

6 LOOKING AHEAD

Ten years have passed since UNEP and UNICEF published the first report on 'Children and the Environment'. At the dawn of the new millennium, while current understanding of the linkages between children and the environment has advanced considerably, we must recognize that so much more still needs to be achieved. For the most part, we know what to do: protect children from environmental health threats and protect the environment to safeguard children's health and their future. In order for this wishful thinking to become reality, consideration for the environment must increasingly be integrated into the strategies addressing childhood development at the international, regional, national, and local levels – and likewise, children's rights and their special vulnerabilities must be fully recognized within environmental management endeavours.

Between two intergovernmental events addressing related aspects of the sustainable development agenda – the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children in May 2002 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in

August 2002 – unique opportunities exist to strengthen the inter-linkages between children’s health and the sustainable management of the environment. This can be done while fighting poverty through efforts to achieve sustainable development.

The goals set for the world’s children and sustainable development are within reach, if today’s leaders can step up efforts to mobilize collective will, resources, and the wisdom to act early and decisively in the name of children and for future generations. We owe it to our children to ensure a brighter and safer future in this new millennium.