the structure of the government.

- That the budgets of public entities attending to the social sectors be increased, especially those programs directed toward children, and that those private programs providing attention to children in situations of risk or disability be subsidized.
- The creation of more positions for Judges of Minors and Procurators in the regional judgeships existent in the country.
- In the creation municipal offices of defense, the active participation of the base communities must be contemplated at the various stages of its execution.
- That the funds collected by PANI be designated in their entirety to the financing of programs which provide attention to children.

3.3 CONCERNING THE ADAPTATION OF THE JURIDICAL STRUCTURE TO THE TERMS OF THE CONVENTION

We propose the following be implemented:

- * The legal aspects of the Convention must be given just recognition in a manner that emphasizes the need to elaborate and execute an adequate Plan of National Action which will put its decrees into effect.
- * That which proceeds from the results of legal action must reflect what preceded it, for example: the Plan of National Action, for its realization, would need to be attended to and revised with the same level of participation and attention to detail that brought about the original legislation.
- * The Executive Power must reactivate the National Coordinating Commission for the Rights of Children, to be composed of governmental and non-governmental sectors, and to include a commission of children.
- * The Executive Power and the National Congress must not allow the initiatives of individuals or groups which directly or indirectly prejudice the process of incorporating the terms of the Convention into national laws.

* The judicial infrastructure must be fortified, with a substantial budget, in order to make possible the establishing of judges for Minors, with corresponding logistic support in the sixteen departments in the country that do not currently have them.

3.4 CONCERNING THE MONITORING OF THE CONVENTION

- We propose that the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights be given constitutional character in order to guarantee the permanence of these important functions with respect to future governments.

- We propose that the National Commission on the Rights of the Child be reorganized to include the distinct sectors of civil society, the state, and children themselves, in order to guarantee the effective and democratic participation of all involved, and to assume a pro-active position regarding the rights of children.

- We propose formal annual monitoring of compliance with the Convention in Honduras, with the participation of the various governmental and non-governmental social sectors.

We propose that UNIS, in coordination with the NGO'S, define the social indicators that will permit monitoring of compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its impact in improving their quality of life.

3.5 URGENT PROPOSALS FOR THE SHORT TERM

- To execute, in the span of no more than six months, a strategy for the promotion of the principles and decrees of the Convention, involving all social sectors, governmental as well as non-governmental, in a systematic fashion and on a national level.

- To elaborate and distribute the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adapting it to popular language, and taking into account the languages spoken by our aboriginal and Garifuna communities.

- To firmly order an end to forced military recruitment, and to punish those officials and soldiers who practice, promote, or tolerate it, by means of a transitional decree or law dictated by the Executive or by the National Congress, until such time as a law or decree will come into effect converting obligatory military service into a voluntary and educational military service.

- To apply justice in those cases in which the rights of children are compromised, sanctioning those who commit violations, especially those cases involving civil or military authorities.

- That the Directive Board of the National Congress not permit discussion of an initiative of law which seeks to reduce the penal age, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- That the treatment alternatives to the problem of so-called "juvenile delinquency" be approached with more depth and that this aspect, as considered in the document, "Social Policies of the State toward Children", be revised, since it is one of the components not presented in a new focus, continuing to judicialize the social problem of children in conflict with the law, independent of their structural or social nature.

- That the Minister of Labor assume a role as protector of the rights of adolescent workers in the maquila industry in their double-status as workers and children, by means of.

- The protection of youth workers who manifest their desire to organize themselves into unions.

- The use of their authority to supervise, even against the will of the employers, the working conditions of those less than 18 years of age.

- To re-open the Department of Protection of the Woman and Child Worker in order to give follow-up and real protection to worker-children in industry, enterprise or other lines of work.

4. FINAL SUMMARY

There are aspects to the situation of children in our country which we have not been able to bring up for lack of data which would demonstrate the true reality, among these the application of various forms of mental and physical violence, including physical punishment in the home, in the schools, in the centers and institutions giving attention to children, and in the penal system. Apparently, different forms of punishment are used to discipline children, but we have not measured their use, abuse or scope, while we recognize the Convention points out that the child must be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence.

We can affirm that the rhythm of work of the State of Honduras in the first eight months of the present government, with respect to the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, unites two characteristic principles:

1. Considerable and noteworthy efforts with respect to the readaptation of law, the revision of Policy, the assessment of national institutional structure, and the opening of public and private interinstitutional dialogue in search of a more desirable future vision for children have been made, as well as approximations and understandings toward the execution of new social policies with attention to all children, trying to create better conditions in which to realize the transformations necessary for a true and universal application of the rights of children in this country.

2. Slowness in the taking of decisions that, in reality, should be rapid in order to execute as quickly as possible the necessary institutional reforms, the approval of a new juridical framework and the adoption of practical strategies and mechanisms which would permit the immediate initiation of a coordinated effort of policies as well as services to benefit the children who have been waiting so long.

We can add to this a serious lack of vigilance with respect to violations of the rights of children, as well as a lack of application of the law against those who infringe it, whether these people are native or juridical, civil or military authorities.

We make note that the present political context is more favorable than the last, so that all Honduran society, and in particular those responsible for activities which will improve the quality of life of the children, may urge historic change, not only at the level of laws and policies but also in the real conditions of the lives of our children, committing ourselves to them in an intense and continuing labor together.

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., August 31, 1994

cc. President of the Republic

National Congress of the Republic

Social Cabinet of the President of the Republic

Junta Nacional de Bienestar Social

Commission Nacional Coordinadora de Derechos del Niño

Comisionado Nacional de Proteccion de los Derechos Humanos

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