

IMMUNIZATION

a chance for every child

WORLD HEALTH DAY, 7 April, commemorates the coming into force of WHO's Constitution, in 1948. This year, countries around the world will use World Health Day to spotlight their activities in immunization

by Dr Halfdan Mahler

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We have—within our reach—a challenging goal set in 1977 by the health parliament of nations, our World Health Assembly, to provide immunization for all the children of the world by 1990.

There is, however, no room for complacency. I have decided to devote World Health Day 1987 to immunization because much more still needs to be done within countries themselves. No matter how generous external support will be, nothing can replace the active participation of individuals and their communities, of national leaders and their government structures.

Planet Earth can no longer accept that, in the age of modern technology, children should still die by the millions of diseases which can be prevented by available vaccines.

Since we launched the WHO Expanded

Programme on Immunization in 1974, moving forward with the strengthening of primary health care, there have been major public gains. The lives of some 800,000 infants are saved every year in developing countries, where child, vaccine and health worker can be brought together. The World Health Organization is particularly grateful to UNICEF, whose active support to achieve universal child immunization by 1990 has been and will remain of critical importance for the success of this programme.

To offer the chance of a lifetime to all the children of the world will call for the informed cooperation of the people, the unwavering commitment of leaders, the devotion of health workers, the loving care and intelligent interest of parents, and the raising of the necessary funds and materials. Immunization is truly a chance for every child.