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## Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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### Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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### From the desk of the Chairperson

Microcredit has been on the public screen for several years. It arrived on the big screen in 2005, which was declared the International Year of Micro credit by the United Nations.

Matters have evolved since then. Microcredit is now well established as a recognized investment tool, which has made it easier to obtain the necessary funds to supply the Microcredit loans.

The history of Microcredit was again made aware to a larger public on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006, when the Norwegian Nobel Committee released the name of the winner of one of the most prestigious prizes on offer worldwide, the Nobel Prize for Peace:

The statement contained the following words:

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006, divided into two equal parts, to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank for their efforts to create economic and social development from below. Lasting peace cannot be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Micro-credit is one such means. Development from below also serves to advance democracy and human rights."

Mr. Yunus started with Microcredit back in 1976. He was a University teacher and fairly well situated, but – as he described it - *poverty was all around him*. At first he started as a guarantor for the loans to the poor.

He soon discovered to his surprise, that the poor paid back their loans on time, every time.

When he ran into difficulties with the commercial banks, he founded Grameen Bank in 1983, which gives loans to 7 million people in Bangladesh and is making a profit.

### SPECIAL FEATURE:

### INTERNATIONAL FORUM: MICROCREDIT AND FAMILIES

In his Nobel lecture in Oslo on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, he described the impact his work has had on families:

*"It is 30 years now since we began. We keep looking at the children of our borrowers to see what has been the impact of our work on their lives. The women who are our borrowers always gave topmost priority to the children. One of the Sixteen Decisions developed and followed by them was to send children to school. Grameen Bank encouraged them, and before long all the children were going to school. Many of these children made it to the top of their class. We wanted to celebrate that, so we introduced scholarships for talented students. Grameen Bank now gives 30,000 scholarships every year.*

*Many of the children went on to higher education to become doctors, engineers, college teachers and other professionals. We introduced student loans to make it easy for Grameen students to complete higher education. Now some of them have PhD's. There are 13,000 students on student loans. Over 7,000 students are now added to this number annually.*

*We are creating a completely new generation that will be well equipped to take their families way out of the reach of poverty. We want to make a break in the historical continuation of poverty."*

For the reasons given in this speech the board of our Committee decided to give this important topic a forum in our Full Committee Meetings in 2007 .

In this issue you will find two presentations given by two renowned experts in the field of Microcredit, which were made during an International Forum at our Full Committee Meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007. We will also dedicate our Full Committee Meeting on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to this subject.

Please also bear in mind that our Committee will also hold its board election at this meeting – Member Organisations will receive the relevant communications during the coming months.

Kind regards  
Michael Schwarz  
Chairperson

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## ***International Forum: Microcredits and Families***

### **United Nations Vienna International Centre May 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2007**

<b>10:00 - 10:45</b>	<b>Dr. Andreas Galik, Schelhammer &amp; Schattera, Vienna</b>
<b>10:45 - 11:30</b>	<b>Gerhard Novy, Oicocredit, The Netherlands</b>
<b>11.30 - 12:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>
<b>12.00 - 12.30</b>	<b>Discussion with Dr. Andreas Galik &amp; Gerhard Novy</b>

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICAL INVESTMENTS**

Sustainable development and ethical investments are main issues of Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera over the years. The following article is an abstract of a presentation which was held at the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family Full Committee meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007. At the beginning key data of Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera is mentioned.

#### **Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera AG:**

Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera AG is Vienna's oldest private bank. It was established in 1832 and the company celebrated its 175th anniversary a few days ago, which by itself might be a symbol of sustainability. 65 people staff work in the Head Office at Goldschmiedgasse 3, 1010 Vienna.

We are a full service bank offering checking accounts, payments, guarantees and loans.

We are a partner of Oikocredit microfinance organisation that is specialised in this area to show our commitment to the microfinance idea.

Our business focus is on asset management which means that EUR 2.20 billions are under our management. EUR 340 millions out of the money under management are invested in Superior ethical mutual funds managed by Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera. This amount represents a market share of 20% in ethical investments in Austria and makes us market leaders in this business in Austria.

**Our shareholders:** 15% of our shareholders are private individuals in Austria.

85% of our stocks are held by Austrian Roman Catholic institutions (male catholic orders, dioceses and monasteries). They became the major shareholders of our bank in 1955.

#### **Our mission statement**

We are a full service bank with a longstanding tradition. The company is related to the principles of the Catholic Social Teaching. We are a private bank and emphasize on *confidence, continuity and individual advice in customer relation*. Our highly qualified staff is our major asset in customer care.

#### **Our customers**

30% of our customers are private customers, 30% are companies and 40% are Roman Catholic institutions (dioceses, catholic orders, schools, hospitals and NGOs).

#### **Our NGO services**

We are proud to have a number of NGOs among our customers and to offer them tailor-made ser-

VICES in all business areas. This starts with checking accounts in EUR and all major currencies and transfers. A substantial part of the cross border payments we effect on behalf of our customers is sent to beneficiaries in countries like Guatemala, Nicaragua, as well as African and south east Asian countries. In these countries our NGO customers maintain numerous project partnerships.

Other services for NGOs are liquidity management (high interest overnight accounts), cash management (money market funds managed under ethical aspects) and asset management (investment funds managed under ethical aspects).

We consult NGOs in legal aspects regarding payments and embargoes to avoid charity funds being blocked or frozen. Furthermore we are offering the issuance of bank guarantees that are often necessary to apply for aid programs (EU, World Bank). We also do interim financing in case of late arrival of aid program funds agreed.

#### **Our investment fund company, Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera KAG**

is owned by Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera (70%) and the Conference of the Superiors of the Male Austrian Catholic Orders (30%).

All its "Superior" Mutual Funds available to public are managed under ethical aspects.

They have a total of EUR 340.000,000.00 money under management (MUM) and cover all major asset classes:

SUPERIOR 1 – Ethik Renten, MUM: EUR 139 mio., invests in bonds.

SUPERIOR 2 – Mix, MUM: EUR 28 mio., invests 50% in bonds and 50% in stocks,

SUPERIOR 3 – Ethik; MUM: EUR 137 mio., our flagship fund invests 80% in bonds and 20% in stocks and is a favourite of our institutional investors.

SUPERIOR 4 – Ethik Aktien, MUM: EUR 27 mio. invests in stocks and last not least

SUPERIOR 5 – Ethik Geld; MUM EUR 12 mio., the first money market fund in Austria, managed under ethical criteria.

#### **Other products based on SUPERIOR Ethical Funds**

Based on the ethical concept of SUPERIOR 3 – Ethik, is the "United Funds of Success Ethik" an ethical life insurance in cooperation with Wiener Städtische Insurance.

SUPERIOR Ethik Garant 2006/11 is our guarantee product reducing the risks that are inherent to investments in the stock markets.

### **Sustainable Development and Ethical Investments**

Let me begin with two quotes. The first one is:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

Source: Report of the Brundtland Commission (established by the UN in 1983) published by the Oxford University Press in 1987.

And one more quote:

"The interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development are economic development, social development and environmental protection"

Source: UN 2005 World Summit Outcome Document

#### **Social Responsibility Investment (SRI)**

Socially responsible investing describes an investment strategy which combines the intentions of maximize both financial return and social good taking ethical, social and ecological aspects into consideration.

I would like to point out the fact that sustainable or ethical investment and maximizing financial returns are compatible tasks. One of our shareholders, the bishop of a diocese in Austria and one of the main supporters of ethical investments in this country said: "I am in charge of the salaries of 700 people (priests, employees) and for the maintenance of 1000 buildings in my diocese. I cannot afford investments leading to poor returns".

This statement builds the basis for the engagement of the customer in ethical investment. He is an excellent example for socially responsible investors who favor corporate practices, which are environmentally responsible, support workplace diversity and increase product safety and quality.

#### **The fourth dimension of investment**

Ethical responsibility is the so called fourth dimension of investment. It supplements but does not supersede the three traditional dimensions of investment: balance of safety and risk, profitability and liquidity.

#### **Why socially responsible investment?**

The reasons for a socially responsible investment are diverse: for many of them it is an accordance with the code of values of the company: e.g. WWF would reject investing in animal testing products

or Greenpeace would never invest in nuclear energy.

Other companies want to contribute to sustainable development of human society and economy. Financial aspects are another reason, because sustainably managed companies are meant to be more successful in the long run. In some countries, e.g. Norway, state owned funds (oilfund) are obliged to invest sustainably/ethically by law.

## History of socially responsible investment

One of the most early adopters of SRI was John Wesley (1703-1791). He was the founder of the Methodist Church.

A sermon of his, entitled „The Use of Money“, outlined his basic tenets of social investing – i.e. not to harm your neighbours through your business practices and to avoid industries like tanning and chemical production that pollute rivers and streams.

## Modern SRI

Modern SRI movement began during the Vietnam War. Many people living during the era remember the picture in June of 1972 of a naked nine year-old girl running towards a photographer screaming, her back burning from napalm dropped on her village.

That photograph crystallized outrage against Dow Chemical, the manufacturer of napalm, and prompted protests across the world against Dow Chemical and other companies profiting from the Vietnam War.

These issues and people who promoted them, established the basis for SRI as it is today

## SRI investing strategies

First of all I would like to mention the active approach of SRI investing strategies. This approach signifies engagement which means identifying companies that could improve their social, environmental, governance or other ethical policies and performance and encouraging them along this path. This can be done by writing occasional letters of protest or support or raising issues at the annual general meeting as well as maintaining a detailed and direct dialog with the company. Last but not least you can confront companies in telling them how their corporate behaviour influences your investment strategy.

## SRI investing strategies

The passive approach of SRI investing strategies means screening. We distinguish between negative and positive screening. On the one hand

negative Screening excludes certain securities from investment considerations based on social and/or environmental criteria. On the other hand positive Screening means investing only in companies with environmental issues or Best-in-Class approach that is a bench marking system regarding certain issues.

## Specification of the negative screening

The negative screening can be specified as follows:

Identification of controversial business areas of companies such as abortion (production of abortion drugs, execution of abortions), biocides, embryonic research, military weapons, nuclear power, pornography, tobacco, etc.

Furthermore the negative screening contains the identification of controversial business practices of companies such as: serious violation in areas such as corruption, accounting-fraud, animal testing, child labour (use of child labour by company and/or supplier to an extent that exceeds the limits set by the ILO), controversial environmental behaviour (e.g. operating or financing of ecologically controversial facilities such as dams, pipelines or mines), violations of human rights (serious violation of human rights by the company and/or supplier), violation of labour rights (serious violation of the „ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work“ by the company and/or supplier).

Finally country related issues such as death penalty or the refuse of underwriting of the Kyoto protocol are negative screening specifications. These items cause no investment in government bonds of countries concerned.

## Our way of ethical investment

In this chapter our way of ethical investment will be outlined. The company process consists of three parts. The Ethical Council, the external research and the selection process.

## Ethical Council

Our ethical council consists of 10 members from the economy, science and roman catholic church. They define criteria of ethical investment based on the „Frankfurt Hohenheimer Leitfaden“ by Prof. Dr. J. Hoffmann. They also clarify negative criteria of our ethical investment.

## External Research

The external research is done by oekom research AG Munich one of the world's leading rating agencies in sustainable investments. Their corporate responsibility research covers 750 large and

medium-sized companies from all important industries. Their country rating covers 45 nations, all OECD members, the new EU members plus the most important Asian countries. As a consequence the research universe comprises the world's major companies and countries. Monthly updates done by a multidiscipline team of analysts are delivered.

### **Corporate Responsibility Rating provided by oekom research**

Oekom provides a social cultural rating containing the checking of the management system (mission statement and goals), the relation to the employees (such as working hours, job security, remuneration, health and safety, equal opportunities) and the relationship with external stakeholders (e.g. suppliers, customers, standards in foreign countries).

They also provide an environmental rating which contains the environmental management (eco-balance, office ecology, procurement), products and services (environmental product development) and the eco-efficiency (such as energy consumption, water consumption, volume and type of waste, atmospheric emissions).

This leads to a company or country rating from A to D, whereas A is a top rating and D signifies a very poor rating.

### **Selection Process**

The selection process starts with the definition of our sustainable investment strategy given to oekom research. Oekom research is committed to the criteria given by our ethical council. To follow these terms of reference oekom starts the selection process based on the MSCI World (Morgan Stanley Corporate Index) which covers the top companies of all industries. The next step are the negative selection according to our principles and the "Best in class approach" according to the corporate responsibility rating of oekom.

This process leads to a sustainable investment universe. Finally the selection process is done by mutual fund managers of Bankhaus Schelhammer & Schattera KAG. In the end we can offer our customers an investment in our Superior Ethical Funds that supports sustainable development in a global environment.

To sum up I would like to point out that ethical investment has long tradition. Sustainable investment results in the same profitability than non-sustainable investment. Sustainable investment builds the basis for future generations.

**If you need further information please contact  
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## OIKOCREDIT

In the Full Committee Meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2007, held in the Vienna International Center of the United Nations Office in Vienna, Director Gerhard Novy introduced to the participants the work of Oikocredit U.A., an enterprise registered in the Netherlands. Oikocredit U.A. has a licence as a financial institution and concentrates on loans to the poorest of the poor.

Some facts about Oikocredit which may be of interest and benefit to you.  
(source: [www.oikocredit.org](http://www.oikocredit.org)):

### Introduction:

**Oikocredit believes that poor people can build themselves a better life, if only given the chance. If only given credit. Started as a pioneer in the field of development financing, Oikocredit is today one of the largest financiers of the microfinance sector worldwide. Oikocredit is one of the few ethical investment funds, which finances development projects in the South benefiting disadvantaged and marginalised people.**

Privately owned, Oikocredit is a unique cooperative society, which encourages investors to invest their funds in a socially responsible manner. Read more about Oikocredit's mission and values.

Oikocredit's loans are channelled through a network of Regional Offices spread over Latin America, Asia, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and managed by local professionals. Today more than 60% of our outstanding capital goes to financial intermediaries, so-called microfinance institutions (MFIs).

Moreover Oikocredit finances cooperatives or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in agriculture, trade, services and manufacturing.

Oikocredit gives loans instead of donations. This is based on the view that when it comes to achieving economic productivity and self-reliance, loans are a more effective instrument than grants.

### 1. Values

#### a. People

All people are created equal. Oikocredit thus extends credit to marginalized people irrespective of their faith, culture, age or gender and favours the initiatives of women, as they are the backbone of their families and thus society as a whole.

### Sharing

An uneven distribution of resources, wealth and power lead to a world of conflict. When people in the North, South, East and West are prepared to share what they have, respect each other and cooperate together, justice and peace can rule in the world. Oikocredit provides a mechanism for meaningful sharing.

#### b. Ecumenical Spirit

Around the world people of faith are willing to share their resources. Oikocredit forms part of that worldwide coalition of solidarity.

#### c. Grassroots

Development is most effective when it stems from the grassroots. In the cooperative culture of Oikocredit, people's initiatives and participation are central to all acts and policies.

#### d. Integrity

Respect between people implies honesty and truthfulness. Oikocredit's determination is to listen with an open mind and communicate in full transparency on all parameters of its own policies. A code of conduct for those who determine the Oikocredit course is part and parcel of this principle.

#### e. Creation

A wholesome eco-system is the basis for life. Animals, species and bio-diversity should thus be preserved. Oikocredit believes that a healthy balance in nature can only be achieved in a world where resources and power are evenly spread.

### 2. History

The roots of Oikocredit lie in the 'social gospel' of the World Council of Churches. In 1968, when the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches convened in Uppsala, Sweden, the Western world was experiencing unsettled times. The unease of that period was also felt within the churches. Young and politically engaged church members cried out at the General Assembly: 'We preach love in our church, telling people to be good and not to fight. But why do churches invest

without scruples in banks that might channel their investments to industries that support Vietnam War and Apartheid? Can't we invest our funds in a better way; something that is more in line with the social teaching of the church?'

**Even after this dramatic request, it still took seven years to establish such a fund. It was only in 1975 that the Oikocredit Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society U.A. was established to provide churches and church-related organisations with an alternative investment instrument, to serve the interests of the poor. The aim was to encourage social justice by giving credit to productive enterprises run by disadvantaged people.**

Oikocredit had an unexpectedly difficult start, since many church treasurers ultimately didn't believe in this alternative investment instrument. Some felt it was unethical to lend instead of giving. Others simply didn't have faith in the concept's success and didn't want to invest the church's money rashly. Many individual church members in Europe did believe in the concept, though, and started Support Associations. Even now, these Support Associations are still mobilising the largest part of the actual share capital and making a major contribution to the success of Oikocredit.

Another great contribution to Oikocredit's success came from project partners themselves, who - contrary to the stereotypical image some had of them - repaid their loans. Oikocredit's remarkable repayment rate is proof of this: for as long as we have been around, less than 10% of all the loans we have disbursed have had to be written off.

### 3. Organisation

Oikocredit's mission is to mobilise capital for business enterprises, which operate on principles of justice and are aimed at improving the standard of living for people in the so-called Third World.

Since foundation in 1975, Oikocredit has grown into a sizeable financial institution with a great variety of supporters throughout the world: churches, church-related organisations, investment funds and individuals through Support Associations.

Oikocredit is in many respects a unique organisation:

- Oikocredit operates like a development "bank", providing financing to disadvantaged people, people who would normally not get a loan from a commercial bank.

- Even though it is a small organisation, Oikocredit has a wide network of regional offices and country offices.
- Oikocredit manages to run its operations with a modest financial return but a high social return for its investors.
- Oikocredit is one of the only (if not the only) cooperative societies operating with a worldwide membership of investors and clients.
- Oikocredit has a unique structure of: members, project partners, regional offices, international office and a Board of Directors.

### 4. Facts and figures

(Figures per 31/12/06)

*Objective:*

Credit for development

*Share capital:*

EUR 276 mln.

*Total lendable funds:*

EUR 286 mln.

*Capital sources:*

Around 500 churches and church-organisations

Over 27,000 individuals and local organisations through

37 Support

Associations in 18 countries

More than 50 banks, development organisations, foundations

Some 43 project members

*Shares:*

Nominal value of EUR/USD 200

Shares have kept their value since Oikocredit's start in 1975

Repayment possible under conditions (the intention of the investment is long-term)

*Dividend:*

Modest, usually 2%

2% paid yearly since 1989, except for 1998/99 (1% due to Asia crisis)

s

*Membership/investment fees:*

None

*Investment mix:*

16% agricultural/other sectors

47% financial intermediaries (e.g. microfinance)  
19% Socially Responsible Investments allocated to project funding (not yet disbursed)  
16% Socially Responsible Investments in development banks/development countries  
2% Socially Responsible Investments in bonds/shares (more than 90% bonds)

*Socially responsible investment:*

Ethical Excellence label for Long Term Investment Portfolio (non-project financing) and Ethical label for Bonds in Developing Countries and Emerging Markets

*Operational costs:*

2.4% as a percentage of total assets

*Governance:*

Cooperative Society, under Dutch law  
International Board of Directors  
Audit Committee  
Investment Advisory Committee

*Organizational structure:*

11 regional and 18 country offices, staffed with local professionals, in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America Management at International Office in the Netherlands  
137 staff members (FTE)

*Auditors:*

PricewaterhouseCoopers

*Regulatory status:*

Oikocredit deposits a prospectus with the AFM (Autoriteit Financiële Markten), the Dutch Organisation that supervises financial markets in the Netherlands

Recognition by the Dutch Central Bank as a credit institution with exemptions according to Section 2 of the Exemptions Regulations Act on the Supervision of Credit Systems (ASCS 1992)

*Project financing features:*

Loans between EUR 50,000 – 2,000,000 (in exceptional cases 4,000,000)

Credit lines

Equity investments

Hard/local currency

Duration 2-10 years

Flexible interest rates (based on market rate, country and project risks, development relevance)

*Project financing figures:*

EUR 208 mln. outstanding with 561 project partners

199 new projects approved for EUR 117 mln. in 2006

EUR 94 mln. disbursed in 2006

*Financing criteria:*

Feasibility, preferably cooperative structure, participation of women, respect for environment, impact on community

*Loan loss provisions:*

15.1% as a percentage of total outstanding project portfolio (incl. provision for general risks)

*Project financing write-offs:*

Less than 10% of the total disbursed amount since Oikocredit's start in 1975 written-off. In 2006 0.9% of total outstanding was written off

**For further information please visit the homepage of oikocredit at:**

**[www.oikocredit.org](http://www.oikocredit.org)**

***News from the United Nations***

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES**

**15 May 2007**

The theme for this year's International Day of Families is "Families and Persons with Disabilities".

For many persons with disabilities, their family has been, and remains, a source of empowerment. For others, however, their family has perhaps been overprotective, restricting their growth as individuals. Tragically, for others still, their family has viewed them with stigma or shame, and has even become a source of abuse and neglect.

In December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the first human rights treaty of the 21st century. In its preamble, the Convention reconfirms that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and the State. It also states that persons with disabilities and their family members should receive protection and assistance so that families can contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities.

In Article 23 of the Convention, Governments agreed to protect persons with disabilities against discrimination in matters relating to marriage, relationships and the family. They also agreed to ensure the equal rights of children with disabilities with respect to family life, and to ensure that children with disabilities are not separated from their families against their will except when necessary for the best interests of the child. Should the immediate family be unable to care for a child with disabilities, Governments agreed to undertake every effort to provide alternative care within the wider family or, failing that, within the community in a family setting.

Society has a responsibility to persons with disabilities and their families. On this

International Day of Families let us dedicate ourselves to enabling the family, the most basic unit of society, to fulfil its role in ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy full human rights and dignity, and flourish as individuals.

## ***Recent and forthcoming events***

**23-25 MARCH 2007**



### **XVII INTERNATIONAL FAMILY CONGRESS ROME**

#### **FAMILY, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Report IFFD Congress

The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) has held an international congress from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to March 25<sup>th</sup> in Rome.

500 participants from all over the world met to discuss issues facing the development of Families on our modern world.

The participants also discussed and passed a declaration on the needs of the family, the "Declaration of Rome". This declaration was presented to the United Nations in New York on the International Day of the Family on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

The declaration reads as follows:

#### **ROME DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSABILITIES OF FAMILIES**

On the occasion of the appointment of a new Secretary General of the United Nations, the signatories to this declaration wish to offer their wholehearted cooperation.

In addition,

- (i) (i) the ninety family enrichment organisations from forty-seven countries on all continents, which are part of the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), a body that has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, gathered in Rome at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Family Congress under slogan "The Family: Rights and Responsibilities",
- (ii) (ii) as well as the family organisations that support this declaration,

Wish to make the following observations and put the following requests to those in positions of responsibility at the United Nations (UN) so that they may take them into consideration when drawing up their recommendations and policies concerning families:

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

1. A process is currently underway, at various levels and paces in different countries, whereby the fertility rate is progressively falling, while populations are ageing. This process is creating uncertainty as to whether welfare systems will be maintained, especially care for the elderly and dependents, and whether sufficient public funds will be provided in the short and medium term for health and education in particular. In this context, in all cultures and countries, the family plays a key role in social cohesion between the generations.
2. In an ever-growing number of countries, parents face difficulties in having the number of children they freely wish to have within a context of equal opportunities and social support for maternity. Economic hurdles, the impossibility of achieving a work/life balance and, generally speaking, the absence of a family-friendly social environment that promotes recognition of families and social support are contributing to something of a global family crisis, preventing people from becoming parents and from playing their full role as parents.
3. The need to pay appropriate attention to childhood and young people in a rapidly changing world of social and economic globalisation is a priority. The difficulties parents experience in gaining access

to the training, tools and time they need to carry out their role as spouses and the main carers of their children is the cause of many of the worrying rates of failure at school, addiction, violence, traumatic family break-ups and an absence of civic values among so many children and adolescents around the globe. These factors are ameliorated when steps are promoted to strengthen families together with generous social and economic support policies.

These observations lead us to make the following:

## REQUESTS

1. The United Nations (UN) should provide the necessary tools to monitor the extent to which family rights are honoured. In particular, it should denounce any infringement by member states of the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the family is the “natural and fundamental group unit of society”, article 16) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (“the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family”, article 10). Any form of discrimination based on the number of children one has, the fact of being a parent, or situations affecting the weaker and more defenceless family members such as children and the elderly and the families that look after them should be especially closely monitored.
2. The United Nations (UN) should promote the “family perspective”, i.e. the importance of analysing the impact on family welfare of all of the policies the same organisation promotes, as well as those followed by member states, in a similar way to the “environmental perspective”, for example. In the same way, it should promote the concept of “family-responsible policies”, in particular considering family circumstances in the sharing of social burdens and benefits, which should be a priority across the board in the United Nations’ (UN) Millennium Goals.
3. Awareness-raising and educational campaigns should be carried out in member states in order to enable parents to carry out their roles as the main carers of their children. In order to achieve this goal, steps to provide a work/life balance to help rather than penalise parents for spending time with their children should be promoted, family stability and cohesion among family members should be promoted, and initiatives to advise and train parents should be supported.

Rome, 25 March 2007

## CONTACT:

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## 27-29 MARCH 2007

### THE 5TH AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The HIV/Aids pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on the lives of children and young people worldwide, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Join academicians, practitioners, children and researchers in exploring the issues relating to the care and protection of children infected and affected by HIV/Aids.

ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter in conjunction with ANPPCAN Head Office-Nairobi and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) organized the 5th African Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. The conference under theme: “**HIV/AIDS and Children: The challenges of care for and protection of children in Africa**” took place from 27th to 29th March 2007 at Hotel Africana in Kampala, Uganda, and attracted over five hundred participants from all over the world.

## **PROGRAMME**

1. The Rights-Based Approach: A community-led strategy to fight HIV/AIDS among Children
2. Achieving sustainable care and support for Children Living with HIV/AIDS and other Vulnerable children
3. Challenges of providing effective protection to victims of HIV/AIDS induced child labour in Uganda
4. CHILD LABOUR AND HIV/AIDS
5. Child Trafficking : A UK Police Response Child Response
6. Creating safer school environments for children-action oriented meetings
7. Disclosure of HIV to infected children-balancing parents' needs and children's rights
8. Enhancing social protection to reduce hiv-aids induced child labour
9. Experience on sexual protection for HIV/AIDS infected and affected child labourers
10. HIV prevention in areas with conflict- challenges and strategies used by primary schools in northern Uganda

### **CONTACT:**

[www.anppcanug.org](http://www.anppcanug.org)

## **1-12 MAY 2007**

### **FAMILY Forum in STROBL**

Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Austria

### **CONTACT:**

Katholischer Familienverband Österreichs  
Spiegelgasse 3/9  
1010 Wien  
01/51552/3201  
[info@familie.at](mailto:info@familie.at)

## **MAY 3, 2007**

### **VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY**

<b>INTERNATIONAL FORUM</b>
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#### **“Microcredits and Families”**

**10:00 – 10:45 Dr. Andreas Galik, Schelhammer & Schattera, Vienna**

**10:45 – 11:30 Gerhard Novy, Oicocredit Austria**

**11.30 – 12:00 Coffee Break**

**12.00 – 12.30 Discussion with Dr. Andreas Galik & Gerhard Novy**

## **MAY 9, 2007**

The Institute for Family Policy (IPF) is happy to invite you to the presentation of the Report "Evolution of the Family in Europe 2007" which will take place at the European Parliament in May 9, European Day, 10:00 am, room 5E2.

The presentation will be chaired by:

**Mr. Jaime Mayor Oreja**, Spanish Member of the European Parliament; Vice-Chairman of the European People's Party and European Democrats;  
and

**Mr. Alojz Peterle**, Slovenian Member of the European Parliament; Member of the European People's Party and European Democrats

The report will be presented by:

**Mr. Eduardo Hertfelder**

President of IPF International,

and

**Mrs. Lola Velarde**

President of the European Network of the Institute for Family Policies (IPF).

## **11-13 MAY 2007**

If You Believe in the Family,

COME TO WARSAW

### **FOR WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES IV**

**Who We Are:** The World Congress of Families (WCF) was founded in 1997 by Dr. Allan Carlson (president of The Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society), when the first Congress convened in Prague. Since then, there have been Congresses in Geneva (1999) and Mexico City (2004). More than 3,000 pro-family activists from over 65 countries are expected in Warsaw this spring for World Congress of Families IV. World Congress of Families fosters an international network of organizations, leaders, legislators, scholars and activists seeking to restore the natural family as the fundamental social unit and seedbed of a civil society.

**Our Goals:** To shift the public policy debate: From "The Family as an obstacle to development" to "The Family as the source of social renewal and progress" • From "overpopulation" to "under-population" as the demographic challenge of the 21st century • From "The small family and voluntary childlessness as good" to "The celebration of large families as a special social gift" • From "religious orthodoxy as a threat to progress" to "religious orthodoxy as the source of humane values and cultural progress."

**Some of the Issues We'll Be Talking About In Warsaw:** Gender Rights or Family Rights – Demographic Winter as the New Population Crisis – The Family Home as the Center of Upbringing and Education – Family Enterprises and Family Independence – The Effects of Marital Fidelity and Harmony on the Family – What's Wrong with Cohabitation? – The Harm of "Same-Sex Marriage" – Media and the Family: Threats and Opportunities – How Abortion Undermines The Family – The Impact of Pornography on Family Unity.

**Why Warsaw in 2007?** Europe is the battlefield and Poland is pivotal. Through demographic winter and the rule of an anti-family elite, Europe is almost lost to family values. The loss of Europe will have a devastating impact on the family in the Americas, Asia and Africa, as well as in international forums. Poland is a bastion of tradition, faith and family. WCF IV will draw pro-family advocates from across the European continent in what could be the beginning of a pro-family renaissance.

**A Unique Experience:** You'll have an opportunity to make history while meeting people from around the world who share your values, exchanging ideas and strategies, hearing exciting speakers from five continents, helping to devise an international pro-family agenda and experiencing the wonder of Warsaw in the spring.

#### **CONTACT:**

Media Inquiries – Don Feder (508) 405-1337 or [dfeder@rcn.com](mailto:dfeder@rcn.com)

World Congress of Families

934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103.

Phone: (815) 964-5819

E-mail [larry@worldcongress.org](mailto:larry@worldcongress.org).

## **MAY 15, 2007**

### **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES**

The theme for this year's International Day of Families is "Families and Persons with Disabilities".

### **UNITED NATIONS TO ADDRESS FAMILIES AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

A panel of experts will address the issue of families and persons with disabilities on Tuesday, 15 May, 1:15 - 2:30 p.m. at the United Nations (Conference Room 4).

The panelists are Ms. **Megan Kirshbaum**, Founder and Executive Director, National Resource Center for Parents with Disabilities "Through the Looking Glass", Berkeley, California; Ms. **Sue Swenson**, Executive Director, The Arc of the United States, Silver Spring, Maryland; Ms. **MiJoo Kim**, Director, Women with Disabilities Arts and Culture Network, Seoul, Republic of Korea; and a representative of a UN Member State. The panel will mark the 2007 observance of International Day of Families, 15 May, whose theme is "Families and Persons with Disabilities".

For those wishing to attend and needing a grounds pass to enter the United Nations, please contact Ms. Dolores Vicente at [vicented@un.org](mailto:vicented@un.org) or at 212-963-2820 by close of business on Wednesday, 9 May. Please indicate if you are a wheelchair user.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Please visit <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family>

Or

#### **CONTACT**

Edoardo Bellando, (212) 963 8275

e-mail: [bellando@un.org](mailto:bellando@un.org)

or

Dan Shepard, (212) 963 9495

e-mail: [shepard@un.org](mailto:shepard@un.org).

## **2 – 10 JUNE 2007**

### **ASSOCIATED COUNTRY WOMEN OF THE WORLD 25TH TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

Turku, Finland

#### **CONTACT:**

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E-mail: [finland2007@gmail.com](mailto:finland2007@gmail.com)

<http://www.acwwfinland2007.com>

## **5 – 8 JUNE 2007**

### **THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON COUPLE AND FAMILY RELATIONS**

#### **54th International Conference**

Edinburgh, Scotland

#### **Barriers to Access: Finding Paths to Inclusiveness**

Despite the plethora of activities, laws and resources seemingly available for individuals and families in difficulty in today's world, many barriers remain that prevent those in need accessing the support and personal affirmation they require. Numerous barriers present themselves, including: language, both cultural and technical; ill health, both physical and mental; economic inequalities; and legal and political systems.

Despite these barriers, practitioners continue to seek ways to reach out to others. Many creative, even subversive, responses have ensured that services and support still get through to people, if not all the time, and such ingenuity surprises us all time and again.

The 2007 Conference of ICCFR/CIRCF will share experiences of barriers, in order to understand them and their impacts. But, more importantly, it will focus on the creativity, ingenuity and courage demonstrated throughout our world in the service of couples, relationships and families. Join us in Edinburgh and be part of the solution.

#### **Participation**

Individuals and organisations involved in couple and family counselling and therapy, family organisations, research, social policy, family-related legislation and legal processes, relationship education, and the provision of welfare services are invited to participate in the conference.

#### **Conference programme**

- Six keynote presentations by internationally recognised experts.
- Among the sub-topics to be addressed will be:
  - The changing nature of relationships
  - Gay marriage and The impact of civil partnerships
  - The impact of HIV/AIDS on access to services
  - How labelling impacts on different people, e.g., former prisoners.
- Ten workshops offering the chance to explore topics in more depth
- Four study group sessions developing international, multidisciplinary perspectives on conference topics and participants' interests
- The conference language will be English; it is hoped to provide translation into French in the plenary sessions and facilitation in some of the workshops
- A mixture of cultural events and informal entertainment will make up the social programme including visits to some of Scotland's most historic buildings.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

**about the 54<sup>th</sup> ICCFR Conference please visit our website: [www.iccfr.org](http://www.iccfr.org)**

*The 54th international ICCFR conference is jointly organised with Scottish Marriage Care and Relate Scotland. It is held in partnership with the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts and will follow the 2007 AFCC conference held in Washington DC, from 30 May to 2 June. Further information about this conference is available from the AFCC website [www.afccnet.org](http://www.afccnet.org)*

### **25-29 JULY 2007**

#### **WORLD ASSEMBLY OF FAMILIES AND ICCFM GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The World Assembly with the theme, "The Legacy of Fatima to the Family, Spirituality and Sacrifice", will be held at Fatima, Portugal on July 25-29, 2007.

**MORE INFO AND REGISTRATION:** <http://www.iccfm.org/conventions.html#fatima>

### **28-29 SEPTEMBER 2007**

#### **EUROPEAN MEDIATION CONFERENCE 2007**

Vienna, Austria

The aim of this conference is to enhance the exchange of information and knowledge on mediation and on alternative dispute resolution, and to advance a continuous transfer of know-how among the mediation community in Europe. The conference will gather mediators from different areas such as family, business, community, environment, victim-offender, school, international, corporate, civil and court mediation.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Conference website - [www.europemediation.eu/en](http://www.europemediation.eu/en)

### **7-10 NOVEMBER 2007**

#### **69TH NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS ANNUAL CONFERENCE - FAMILY VULNERABILITIES: CHALLENGES TO SAFETY, SECURITY, AND WELL-BEING**

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

The theme "Family Vulnerabilities: Challenges to Safety, Security, and Well-being" encourages examination of families and diverse issues encompassing physical, emotional, spiritual, health-related, financial and professional dimensions in community, national and global contexts. The National Council on Family Relations provides a forum for family researchers, educators, and practitioners to share in the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family relationships, establishes professional standards, and works to promote family well-being.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** National Council on Family Relations website - [ncfr.org/conf/current/annual.asp](http://ncfr.org/conf/current/annual.asp)

***From the EUROPEAN UNION Presidency***

*Deutschland 2007 – Präsidentschaft der Europäischen Union*  
*Germany 2007 – Presidency of the European Union*  
*Allemagne 2007 – Présidence de l'Union européenne*

09.03.2007

Federal Minister of Family Affairs von der Leyen:  
"Learn from the successful policies of others"

Council of the European Union accepts the  
European Alliance for Families

On the occasion of the summit meeting in  
Brussels on March 8-9, 2007 and against the  
background of demographic change in Europe,  
the heads of states and governments of the  
European Union acknowledged the European  
Alliance for Families as proposed under the  
German EU presidency.

The societies of Europe are growing older and the  
birth rates of nearly every Member State are  
falling. "The European Alliance for Families is a  
strong acknowledgement for policy that will make  
it easier for the citizens of Europe to decide to  
have children. A beautiful success for the German  
Presidency!" said Ursula von der Leyen, Federal  
Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women, and Youth. "The Alliance for Families  
should support the European Union and the  
Member States, in the future as well, in the effort  
to insure growth, employment, and prosperity in  
Europe. Business invests where it finds qualified  
people. Families settle wherever they can find the  
best balance between work and family life.  
Family-friendliness plays an increasingly  
important role in the competition to attract  
business investment in Germany, in Europe, and  
internationally," continued von der Leyen.

The Alliance, with the participation of the  
European Commission, should become a platform  
for the member states to exchange opinions and  
information in the area of family-friendly initiatives.  
"We can all learn from the family policy successes  
of other countries," said von der Leyen. "We  
should use them as our benchmark while always  
talking national particularities into account." The  
responsible Ministers of the EU Member States  
will soon begin a close cooperation with the  
Commission to discuss detailed steps for the

implementation of the European Alliance for  
Families.

Background: The average birth rate in the EU  
stands at 1.5 children. Furthermore, nearly every  
Member State reports the following trends: The  
birth rates have been falling since the mid 1960's;  
the number of children drops in proportion to the  
educational level of the potential parents; the  
desire to have children is decreasing, especially  
among men; men and women are seeking gender  
equality models that permit shared responsibilities  
for their families. The facts are: In the EU, people  
would like to have more children than they have.  
A survey of Eurobarometer in 2006 showed that  
50 percent of those surveyed thought 2 was the  
ideal number of children to have. 21 percent  
responded with 3 and only a relatively small  
percentage, namely 8 percent, thought one child  
was ideal. "In conclusion, only a sustainable  
family policy can cushion the demographic  
change in the medium term and reverse it over  
time. Europe needs more children."

## Introducing



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON COUPLE AND FAMILY RELATIONS  
COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE DES RELATIONS DU COUPLE ET DE LA FAMILLE

Established in 1953 as the IUFO Commission on Marriage and Marriage Guidance (subsequently: Commission on Marriage and Interpersonal Relations) it adopted its current title in 2001 so as to make clear the focus of its work. Its extensive international membership includes organisations and individuals involved in couple and family therapy, relationship education, social work, mediation, psychology and psychiatry, research, social policy, family courts and the law, and family organisations. As a result the Commission sustains a groundbreaking interdisciplinary dialogue about couple and family relations and the support provided for them by the professions.

### Conferences and Communications

The annual international conferences address topics reflecting the current activities and concerns of the membership. Those events bring innovative activities and new thinking about couple and family relations to the attention of their participants and result in publications which reach a much greater readership, worldwide. Conference reports are sent to the WFO and a range of interested governments, NGOs and professional bodies. Those reports and main conference papers are held in the database of GIDS (Institute of Sociology, KU Leuven, Belgium) and recent ones are available as separate publications.

The conferences also expand and revitalise the Commission's active international network of family-related professionals and organisations and promote collaborative activity. Thus, with a minimum of bureaucracy, the worldwide exchange of information and experience is promoted between those whose work connects with and supports couple and family relations – the Commission's primary purpose. By responding to the invitations of national organisations or institutions the Commission is able to ensure that its conferences are held in a different part of the world each year. About twenty countries are usually represented at those events.

The Commission's conferences are carefully structured as working meetings which draw on the

experience and expertise of all who participate. Plenary keynote presentation sessions are complemented by numerous workshops addressing specific topics in more detail and by working groups which relate themes and topics to participants' own working environments. These working groups are central features of the conferences, generating high levels of participation and of creativity, and providing settings in which new members quickly engage in dialogues with a direct relevance to their own special interests. The continuing involvement of key national institutions and eminent practitioners has been attributed to the very significant benefits of the international multidisciplinary activities of the working groups.

### Organisation

A Board of ten or twelve members drawn from different regions of the world plans and manages the annual conferences and the Commission's international communications. Its work is supported by an Honorary General Secretary. Members meetings held during each conference inform Board members about current interests and concerns and about possible future Commission activities. The Commission's purposes and agenda are determined internally while fostering positive working relations with other international bodies.

[www.iccfr.org](http://www.iccfr.org)

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