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I've spent most of my professional life working for children's organizations, so it's nice to be here at the Institute for Child and Family Policy with the chance to talk about kids, which I love to do. Francois Truffaut the great French new wave film director, once said that every film should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but not necessarily in that order, and it's kind of how I feel about what I want to say today. I have a lot to say, and not enough time to say all of it, so I'll probably go a little back and forth. I suspect that I will not be as cogent or coherent as my distinguished predecessor here at the podium. But, I hope that my comments will help to complement Mary Robinson's in addressing a different aspect of refugee children, by focusing particularly on war-affected children, and especially those who are internally displaced and refugees. And I hope I'll pick up on both the linkages and between what she has focused on and some key issues arising from what I'd like to talk about.

Some of the interesting statistics Mary Robinson talked about related to child poverty, and infant mortality and under-five mortality rates. As many of you will know, according to UNICEF, something like 10 million children under the age of 5 die every year, mostly from highly preventable causes -- essentially the interaction between malnutrition and infectious diseases. Of the ten countries in the world with the highest under-five mortality rates, seven of them are countries affected by armed conflict. So, if we needed just one statistic that helps to show the extent to which armed conflict impoverishes children and their families that is a good place to start.

The scale of the problem is immense. There are approximately (and obviously these are “guesstimates,” often in some of the most under-developed parts of the world where statistical data gathering is not at its most effective), 25 million internally displaced people (IDPs), displaced as a result of conflict and violence. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are something like 17 million asylum seekers, refugees, and

what they describe as ‘others of concern.’ There are no good data on the number of children amongst these populations. But given what we know about a lot of countries’ specific situations, and refugee and displaced camps situations, it’s fairly certain that between 75 and 90 percent of these are women and children. So the figures we are talking about are of great importance, and with a major impact on economic issues often beyond their borders -- and I hope to touch upon that as we go along.

You are all familiar with many of the statistics; I won’t bore you with them. Three hundred thousand child soldiers around the world, it is estimated, are actively involved with situations of conflict. Millions are affected by a loss of access to health, to education, and other services; defined as social rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Killings and sexual violence are frequently reported in the news. From Côte d’Ivoire to Nepal, from Congo to Columbia, from Darfur in Sudan to Sri Lanka; so many of the images that we see of conflict and of the front line burden of conflict are images of children, and you are all familiar with them.

It is easy to despair at the lack of response by the international community. It’s very easy to be left with a very strong sense of failure. One of the questions that I do want to pose today is “why is it that we are so palpably failing in situations of armed conflict, particularly with regard to children who are displaced within their countries, or who have been displaced across the borders of their countries and become refugees?” Inevitably as I talk, I will at times try and focus specifically on the problems of children. But, it is not always easy to separate out, the problems of children from those that affect their families, and particularly their mothers.

What is important to stress, and this is a message I stress at all the conferences and events I attend and all the talks I give, is that too little is understood about the enormous policy and legal gains that have been made, particularly in the past 10 (or so) years. I really want to focus briefly on those, because one of the points that I want to make is that we do not really have enough excuses to fail, yet we are failing. Over the last decade we have had enormously positive developments on the international level. Mary Robinson talked about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which she said is not only the most universally ratified human rights treaty in the whole world, but it is probably the most comprehensive human rights treaty in the world. And having worked with it in the field for so many years, I can testify to the importance it serves

as a tool for protection on the ground. It breaks down the nonsensical differentiations that so often arise between civil and political rights, and economic and social rights.

And let's face it, it's very hard for people to say 'no' to children. You could go (as I've done) to warlords, to commanders in the field, and if I had gone and said "I am going to come to talk to you about human rights," they'd have kicked me out of their areas. But, if I came and said "I've come to talk about protecting our children," they had to let me in the door. The Graça Machel study on the impact of conflict on children that came out in 1996 was a hugely important landmark. It was really the first time that the issue of conflict and children was placed firmly and squarely at the center of the international, political agenda; and there have been hugely important ramifications since then. The appointment of a UN special representative of the secretary general for children and armed conflict, the optional protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child which prohibits recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, under the age of 18 have constituted significant advances. There has been the development of what is known as the Human Security Agenda. This is a political agenda which seeks to move beyond the classic approaches to peace and security, to looking at the human impact of conflict; it focuses on the protection of civilians in conflict, on child soldiers, woman and girls, land mines, small arms, and other more human and humane aspects of the peace and security agenda.

We've seen several Security Council resolutions, specifically on children and armed conflict, as well as more broadly on the protection of civilians in conflict, and women, and peace and security. We have the International Criminal Court with which I am sure you are all familiar. We have the Land Mines Convention, which has very quickly become, one of the most ratified human rights treaties in the world. There is much to be proud of and to take stock of. But as the Secretary General has repeatedly emphasized in various reports, we have yet to enter the area of application when it comes to protecting children in conflict situations. We have so many of the necessary tools but we are not using them effectively.

On the humanitarian operational side, there have also been important developments and steps forwards. Humanitarian agencies have begun to work much more effectively on protection as an integral element of humanitarian action. Education is now considered to be an integral part of the humanitarian response, as are the psychological or social rehabilitation of traumatized

children, the reunification of children with their families, and HIV/AIDS work. A huge area, which I won't have time to touch on today. The gender dimension is critical as well, although it remains weak; it has improved as part of the humanitarian response to the problems of civilians, especially children, affected by armed conflict. So there have been important gains, there is definitely progress to report on, but it's not enough.

Lastly, I want to touch on displacement. For so long the most neglected and least understood issue around conflicts -- internal conflicts, was internal displacements -- the displacement that takes place within the borders of the affected country. We've long had, since 1951, the refugee convention and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, so refugees have at least had a body of international standards and a particular agency to which they could turn. Internally displaced people have not had that protection, and have often been marginalized and neglected by the international humanitarian human rights response. In recent years, there have been some gains. The work of Frances Deng, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on IDP and the guiding principles that he pulled together, have been an important contribution towards focusing attention on this particularly neglected group. But I think it's still acknowledged by most humanitarian and human rights agencies, that much yet needs to be done to better address the protection needs, in particular of IDPs, and that within that group, children remain especially neglected and the specific impact of the displacement of children, little understood.

To try and put some focus on all of that -- which I realize is an awful lot, and too much to get our heads around in a very theoretical way -- I want to spend five minutes talking about Darfur. I am sure you are all familiar with the outlines of the situation in Darfur. I actually worked there twenty years ago, so it feels as if the world is going in full circle sometimes. A very neglected and isolated province in Western Sudan, Darfur is about the size of Texas. Until last six or seven months, very few people in this country, or indeed anywhere, would have heard of Darfur and yet, in the first televised debate between the presidential candidates, George Bush and John Kerry, other than Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, the one question both candidates were asked about and were able to respond to quite cogently was Darfur. But one of the many things to note about Darfur is that the United Nations first sounded warning bells about the humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur more than a year ago. The very first press release that was put out saying that we have

a major humanitarian catastrophe was on October 7, 2003, and that's very frightening when you think about how recently it is that the international community has awakened to what is really going on there.

Many of you will be familiar with the details. Something like, 1.7 million people displaced – give or take a hundred thousand or two. Two hundred thousand refugees in Chad. It is estimated that fifty thousand people have been killed, over six hundred villages destroyed; widespread and massive sexual violence, and approximately 2 million people currently dependent on food aid from the international community. In the light of such extraordinary suffering, suffering which has been created directly by massive atrocities -- ethnic cleansing; crimes against humanity and what some, at least, have described as genocide – the response by the international community has been appallingly slow and inadequate.

As I mentioned, it was more than a year ago that the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, raised the question of Darfur. But virtually nothing happened until April 7<sup>th</sup> this year when the Secretary General Kofi Annan gave a speech to the Commission on Human Rights, which was focused on the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. And in that speech in which he talked about, and reflected upon the failures of the international community ten years ago, he started to talk about Darfur. He talked about Darfur as today's humanitarian crisis that could require intervention even to the extent of using military force. It was an important speech and it helped move the international agenda forward, but still there was an appallingly slow response. I, myself, knocked on the doors of many, many Security Council diplomats around that time, urging and pleading with them to put Darfur at the top of their agenda, to ensure that the Security Council as the chief institution within the United Nations system responsible for peace and security took cognizance of what was going on, and began to respond. And the main response that I got was "it isn't on our agenda." And they literally meant that, it is not on the agenda of the Security Council. It took an enormous amount of political pressure from a variety of sources, including the Secretary General, himself, and Colin Powell the Secretary of State, who themselves visited Darfur, before the Security Council finally took up the issue of Darfur in July 2004.

Even today, after two Security Council resolutions on Darfur, we've seen a really grotesquely inadequate response to suffering and atrocities being carried out there by the government of Sudan, and its allied militia, the Janjaweed. We have made some progress. We have an international commission of inquiry that is being set up to try and identify responsibilities for the perpetrators of atrocities. We have an arms embargo against the Janjaweed, against the ethnic militias, although not against the Sudanese government itself. So we effectively have an arms embargo directed against the puppets, but not against the puppet masters. We do not have an oil embargo, and so far we do not have any disarmament of the Janjaweed, the ethnic militia, which is being demanded by the international community. We have a slow response by the African Union and only the beginning of the deployment of forces, there.

Given all that I've mentioned in the beginning about the development of a legal and policy agenda around protection in humanitarian crises, around protection in conflict, improved attention to children, to refugees, and IDPs, why is it that we have seen such failings in Darfur? I can only give you one analysis, and I am sure there are many others – and better ones. Darfur unfortunately, shows what happens when a humanitarian crisis and a conflict happen in a place that is marginal, isolated, and of no strategic importance. Darfur has no oil. Darfur has no terrorists. Darfur is simply not of great interest to the great powers of the world. In addition, the Sudanese government was very effective, together with the extraordinarily underdeveloped infrastructure of the province itself, in keeping the media away. Very few media went in and thus we didn't have and have rarely had to date, the kind of searing images of dead and dying children that mobilize public opinion, and mobilize politicians to do something and to be seen to be doing something.

Darfur also illustrated, I think, a critical problem that we face in many parts of the world: a humanitarian crisis which is really a fig leaf for a human rights crisis. The response from so many governments to the suffering in Darfur, has been to talk about delivering food and health care. President Bush, himself, in the debate said “we have to get more food to these long-suffering people.” Yes, of course we have to get more food to these long-suffering people, and the World Health Organization's estimates of the current mortality rate shows the extent to which the humanitarian response has thus far been too slow and inadequate, largely because of the way the Sudanese government has blocked it. But what we really need in Darfur is

international action that addresses the core cause, the single principal cause of the humanitarian crisis, which is the level and extent of the atrocities being carried out by the Sudanese government. And of course it's much easier for governments to send in food, vaccines, antibiotics, and oral re-hydration salts, than it is to take the kind of concrete measures that are necessary to deal with atrocities on that scale.

There are a couple of other things which we need to focus on and acknowledge, although I don't quite know how we deal with them. We can't underestimate the extent to which the war in Iraq has affected and challenged the concept of humanitarian intervention. Iraq, of course, was not a real humanitarian intervention. But the war there has made it much more difficult to talk about situations which are crying out for genuine humanitarian intervention. The political mood is such that the international community would not accept a humanitarian intervention in Sudan.

And the last point I want to make, is that at the level of so many inter-governmental institutions, including the Security Council, national interests do predominate. Without wanting to point fingers too obviously, it is important to note that Russia is the most important supplier of arms to the Sudanese government, and that China is the largest investor in the oil industry, and both of them (of course) are permanent members of the Security Council.

I've already gone over my time, so let me make a few concluding comments. What do we need to do to take the policy developments that I began with, to take our understanding of how we've failed children so miserably in Darfur? Where do we go from here? The first point I want to stress, which may be very obvious but is something we have to emphasize time and time again, is that we must put children and child protection at the heart of the humanitarian and human rights response in situations of conflict and displacement. Now, how do we go beyond the rhetoric of that? What strategy might be effective? One problem has been the almost total failure of humanitarian and human rights agencies to involve children, to promote child participation. We all talk about participation in a development context. We talk about participation of beneficiaries. We talk about participation of women, and about the participation of all sorts of marginalized and oppressed groups, but we rarely talk about the participation of children in fundamental decisions that affect their well being.

Two very obvious examples, just from my very own experience: When the UN's special session for children took place in 2001, I was then with UNICEF, and we helped to organize a special session of the Security Council to talk about children and armed conflict. We brought in three children from conflict-affected areas and we had them speak to the Security Council. The impact was extraordinary. The personal impact on senior diplomats sitting around that table, looking at and talking to kids from Liberia, from Bosnia, and -- I can't remember the third country, I think it was Columbia -- was absolutely profound and extraordinary. One other very small example, in Sierra Leone the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which has played a hugely important role in addressing the issues of impunity and accountability) produced a report specifically for children, not something that I know has happened anywhere else in the world; and yet as children have been so prominent as both victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses in Sierra Leone, it was felt important to do so. So let's think much more about child participation.

We need to improve our monitoring and reporting of child rights violations around the world. Now, there is a problem here and some will criticize me for this. It's true to say we live in a world where there is an extraordinary surfeit of information. All of us sitting in this room are bombarded with so much information that we don't know how to deal with it much of the time. And frankly those who say 'we didn't know,' when it comes to talking about failures to respond to violations of children's rights are, in my experience, usually lying. But, there is no question that there is a need for better coordination, more public reporting, and a much more coherent process at the international level for channeling information about children's rights violations to key decision-makers in the United Nations -- in regional organizations, government levels, in civil society, religious organizations, and others, to ensure proper follow up. There have been many initiatives -- the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, the NGO initiative that grew out of the Winnipeg conference on children and conflict, has been an important step forward. But we still see time and time again the way in which the Security Council and other key decision-making bodies, turn their backs on this kind of information when it's not politically convenient to take it forward.

In that respect, we need to look more carefully at the integrity of inter-governmental processes, and how we can hold governments within those inter-governmental processes accountable for commitments they make. Let me give you a couple of examples:

- The first two resolutions of the Security Council on children in armed conflict, that I mentioned earlier (1261 and 1379), talked about the need in all resolutions on countries in armed conflict, for the Security Council to ensure that questions of child protection be included and to make sure that child protection is taken account of in any action taken on situations of armed conflict.
- The Secretary General was asked to ensure that all his reports on the situations of armed conflict, address the issue of child protection.

In both those cases it has happened somewhere between 25 and 50 percent of the time.

Commitments have been made but are simply not being followed up on. We are not holding these people accountable, and we must find better ways of doing so.

We also need to look at people who are given a place in important inter-governmental processes that at least, in theory, can protect children in these kinds of situations. Some of you may have read recently, that one of the members of the next commission on human rights (an extraordinarily important governmental body, which Mrs. Robinson has great experience with, and not all positive I would guess), includes Sudan. The government of Sudan, guilty of massive violations of human rights in Darfur against its own people, is going to sit in judgment on other countries with respect to their human rights records. That clearly is the kind of situation which totally corrupts the integrity of inter-governmental processes, the respect in which they are held, and their ability to take action to protect children, or more broadly, to protect human rights. Clearly, we need to find ways of ensuring that such governments are not in position to sit in judgment of others.

Impunity and accountability are so important that they cannot be emphasized enough. Until we ensure that the crimes and sins of the past are addressed, we cannot move forward in many of these countries in conflict. Whether they be governments, trans-national corporations, or individuals, we need to name and shame those whose sins of commission and omission and those whose actions and in-actions have contributed to the violation of children's rights and human rights. We particularly need to give attention to children in accountability processes – children as witnesses of human rights violations, children as victims of such violations, and (even as I mentioned earlier) children as perpetrators. I am not for a minute suggesting that any child should ever be brought before the International Criminal Court. But the abuse, manipulation and

instrumentalisation of children in conflict has created a set of problems that may not have been reckoned with when we first started engaging in issues around the protection of children in conflict.

And now my last two points: we need to find a way of addressing neglected and marginalized emergencies much better. People, particularly in the humanitarian arena will often talk about ‘forgotten emergencies.’ If they were forgotten it would almost be excusable but, they are not forgotten. As I said, we live in a world where we pretty much know what’s going on. These are neglected and marginalized emergencies, and the principles of neutrality and impartiality demand that there be a much greater response by donors, by operational agencies, and more broadly, by the international community. The human security agenda which has played such an important role in humanizing politics at the international level, has a reverse side in which, unfortunately, too often there is politicization of the humanitarian agenda; and those countries which are not important politically are neglected, even from a humanitarian perspective.

The last point I want to make, which goes back to so many of the points that Mary Robinson made, is that we need to be much more attentive to the global and regional dimensions of armed conflict. Increasingly, the long running armed conflicts – Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Great Lakes – are rarely confined to one country. There are increasingly, conflicts with regional dimensions in which guns, and diamonds, and child soldiers are moved and trafficked across borders. We’ve documented in recent weeks and months, former child soldiers from Sierra Leone and Liberia ending up fighting for mercenary forces in Côte d’Ivoire as diamonds and small arms move back and forth to pay for them, and to move them around. So, the ways in which warlords are increasingly capable of working within the global economy to fund their efforts and fund their wars is something that needs a lot more emphasis, and a lot more of a coherent global response.

Let me stop there. Thank you very much.