

## Foreword

Realising the needs of children and the importance of giving them comprehensive care are among the major ethical principles which are called human rights. Such realisation is inevitably required as an appreciation of man's value, as a protection of his dignity and to enable him to live and interact with other members of the society. Duties and responsibilities are the other side of rights. If these two sides are considered together and put in the form of laws, customs, and traditions, a major stride in the march of human civilisation is undoubtedly taken. Nowadays rapprochement among different countries has widely increased and international charters providing the general duties and rights which regulate relations and which are applicable in all communities without any exceptions are being drawn. Such international instruments basically help promote peace, justice, freedom and a better standard of living.

Among major charters are those which are concerned with the rights of the child. This is attributed to the fact that children represent a category which cannot and does not have the ability to protect itself. The global community has fortunately realised this indisputable fact, and became aware that the treaties concerned with human rights in general without stipulating specific rights for children are not enough to safeguard this group of the population or do justice to them. The efforts exerted in preparing for the child's international year in the 70s managed to create a positive atmosphere in different communities, in this respect. It took a step further than the Declaration of the Rights of the Child which the General Assembly had unanimously adopted in 1959. Governments and non-governmental bodies realised that a legal document providing items beyond mere recognition and resolutions was needed to guarantee unambiguous specific rights for the child. Hence Poland submitted a proposal for a Convention on the Rights of the Child to the General Assembly which in turn submitted it to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Several bodies contributed to the drafting process of the Convention beside the working group of the Commission. These included many governments, UN agencies, and a network of some 50 non-governmental organisations serviced by Defence for Children International.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly in November 1989 during the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and coinciding with the end of a decade since the proclamation of the International Year of the Child. It is gratifying to see the number of countries which have ratified the Convention in such a short time. Ratification of the Convention is,

however, a first step. The real issue is its implementation, which requires the efforts and the cooperation of all those working in the field of children's rights.

The International Law on the Rights of the Child is a great contribution, and will assist all those working for children's rights. It is fortunate that the International Save the Children Alliance undertook to bring the book into being. It is also most fortunate that such an eminent authority as Geraldine Van Bueren is the author. I am sure it will be of great benefit to all those concerned.

Hoda Badran  
*Chair of the United Nations Committee  
on the Rights of the Child*