

THE GREATEST VICTORY FOR UNBORN CHILDREN IN OUR GENERATION

*“O sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done wonderful things,
His right hand and His Holy arm have gained the victory for Him.
The LORD has made known His salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations” (Psalm 98-1-2).*

*“One generation shall praise Thy works to another,
and shall declare Thy mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4).*

Report on the United Nations Child Summit

by Thomas W. Jacobson

May 2002

Abortion is not today an international human “right” that can be imposed upon nations because of answered prayer; because President George W. Bush and the U.S. delegation refused to sacrifice unborn human life for a compromised United Nations document on children; because of opposition to abortion by the Holy See and a few other national delegations; and because of the willingness of some member nations of the Rio Group to break the group consensus and oppose pro-abortion language. The 8-10 May 2002 Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children (the Child Summit), which was the conclusion of more than a year of negotiations on the final document, was an international Roe v. Wade moment. But this time, the final outcome went the right way, though it was not clear that it would until the final evening.

The Battle for the Unborn Engaged Until the 911 Tragedy

A fierce battle of will and words was engaged in June 2001, when the U.S. delegation, during negotiations at the United Nations, asked to clarify if “reproductive health services” meant abortion (because it was defined to include abortion at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo). The Canadian delegate reluctantly acknowledged that it included abortion—which all the delegates seemed to know but refused to acknowledge.

From that point, the U.S. delegation and Holy See, with the support of several other delegations, persistently and successfully removed all abortion language from the document.

European nations came with a mandate from their governments to support disguised pro-abortion language. Latin American nations came with a mandate from their presidents to stick together as the Rio Group, and to support “reproductive health services.” Yet it appears that some of the Latin American nation presidents, vice presidents and first ladies did not understand, or were misled, as to whether “reproductive health services” included abortion.

Mr. Jacobson originally wrote this paper in 2002 when he was serving as Representative to the United Nations for Focus on the Family (U.S.A.), from 2001 to 2010.

The negotiations continued through September 10th, and stopped because of the September 11th tragedy. They did not resume until April 22, 2002.

The Battle Resumes, Continues Through Child Summit

On 8 May 2002, after two weeks of new negotiations—the Child Summit officially opened at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. Presidents, first ladies, vice presidents and other top officials from 190 nations met at the General Assembly hall, and 57 delivered their 5-minute official statements on children.

First Lady Lila T. Abaúnza de Bolaños of Nicaragua did something very unusual at the UN: she spoke plain truth from her heart. Speaking as a daughter, woman, wife “happily married for 52 love-filled years,” mother, grandmother and great grandmother, she appealed to the nations to protect life “created by God” and preserve “the family as an institution.” A loving family, she said, is the best environment for children, including those in poverty.

By that evening, I received assurance from a Nicaraguan delegate that his nation would break with the Rio Group if abortion language was in the final document.

The next day, May 9th President Vicente Fox of Mexico delivered his speech to the General Assembly. When he spoke of protecting children, he added something that was not in his written speech: “from the moment of conception.”

By that afternoon, a new and near final draft of the document was presented with no abortion language in it. The U.S. delegation said they could accept it. Then some delegations attempted to insert language to “ensure compliance with” Cairo and other UN international conference documents. This was a back-door approach to mandate abortion upon nations. Their attempt failed.

For over a year, the European and many Latin American delegates believed that the U.S. would eventually cave in and allow abortion language. But that final Thursday night of debate, during all-night negotiations, they finally realized that the U.S. would not compromise (when the innocent lives of children were at stake.)

The Europeans were also trying to redefine the family “in its various forms” to include homosexual partners. At 4:00 a.m., when the working group got back to the paragraph on family, the U.S. tried to insert “marriage.” The group spent the next 3.5 hours discussing whether “marriage” should be in the paragraph discussing the importance of the family to children, and at around 7:30 a.m. rejected the U.S. proposal.

Concern for Protecting Unborn Stirs Many Nations to Prayer and Action

Many other factors began to affect the negotiations:

- People in El Salvador, Costa Rica and other Latin American nations, where abortion is largely illegal, were hearing that their own delegations were supporting abortion.
- The U.S. began making diplomatic appeals at high levels to European and Latin American governments.
- Private appeals were made to the heads of delegations, including First Ladies, in New York City for the Child Summit.

- Prayer efforts were increased in the U.S., Europe and Latin America.

As a result, some delegates from pro-life nations in Latin American began to say they would break with the Rio Group, and even the EU began to soften their hard-line abortion positions.

Prayer was the most powerful weapon. Prayer alerts began going out again in the final two weeks of the negotiations. We sent more prayer alerts on May 9. A pastor from Connecticut came down to New York City and prayed with me for 1-2 hours each day, across the street from the UN. When the negotiations continued into Thursday night, I dared not go to sleep, so prayed all night in a closed hall next to the negotiating room at the UN. Early on the morning of May 10, Peter Smith and Charlie Hoare from the United Kingdom sent more prayer alerts.

Victory! For “the least of these”—

For the Unborn Children Who Could Not Defend Themselves

Finally, during early Friday evening, May 10, the final document was agreed to: there was no abortion language and no mandate for nations to legalize abortion.

When the final document was presented around midnight to heads of national delegations assembled at the UN General Assembly hall for the Special Session on Children, it was approved. Also, just prior to approval, five nations from Latin America plus the United States made very strong statements about the sacredness of life and the importance of the family.

Latin American Nations and USA Reaffirm Protection of Unborn and Family

EL SALVADOR said: “We reaffirm our position in the (reservations) to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) on reproductive rights and services—that they do not include abortion. Our Constitution prohibits abortion. Life is to be protected from the moment of conception.”

COSTA RICA said: “The Government of Costa Rica wants to place on record, and in accordance with its Constitution, that nothing in this document can be construed to include abortion. ... And the family is the basic cell of society.”

For ARGENTINA, Dr. Norberto Ignacio Liwski, President of the National Council of Children, Adolescents and Family, said: “Compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child does not include what Argentina has given reservations to. ... It is the sovereign power of any State [nation] to put reservations on international documents. Argentina supports its interpretive statements on Cairo, Beijing [see excerpts below], Habitat II The concept of the family is to be understood to be the union of a man and a woman, from which children come forth, as stated in Article 16 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

When Dr. Liwski referred to reservation and interpretive statements made at Cairo, he was speaking of Argentina’s statements at the end of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. Argentina said: “(L)ife exists from the moment of conception ... from that moment every person, being unique and unreproducible, enjoys the right to life, which is the source of all other individual rights.”

And at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), Argentina said: “No reference in these documents to the right to control matters related to sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, may be interpreted as restricting the right to life or abrogating the condemnation of abortion as a method of birth control or an instrument of population policy.”

HONDURAS: “Honduras reaffirms its reservations to previous UN documents. Honduras will review this document within its legal and cultural customs. ... The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society. It is the right of a man and a woman to form a [marriage] union. ... Parents have an irreplaceable right to choose the education for their children.”

When Honduras “reaffirmed its reservations,” it reaffirmed this statement it made at Cairo: The “Constitution of the Republic of Honduras ... provides ... that the right to life is inviolable, ... the State must protect the institution of the family and marriage and the right of men and women to contract marriages and common law marriages. ... (E)very person has the right to life and ... this right will be protected by law ... starting from the moment of conception. ... (T)he terms ... ‘types of families’, ‘different types of families’ ... and similar terms can only be accepted on the understanding that in Honduras these terms will never be able to mean unions of persons of the same sex.”

NICARAGUA: “Nicaragua reaffirms our reservations to previous conferences and conventions. This document is not jurisdictionally binding; and only [has] recommendations. ... The right to life exists from the moment of conception to its natural death. ... Sexual and reproductive health does not include abortion. ... ‘Various types of family’ includes only those shaped by the union of a man and a woman, and extends to extended family and single parents.”

When Nicaragua reaffirmed its reservations, it reaffirmed its statement at Cairo: “Nicaragua ... confirms that every person has a right to life, this being a fundamental and inalienable right, and that this right begins from the very moment of conception. ... (T)he family may take various forms, but in no event can its essence be changed. Its essence is the union between man and woman, from which new human life derives. ... [Nicaragua expresses] an explicit reservation on ... the concepts of ‘family planning’, ‘sexual health’, ‘reproductive health’, ‘reproductive rights’ and ‘sexual rights’ ... and any others when they include ‘abortion’ or ‘termination of pregnancy’ as a component. Abortion and termination of pregnancy can under no circumstances be regarded as a method of regulating fertility or a means of population control. ... (W)e also express an explicit reservation on the terms ‘couple’ or ‘unions’ when they may refer to persons of the same sex.”

UNITED STATES: Ambassador Sichan Siv spoke: “The United States understands the terms ... ‘sexual and reproductive health’ ... ‘reproductive health care,’ ‘family planning,’ ‘sexual health,’ ‘reproductive health,’ and ‘safe motherhood,’ in the document to in no way include abortion or abortion-related services or the use of abortifacients.” (Then he added that the U.S. is supportive of “post-abortion care” and “treatment of injuries or illnesses caused by illegal or legal abortion.”)

Ambassador Siv also said: “The United States emphasizes its commitment to programs that ... stress the practices of abstinence, of delaying sexual initiation, monogamy, fidelity, and partner reduction in order to ... prevent HIV infection.”

“The United States reaffirms that ‘The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State’ (Universal Declaration on Human Rights); that ‘the Right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized’ (International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, Art. 23, 1-2); and that ‘Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance’ (Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Article 25, 2). It stresses the need to further address the importance of family stability, the role of fathers, and parent-child communication on responsible sexual behavior, especially abstinence, and delaying sexual initiation. As regards the phrase ‘various forms of the family exist,’ the United States understands this to include single parent and extended families. It reaffirms that governments can support families by promoting policies that help strengthen the institution of marriage and help parents rear their children in positive and healthy environments.”

“A World Fit for Children” is Where ALL Children Are Protected & Cherished

The goal of the Child Summit was to produce a vision and goals for a World Fit for Children, which were to be outlined in this document. How could there be a “world fit for children” where we are deciding that some shall live and some shall die? The final document is much more consistent with the vision and goals, and will spare the lives of countless children.

Praise to God, Thanks to Prayer Warriors

Praise God for what He has done in giving us this great victory as we stood in the gap for unborn children; for the righteous people on the U.S., some Latin American, and other national delegations; for giving the righteous strength and resolve to stand and to continue negotiating, even through the night, until victory was attained; and for protecting millions of unborn children and preventing an increased global holocaust of unborn children.

For those of you who prayed, thank you! The Living God heard our prayers!