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Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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Dear Readers of Families International,

This 99th issue focuses on the Commission for Social Development (CSD) of the United Nations, which meets each year in New York. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), accredited with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, have the opportunity to submit written statements, which become part of the official documentation of the CSD. CSOs also have the opportunity to make oral statements to the deliberations of the CSD. Included in this issue is a selection of written statements, submitted to the CSD 2016, by CSOs, highlighting and reflecting issues relating to families, worldwide.

The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family is organising an International Forum, within a Full Committee Meeting (FCM), on November 7th 2016, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre, focusing on Family Poverty, which includes a presentation by Dr. Michaela Moser on its; Causes, Consequences, Solutions. The Agenda of the FCM is included in this issue and the proceedings of the Forum will be published in an upcoming issue of Families International.

Further included in this issue are texts from Member Organisations of the Committee, as well as a number of recent and upcoming events.

Sincerely,

Peter Crowley Ph.D.

Editor

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From the United Nations

United Nations



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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening
social development in the contemporary world**

**Statement submitted by Association of United Families International and
Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society, non-governmental organizations
in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Rethinking and Strengthening Social Development: It Begins and Ends with Family

The Social Summit Declaration correctly identifies the need to “recognize the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledge that it plays a key role in social development and as such should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members” (26-h). This understanding should receive significantly more focus as international bodies move forward in the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In addition, the 2030 Agenda itself, in Paragraph 11, reaffirms the Social Summit Declaration.

A Family-Centred Framework

There is a growing body of research showing that the family is indispensable to the welfare of society and to the individuals that comprise it. The benefits that flow to children and to adults from two-parent married families include: increased educational attainment, substantially less poverty, better physical and mental health, less crime in communities, and more healthy socialization over all. These benefits are then directly reflected in society and the nation. (See “Marriage and Child WellBeing: Research and Policy Perspectives,” by Susan L. Brown, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Oct. 1, 2010.)

Even in situations of dire poverty, the most important factor influencing outcomes for individuals is whether they are members of a strong, stable family (Strengthening the Family: Implications for International Development, UN University Press 1995, page 1.) To this end, United Families International has produced a booklet titled, “The Marriage Advantage,” which can be downloaded from their website: http://unitedfamilies.org/downloads/Marriage_Guide.pdf. The book, *The Family and the MDGs – Using Family Capital to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, was produced to show how international goals can be accomplished by focusing on the family unit. The information it contains is equally applicable to the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Agenda 2030). The book is a combined effort by the Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society, United Families International, Family First Foundation and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development.

Support for Life at All Stages

Social development begins from the moment of conception and continues to the time of death. At the core of all social development are relationships – relationships that have their genesis within a family, beginning with a mother and father. In support of the right to life, we:

1. Emphasize basic pre- and post-natal maternal health care;

2. Encourage the birth of healthy children, and oppose coercive methods to limit family size;

3. Oppose efforts to promote abortion;

4. Oppose comprehensive sexuality education and sexual rights, which thwart parental rights to control their child’s education (Universal Declaration, 26-3) and may be in opposition to religious values (Social Summit Declaration, 25), and;

5. Encourage respect for the dignity of older persons and the elimination of all forms of neglect, abuse and violence” (Madrid Ageing Conference, Article 5), recognizing that this is best accomplished in the context of strong and nurturing family units.

Conclusion

“As basic and essential building blocks of societies, families have a crucial role in social development. They bear the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society.” (The Report of the Secretary General on the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, A/66/62-E/2011/4) Strong families are key to effective and sustainable social development in the contemporary world.

“We recognize, therefore, that social development is central to the needs and aspirations of people throughout the world and to the responsibilities of governments and all sectors of civil society. We affirm that, in both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments are those that empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities.” (Social Summit Declaration, 7) We submit that the best place to develop these “capacities, resources and opportunities” reside within a strong, stable, natural family.

To this end, we encourage a commitment:

(a) To place family at the centre of development and direct economic policies to meet the needs of families more effectively;

(b) To share good practices on family policies, review challenges faced by families and recommend viable solutions.

(c) To ensure that governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, civil society organizations and academic institutions share good practices and data in the area of family-oriented policy development, implementation and monitoring and family well-being.

Finally, the family, as the fundamental and basic unit of society, requires the conscious recognition and inclusion by United Nations agencies and other governmental entities. Because the strength of the family is the strength of nations, our challenge is to create a family-centred framework for social development to guide us now and in the future, to build a culture of cooperation and partnership, and to respond to the vital needs of all human beings.

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Statement submitted by Baha'i International Community, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Collective Learning, Collective Will: Strengthening the Foundations of Social Development

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has transformed the landscape in which social development is pursued. Challenges and missteps notwithstanding, the body of humanity today is articulating the world it collectively desires to a degree unsurpassed in previous ages. The central task before the international community, then, is building capacity in increasing numbers of individuals, communities, and institutions, with the ultimate objective of promoting universal participation in the construction of that world. Such an objective, the Bahá'í International Community believes, lies at the heart of the Commission's current emphasis on rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world.

Many have noted that the true test of the new global development agenda, in its social, economic and environmental aspects, will be its practical implementation. In this regard, there is no more appropriate place in the UN system to address the social dimension of sustainable development than in the Commission for Social Development. While the particular modalities needed will undoubtedly be refined over time, this space has the potential to serve as an important platform for the sharing of learning and accumulated experience from as wide a range of development actors as possible.

To facilitate steps in this direction, the Bahá'í International Community would like to briefly explore two areas particularly important in strengthening the ability of people to contribute to global development efforts:

Learning and capacity building — the generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge at all levels will be critical in unlocking the human capacity needed to advance social development at the grassroots level, and meet the ambitious 2030 Agenda goals.

Motivation and volition — To mobilize large numbers of people into action for the common good, development efforts must be concerned with the roots of motivation and the generation of individual and collective volition for the betterment of communities, nations, and the world.

Development as Learning

Understood broadly as one component among many contributing to effective action, learning is well regarded in UN circles. However, conceiving of development as learning — approaching it as a process of generating and applying knowledge about the dynamics of social change in specific settings — reframes many familiar aspects of traditional development practice. In the context of such a paradigm, participation in discrete development efforts serves not only as a mechanism to bring about particular outcomes, but also as a means by which the community learns to assess its own needs and mobilize its own resources. Elements of process also assume critical importance, as the ongoing acquisition of knowledge can never be considered “complete”. Within a mode of learning, plans grow organically over time and exist to be modified in light of the ultimate goal of sustainable community development. Visions and strategies are re-examined and modifications are made as tasks are accomplished, obstacles removed, resources multiplied, and lessons learned. Haphazard change is avoided and continuity of action is maintained.

Such an approach calls for the involvement of growing numbers of participants in a collective process of learning about the practical betterment of society. Efforts of this kind rely on the application of existing knowledge, but invariably involve the generation of new knowledge as well. Much of this takes the form of insights acquired through experience, and here the systematization of learning is crucial. As those working at the grassroots begin to gain experience, initial lessons learned may consist of little more than anecdotes or personal accounts. But over time, patterns emerge which can be documented, analysed, and used to shape subsequent efforts. Conceived in this way, learning concerns not only academic research and formal studies, but also experiential learning, personal insights, and increased capacity to take effective action.

Patterns of learning at the local level, no matter how essential, will remain limited if they are not connected to global processes concerned with the prosperity of humanity as a whole. UN bodies such as the Commission could consider themselves as learning entities dedicated to the systematization of a growing worldwide experience made possible by the participation of increasing numbers of collaborators. Such an approach defies categorization as either “top-down” or “bottom-up”; rather, it is one of reciprocity and interconnectedness.

It is also important to note that while participation in processes of systematic learning builds capacity in individuals, it also does so in communities as a whole. Such collective capacity finds expression in the generation of common will and coordination of actions across real and sometimes challenging social differences. The ability to forge consensus around common values and priorities, to build a shared vision of the future and pursue it through acts of collective volition, to value differences of opinion and build on differences of background, to nurture collective ownership of the methods and direction of community advancement – these are powerful means by which progress can be achieved. Their appearance and strengthening stand as a sure sign of dependable social development.

Development as Volition

Development is a process that must benefit all and draw on the talents of everyone. The universality and spirit of common cause, infusing the new global development agenda reflect a growing commitment to the premise that every member of the human family has not only the right to benefit from a thriving global civilization but also the capacity to contribute to its construction. Capacity of this kind is defined not only by the potential to achieve goals, but also the determination to take needed actions. For this reason, leveraging capacity has to do not only with what people are able to do, but also what they actually choose to do.

Volition is therefore an issue of unparalleled importance. Financial resources are being mobilized at historic scales to implement a wide range of development efforts, but sustainable global progress cannot be achieved through monetary means alone. A central question, is how qualities such as commitment and dedication are generated in large numbers of people. How do individuals and communities become motivated to contribute their efforts toward a cause greater than themselves? How can increasing numbers be assisted to take the vital step from passivity to action?

Faith has proven to be key in this regard. Whether faith in the efficacy of the development process, the capacity of the human race, the virtues of family, community, or a host of other ideals, the combination of conviction and aspiration has been central to generating motivation and action. Among these, religious faith has played a unique and vital role in development efforts. Religion has been a feature of human civilization since the dawn of recorded history and has

prompted countless multitudes to arise and exert themselves for the well-being of others. Religion offers an understanding of human existence that lifts the eye from the rocky path to the distant horizon. And when true to the spirit of its transcendent founders, religion has been one of the most powerful forces for the creation of new and beneficial patterns of individual and community life.

The link between commitment to any set of high-minded principles and service to the common good, however, is by no means automatic. When it comes to religion, for example, it is entirely possible to have a congregation of well-intentioned adherents whose actions do little to contribute to the betterment of society. Clearly there is much to learn about how noble ideals become expressed in committed, sustained action. For their part, religious communities might be understood as communities of practice in which spiritual teachings are translated into social reality. But a process of capacity building that enables people of all backgrounds to participate in the transformation of society will be needed in numerous kinds of social spaces. How this process unfolds in widely differing contexts and environments promises to be an area of rich exploration for all involved in social development efforts.

Formulating action within a paradigm of learning and volition is, we believe, a powerful means of rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world. Building new patterns of thought and behaviour is clearly a task of immense proportions. It will require intense learning and the informed, committed participation of ever-growing numbers. But the Bahá'í International Community has no doubt that humanity possesses the capacity to carry out this work, and it welcomes the contributions of all who are interested in exploring the foundations of lasting social development.

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Statement submitted by Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The Family, Social Development, and Agenda 2030

There is an urgent need to re-orient international policy towards strengthening and protecting the family. Rethinking social development in the 2030 era of sustainable development must begin and end with the family. Only by doing so can sustainable development, in all its dimensions – social, economic, and environmental – become a reality. Sadly, the Sustainable Development Goals and the summit outcome “Transforming Our World” that launched the 2030 era of sustainable development ignores the family as a subject of rights and an essential vehicle to promote sustainable development. We are troubled by this omission. The family is uniquely suited as a vehicle to promote the social and economic wellbeing of its members as well as society at large, within a framework of sustainability, and thereby fulfil their human rights in the social and economic sphere while respecting nature and the environment.

Rightly, Human Rights Council resolutions most recently, and resolutions adopted in recent years by the Commission on Social Development, reaffirmed that “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society” and the “natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members”, following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

This self-evident truth of the benefit of the family to its individual members and society at large is confirmed and validated by the best available science and research. No other structure or institution is able to deliver the same quality outcomes as the family composed of a man and a woman in a stable and enduring relationship. The benefits of the family for individuals and communities are repeated across borders and in all social and economic groupings, including minorities.

The family can help individuals, families, and society more widely, to attain increased social mobility, wealth creation, better physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing, less criminality and substance abuse, longer life expectancies, less infant mortality, among other positive outcomes. A host of negative outcomes result from family breakdown. The family is also essential to eradicating poverty and creating economic opportunity. The breakup of the family results in exponentially higher expenses for governments through welfare programs to care for children and youth who do not benefit from an intact family, as well as adults and elderly persons whose only safety net is found in the public purse.

States have a compelling duty to protect and assist the family. Without the family, societies cannot exist, let alone develop. International law obligations of States under UN treaties with regard to the family are well established and recognize the important link between the family and social development.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the family as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society” and declares that it is “entitled to protection by society and the State” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16). It recognizes the formation of a family as resulting from the union of a man and a woman in marriage (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 23.1) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (International Covenant on Civil and Political Right, Article 0.1) also reflect the UDHR verbatim.

More recently, the most widely ratified human rights treaty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reaffirmed how “the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community”.

States have an obligation and moral duty to create legal, social, and economic environment conducive to family formation and stability, as was recognized at the Copenhagen Conference on Social Development (A/CONF.166/9, paragraph 39). Sadly, this important consensus and the human rights that underpin it are undermined by old and new threats to the family and its members.

Harmful practices such as child and forced marriage continue to violate the human rights of men and women to enter into marriage freely, and threaten the lives of children. Economic conditions frequently make family formation a remote dream for millions of men and women. Violations of these rights also arise in the context of migration.

New threats include removal of all safeguards for family stability that were always intended to protect the most vulnerable members of society, children. Laws surrounding the dissolution of marriage for no reason at all are of increasing concern to scholars who understand the importance of the family for the wellbeing and development of children and social development more broadly.

New legal arrangements between adults, such as same-sex relationships, violate and obstruct the right of children to know and be cared for by their parents. In addition, new reproductive technologies undermine this right. Families are penalized for their traditions, religious and cultural beliefs when they attempt to opt children out of state-run education, or of specific classes such as sex education that promotes and/or legitimizes early sexualisation, homosexuality, and gender ideology.

In light of these troubling events in our time rethinking social development, beginning and ending with the family, is an urgent priority.

Unfortunately, debates about the family and how international policy should understand the family are preventing member states from including, let alone mainstreaming, the family in international policy. This is a scandal that undermines the credibility of the United Nations as an important tool to promote social development.

Some say the family as it has always been understood in international policy discriminates against children who find themselves in same-sex households. This is disingenuous.

Only a few countries have changed their laws to recognize a special status for homosexual relationships, yet they argue this requires a change to the universal, longstanding understanding of family for all member states and international policy. Moreover, validating the choices of adults to live in same-sex unions, or other arrangements, as equivalent to the family is not necessary to protect children from discrimination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several human rights treaties already protect the rights of children deprived of a family to receive the benefits afforded to all children under the law.

While agreement could not be reached on how the family squares in the new development agenda, countries must recognize that family policy, for the reasons outlined above, will be essential to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the eradication of poverty. By placing the family at the center of the social policy debate in the international community, this commission can contribute to achieving this task.

Rethinking social development must begin and end by placing the family back into the social development equation in order to maximize the contribution of the family to realizing Agenda 2030 in all its aspects – social, economic and environmental.

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Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Families, a meeting place for generations

The following Declaration has been approved by the 1,836 delegates from 43 countries attending the 19th International Family Congress, organized by the International Federation for Family Development in Mexico City, 16-18 October 2015, to emphasize that families have a crucial role in social development and to confirm our commitment to help families worldwide and to contribute to universal peace and respect of human rights through our Family Enrichment Courses and other programmes.

We, the families attending the 19th International Family Congress in Mexico City, held as the United Nations celebrates its seventieth anniversary and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in continuation with the previous Congresses and the full activity of the International Federation for Family Development in sixty-six countries, as well as the representatives of the political, academic and civil society named below, agree on this:

World Family Declaration

We acknowledge the right of men and women of full age have the right to marry and to found a family, as described by the art. 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we express our appreciation for the work fulfilled worldwide during the past years concerning the proclamation of, preparations for and observance of the International Year of the Family and its twentieth anniversary in 2014, as well as the different resolutions and decisions adopted on this issue by the United Nations General Assembly and other international bodies,

We emphasize that, as basic and essential building blocks of societies, families have a crucial role in social development, bear the primary responsibility for the nurturing, protection, education and socialization of children, as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society, and are essential contributors to the new Post-2015 Development Agenda, so that one measure of success for the new Sustainable Development Goals will be its ability to strengthen and protect all families,

We welcome the mention in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to cohesive families for providing “inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels” and “for all people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and including persons with disabilities, all migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations”,

We recall the target of “recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family”,

We confirm our will to help families worldwide and to contribute to universal peace and respect of human rights through Family Enrichment Courses and other programmes, as well as our advocacy work at the United Nations and other international institutions, and are grateful the work of the thousands of volunteers who are committed to it around the world.

And we address international organizations, governments, lawmakers and civil society representatives with the following recommendations as appropriate:

1. Empower families by promoting the integration of a family perspective into policy-making at the national, regional and international levels; by removing social, political, legal and economic barriers to their active participation in society; by enabling them to assert greater control over their resources and life choices, especially including decisions on investments in health, housing and education; and by providing instruments to recognize the time, effort and money that committed families invest in their children.
2. Focus poverty alleviation strategies on the family as a unit; acknowledge that family breakdown can be both a root cause and an effect of poverty; consider its prevention as a priority and promote the well-being of families and their individual members by addressing all their functions, including family formation, partnership, economic support, women's empowerment, reconciling work and family responsibilities, child-rearing and child development, to make sure that no one will be left behind.
3. Provide and communicate comprehensive, well-resourced and flexible parental leave entitlements, to promote skill development and learning systems throughout the life course of the family and in periods of transition, to facilitate parents' re-entering the labour market after having the desired number of children and to enhance dialogue and partnerships between social policy makers and relevant stakeholders, including families, family associations, business sector, trade unions and employers, to develop and improve family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace.
4. Develop active measures to support the psychological well-being of children and youth with sensitivity to family situations; prevent violence, addictions and juvenile delinquency; and promote school to work transitions and young adults' economic security to facilitate family formation and stability, particularly among those with insecure socio-economic resources.
5. Acknowledge and encourage the responsibility of fathers and the contribution of men to families, develop policies to address the impact of the absence of males on family well-being and promote active fatherhood and the right to family reunification of immigrants.
6. Facilitate intergenerational care and support and promote equitable access to resources that strengthen family ties, such as family enrichment courses, positive parenting classes or mentoring programmes, and encourage volunteering of older persons in schools and offering community service requirements for highschool students, requiring young people to help older persons with their daily activities.
7. Promote the annual celebrations of the International Day of Families (15th May) as an opportunity to increase awareness of issues relating to families and knowledge of the social, economic and demographic processes affecting them; the Global Day of Parents (1st June) as an occasion to appreciate all parents in all parts of the world for their selfless commitment to children and their lifelong sacrifice towards nurturing this relationship; and the Universal Children's Day (20th November) as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children and of activity devoted to promoting the ideals and the welfare of the children of the world.
8. Support data collection and research on family issues and the impact of public policy on families and invest in family-oriented policies and programme design, implementation and evaluation.

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**Statement submitted by International Federation for Home Economics, a non-govern-
mental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council***

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Statement

Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world, from the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), a Home Economics perspective

From a Home Economics perspective social development must be the overarching goal of the Sustainable Development Goals and of all government and stakeholder strategies, because the people who suffer from poverty, unemployment and social exclusions are individuals, families and communities.

Improving social development is fundamental to the well-being of families. This statement addresses the context and demands for innovative actions and strategies for social development with a focus on wellbeing for individuals, families and communities. It also focusses on the significance of Home Economics competencies that can enable individuals, families and communities to manage everyday as well as critical household situations.

Context of Social development from a Home Economics perspective

Home Economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities. In the 21st century, Home Economics extended its context from home and household to the wider living environment, because the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, ranging from the individual household, to the local and global communities.

Household members are the first to be affected by social, economic and ecological developments in their living environments and to suffer from armed conflicts, economic crises, disasters etc. From a Home Economics perspective, poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, which are widespread in many countries of the world, pulls economic and social resources from each household, and reduces the opportunities essential for developing human growth potential and human necessities and for everyday basic needs to be met.¹ IFHE advocates for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, in order to facilitate sustainable futures.

Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society (UNESCO 2003). Home Economics literacy enables people to improve their lives even in critical living surroundings.

Contribution of Home Economics to Poverty Eradication

Home Economists are concerned that poverty affects mostly women, children, the elderly and indigenous peoples, which increases their challenges to survive especially in poorer communities. The IFHE advocates for fundamental rights for all, especially those living in poverty.

The full participation of people living in poverty, in the decisions that affect their lives and communities, must be at the centre of policies and strategies of governments and decision makers to enable them to build a sustainable future.

In addition to the general implementation requirements – listed in the “Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” – to eradicate poverty, the IFHE, demands Home Economics

education for all; to empower individuals, families and communities to develop sustainable lifestyles; to qualify them to manage their household resources effectively, produce healthy and secure food and improve their health; generate income and to contribute to the decisions for social development.

Home Economics Competencies Support Full Employment

Full employment enables most individuals and families desirable options for income generation as the basis for household management and to fulfil the needs of household members.

IFHE demands that people, who for different personal or social circumstances (such as age, retirement, disability, chronic diseases, underage orphans) are not in a position to generate income from employment receive adequate financial support from social security systems to secure their life. From a Home Economics perspective, full employment must be accompanied by international labour standards to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity including for women and disabled people.

In addition, results from entrepreneurial projects conducted in many countries revealed and verified that Home Economics skills and household management experiences were valuable for establishing small or medium businesses.

Family Life and social aspects of household management are the nucleus for social integration: The Social Exclusion Knowledge Network (SEK) indicates that:

“Exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions — economic, political, social and cultural — and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterised by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to health inequalities.”

Social inclusion must be both multidimensional and transformative

A household always means living together with different persons, who might be old, young, disabled, unemployed, divorced and/or overweight. All household members have to accept and tolerate the values, attitudes, beliefs, habits, experiences and cultural understanding of each family or household member. Home Economical research and Home Economics education focus on this aspect to empower individuals, families and communities to promote social inclusion and avoid discrimination.

Home Economics education for sustainable lifestyles

Improving the quality of life for families is what Home Economics is all about. Home Economics competencies enable individuals, households and communities for example to obtain good nutrition, to take care of their health or to make best use of their income for the good of their family. The Home Economics profession will continue to contribute to support social integration and intergenerational solidarity through research, addressing both aspects in relation to families and households, providing education to improve the capabilities of young and old including outreach supporting families and communities to contribute to social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

Home Economics literacy supports sustainable production and consumption at the household level. Around the world Home Economics educated women and men demonstrate that their acquired competencies enable individuals, families and communities to overcome poverty and hunger and to improve family well-being and contribute to sustainable development.

IFHE points out that Home Economics competencies based on Home Economics education and experiences in household management are valuable for many allied professional fields such as those that serve private and institutional households, those in the food and other services related to households, individuals or families and are not restricted to developing countries.

IFHE in its over 100 year history has supported home economics research and education in countless projects, implemented and conducted by Home Economists, supported social development especially in the fight to eliminate poverty and hunger. IFHE has continuously advocated for families and family well-being. IFHE initiated the dialogue that resulted in the International Year for Family (IYF), which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 44/82 of 9 December 1989 and realised in 1994.

The theme of the IYF was “Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world”. Its motto: “Building the Smallest Democracy at the Heart of Society”.

This example demonstrates that Home Economics has the potential to be influential in all sectors of society by intervening and transforming political, social, cultural, ecological, economic and technological systems, at “glocal” levels. This is driven by the ethics of the profession, based on the values of caring, sharing, justice, responsibility, communicating, reflection and visionary foresight.

The Home Economics Education basis for improvement of well-being

With regards to the current diverse social, economic and environmental developments globally, IFHE promotes integrated, coordinated and coherent strategies at all family focussed groups and individuals aimed at social development and to secure the well-being of families. IFHE will strengthen its efforts to provide Home Economics education for all, because society needs what home economics offers. This need becomes obvious after reflecting on the issues listed frequently on the front page of newspapers: homelessness, obesity, chronic lifestyle diseases, negative social behaviour at home, the workplace and the community, divorce rates, needs of children in deprived single parent families and in under supported institutions, aging and elder care, and financial vulnerability of families.

Future Proofing

To be successful in the dimensions of Home Economics practice means that the profession must constantly evolve, and there will always be new ways of performing. This is an important characteristic of the profession, linking with the twenty-first century requirement for all people to be “expert novices”, that is, good at learning new things, given that society is constantly and rapidly changing with new issues and challenges. IFHE is committed to the evolution of its work and focus to continue to prepare families to meet the demands for a sustainable lifestyle.

United Nations



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Fifty-fourth session

3-12 February 2016

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world

Statement submitted by International Movement ATD Fourth World, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Rethinking and strengthening social development: A perspective from people living in poverty

Introduction

Rethinking and strengthening social development requires a new transformative approach, and the key element to this transformation is that people living in poverty and those most marginalized and excluded participate in the redefinition of social development. For centuries, people living in poverty have been told what their needs are, what their deprivation looks like, what their problems are, and what the solutions are. But they have never been included in thinking about approaches to development. This statement to the 54th Session of the Commission for Social Development has been written based on a dialogue between people living in poverty in New York and different regions of the world. The dialogue addresses issues such as development, sustainability, poverty, dignity, knowledge, and participation and it takes into account contributions made by heads of states at the Post-2015 Summit. Finally, people reflected about the theme of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty: Building a Sustainable Future: Ending Poverty and Discrimination, a theme that puts sustainability at the core of social development.

To build a sustainable future, our struggle must be recognized.

A man in Latin America explained, “We are making a better planet because we take tons of rubbish out of the dump. For most people, those things are worthless. But for us, as well as making an income, we are doing something for our families and children, for those coming after us. We’re leaving a better planet.”

The group in New York commented: “As people living in poverty clean up the planet for us, they are not only building their future, they are building our future. But this contribution is hardly ever recognized.”

An Irish mother said, “Persistent poverty is the world we were born into. It’s a hard feeling not to be able to climb up the ladder little by little. It’s hard to feel trapped and dependent.” A mother in New York added, “Everybody who wakes up in the morning has to hustle for a dollar. We just have to hustle more. We are the last ones to get any hand-outs. We got to fight for every dime.” Another shares her experience, “When you are poor, your life, your kids’ life, your family life is not your choice.”

To build a sustainable future, our experience and knowledge must be taken into account.

A group of people in the Republic of Mauritius reminded us how development often works against people living in extreme poverty, not for them: “There is this non-profit that decided to offer us training. It is a good idea, but the point is, ‘Is this training a priority for us just now?’ They would not be able to answer this question because before they wrote the project and raised funds to see it through, they did not come to consult us about it. This project was a good project to start with – it was meant to help us overcome our difficulties – but it became a project that divides our community and pushes us to do something that we cannot do at the present time; above all, it has belittled our dignity.”

Maladapted social development projects not only fail to help communities, but also actually harm them. Investments frequently fail to reach impoverished people or to provide them with quality healthcare, social protection, housing, or sanitation.

For those rethinking social development at the UN, the group in New York spoke about their personal experience of poverty: “We want to say that we are not poor, we are rich every day even if we are poor every minute, because our mind is thinking: ‘How am I going to feed my family today?’”

The Pope’s message at the Post-2015 Summit resonated with the aspirations of those experiencing poverty: “Absolute minimum has three names: lodging, labour, and land”. As a mother from New York said, “To have a key to a house in our hand means we can start again. There’s sustainability because there is a sense of ownership; when we can go home, we feel good.” In Latin America, a woman said, “If the Government really wanted to help, they could offer a piece of land that is affordable and has basic services, and we would pay instalments on it according to what we can afford.” In New York a mother reacted, “It is like the American Dream. You want to own a home, but it is not affordable, especially for poor people – even if we work hard all our life.”

To build a sustainable future, our rights must be recognized.

In a video from Latin America, a woman said, “I have my dignity. I don’t wait for other people’s crumbs, when as a human being, I can provide for myself, for my home, for my family.” At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, during the Interactive Dialogue: Ending Poverty and Hunger, the Head of State of Mali said, “When people give you their crumbs, they don’t acknowledge your dignity.” This message resonated with the experience of a father in New York, “It seems as though the crumbs are not really to insult you, but to subliminally put you in your place. This is what you’re worth. It holds you down.”

The group in New York commented, “People struggling to feed their families don’t wait around to be given what they are entitled to. But if they are cleaning junk, they are identified with junk – even if they are doing what they can to make a better living. None of us lets poverty eat at us. We are all trying to make our way out of it. We don’t accept pity because we are bigger and better than that. We don’t wait for charity. We have heard so many things, but people have to keep their promises. Most of the time, it’s like telling someone who’s homeless. ‘I’ll go get you food,’ and then you leave and you don’t come back. So we rely on each other to build things up from the ground with sweat equity.”

For those who will define poverty, who will plan coverage for basic services and social protection, the words of this man should resonate: “I will not settle for less because I am not less. I will work hard for what I want and I will not take what is decided for me. I will earn what I deserve.”

To build a sustainable future, our voice will have to be heard.

A woman from Guatemala said, “We have to demand that our poverty is not used to manipulate us. We are not only people to give charity to, but people whose opinion has to be sought.”

In New York, the group reacted: “Nobody ever wants to feel like they’re being used, and you never want someone to think that you’re using them. It’s a big thing when people think that poor people are using the system. But people really need help. What we all need for a sustainable environment is not to feel guilty when we need help and always for there to be someone who is willing to help us, whether it is in the community or the government or your best friend. We’re asking because we need it, not because we want to take it from you. A sustainable future, it’s a give and take. A sustainable life is us, giving and receiving. We also believe that if you are on your own, you don’t really have that many chances. The first thing that hurts us is being divided. Everybody is separating, but everybody has to play a part to come together. If we respect one another, if we can see that we’re all human beings, that we’re the same species, that black and white is not a different set of species — that’s why it’s called the human race; we are all one. If we respect one another, we could come to terms with all our problems and fix them. But there’s always this separation: ‘I’m better than you,’ or ‘I make more money than you.’ A sustainable future is all about breaking barriers.”

To conclude, a mother from Ireland said, “What keeps me going day after day? I suppose it’s what is inside, really: it’s self-pride, it’s inner strength, it’s knowing that one day our voice will have to be heard.”

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

**Statement submitted by The Children's Project, Inc., a non-governmental organization
in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Recognizing Children as the Foundation of the Social Development Agenda

Advances in technology and communications have connected the human race together like at no other point in our shared history. Although this technological progress has spurred the economic transformation of many emerging economies, the era of connectivity has not had a similar impact on social integration. While the raw numbers of millions lifted out of poverty are indeed impressive, trends in economic inequality remain worrisome. Rising inequality reduces social mobility in developed countries and curtails the ability of emerging nations to maintain economic growth. Moreover, economic inequality and limited social mobility are contributing factors to social instability and conflict that can undo hard-won gains. Any development agenda that seeks to maintain a measure of sustainability must seek to create a strong social foundation upon which progress can rest.

Perhaps the strongest foundation for sustainable development is the generation which will grow up to inherit the world shaped by our development agenda and steward the nations and economies of tomorrow. Children are the basis upon which societies grow, thrive and propagate themselves and should be a primary focus of the social development agenda.

The Millennium Development Goals recognized the importance of empowering children and set a target of universal primary education by 2015. The Children's Project International (TCPI), a non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the lives of the world's children, has been proud to partner with the UN and organizations worldwide to achieve these educational goals by creating scholarship opportunities that impact communities of children, supporting institutions of learning in Africa and the Indian subcontinent as well as advocating for adoption of supportive policies at the international level.

Children require other material needs to flourish. A new-born who does not receive adequate healthcare may not grow up to receive their right to education. TCPI actively supports programs that provide mothers, new-borns and children with life-sustaining primary care. We leverage technology to create mobile clinics that can deliver aid where it is needed most. Children also require supplies, safe water and sanitation. Here we believe private-public partnerships hold promise to deliver materially to children in innovative and more efficient ways.

Policymakers should support efforts to research and explore opportunities for creative minds. Beyond material necessities, there are also emotional and spiritual needs that deserve recognition; above all is the right to a happy home. Cohesive and healthy families create the optimal environment to nurture a healthy, ethical citizenry. Families are society's natural "safety net" whose supportive structure can reach across generations and whose levels of altruism inform the child with basic notions of fairness and justice in society. Family stability is critical to healthy emotional and moral formation of children, and promotion of the family is the building block of society and paramount to the social development agenda.

Lastly, the social development agenda must tackle the thorny issues of sociocultural policy. Though primary education provides children with a basis for functioning in society, cultural gender-based barriers to secondary and higher education limit the opportunity for girls to develop

and realize their economic potential in society. Societies and governments must recognize the basic rights of girls to participate fully in society and fulfil their potential and to be included fully in society. Such an inclusive agenda can be transformative if policymakers resist more rigid, ideological approaches to gender. Gender policy need not be revolutionary to be inclusive.

Significant progress has been on the development front, but to maintain such progress requires the fostering of a social foundation among the world's children. By considering the child on a whole – their material needs, their emotional and spiritual needs and their right to justice – policymakers are poised to maximize the long-lasting potential of the development agenda.

From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY

www.viennafamilycommittee.org
www.10yearsIYF.org
www.20yearsIYF.org
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FULL COMMITTEE MEETING

UNITED NATIONS
VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Monday November 7th 2016

CONFERENCE ROOM 6 on the 7th Floor

INTERNATIONAL FORUM

10.00 – 12.30

FAMILY POVERTY – CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, SOLUTIONS

Dr. Michaela Moser

Dr. Michaela Moser holds a PhD in Philosophy and is a Senior Researcher and lecturer at the Ilse Art Institute of Social Inclusion Research at the University of Applied Sciences in St. Poelten, Austria. Dr. Moser has been engaged for more than 20 years as an active member of the Austrian Anti Poverty Network, including many years of involvement in the board of the European Anti Poverty Network EAPN from 1999-2012 and Vice-President from 2006-2012.

Coffee Break

11.00 – 11.30

Discussion with Presenter & Participants

11.30 – 12.30

Lunch

12.30 – 14.00

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Deputy Secretary: Maria Helena Paes, PROSALIS

Treasurer: Mag. Wolfgang Engelmaier, Kolping



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14:00 – 16:00: ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION

- (i) Approval of the Agenda
- (ii) Approval of the Minutes of the Full Committee Meeting May 23rd 2016
- (iii) Report of the Chairperson
- (iv) Financial Report
- (v) Report of the Auditors
- (vi) Approval of the Activities of the Board 2013 – 2016
- (vii) Election to the Board 2016 -2019
- (viii) Reports from Member Organisations
- (ix) Any other Business
- (x) Date and Place of next Full Committee Meeting

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FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF THE VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



MMM'S ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' RIGHTS

Raising awareness on discrimination against women in health and safety

At the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council, which took place in June at the UN in Geneva, Make Mothers Matter (MMM) took the opportunity of the presentation of the 2016 report of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice to make an oral statement.

The focus of this 2016 report was discrimination against women in health and safety. Among the many issues raised, the report mentions the disproportionate risk that women face of "being subjected to humiliating and degrading treatment in health-care facilities, especially during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-partum period". In relation to this particular issue, the MMM statement highlights the impact of a mother's mental and emotional health on her children's future outcome, which is not yet acknowledged and integrated enough into policy making.

MMM also makes policy recommendations, notably calling on all governments to:

1. recognize the importance of these critical early years for child development, especially between conception and early childhood, and make it an investment priority.
2. develop national policies that support mothers and fathers in their caring roles, especially during pregnancy and early childhood, to ensure that babies benefit from loving and nurturing environments and relationships.

Call to promote decent work in global supply chains

For the first time, MMM was accredited by the International Labour Organization to participate at the 105th annual International Labour Conference, taking place from 30 May to 11 June 2016 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Thousands of representatives from Member States, as well as employers' and workers' organizations gathered to discuss Decent Work in Global Supply Chains.

MMM issued a statement highlighting the costs and time pressures that ripple down the supply chain from the lead firm to the workers. These pressures result in low wages and long working times, and have a particularly negative impact on workers with family responsibilities. Indeed, overtime and inadequate rest periods make reconciling work and family responsibilities especially difficult and stressful for mothers, who are also expected to perform domestic work, raise children and care for sick and elderly relatives at home.

At stake is their own physical and mental health, but also the wellbeing of their family, especially children. Parents, especially mothers, have an indispensable role in ensuring children's material and emotional wellbeing, and in enabling their physical and intellectual development to their full potential. The failure to recognize and support this essential role can have a direct, negative impact on children and undermine their prospects for a better

future – with a potentially high cost to societies long-term.

Therefore, MMM is calling on States to:

- ratify and implement the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- put in place a regulatory framework based on both the international standards promoted by the ILO and this Covenant, that also covers export processing zones;
- enforce these regulations and complement them with policies that specifically address all forms of discriminations against women in paid work, against mothers in particular (such as the gender pay gap and discriminations in hiring and promotion), and promote a lifecycle approach supported by flexible working conditions and social protection.

Call to empower mothers as agents of change

“Leave no mother behind: empowered mothers are changemakers who can make the SDGs succeed”. On the occasion of the 2016 Annual Ministerial Review meeting of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held in July 2016 at the United Nations in New York, MMM submitted a written statement on the topic “Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results”.

Make Mothers Matter called on States to recognize mothers as changemakers, who can be instrumental in the realization of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, if only they are adequately supported and empowered. Therefore, key measures are:

- Addressing mothers' unpaid family care work as a root cause of mother and child poverty is essential in order to break the cycle of poverty.
- Empowering rural women in their multiple roles as household managers and caregivers, food producer and marketers is key to enhance food security and nutrition.
- Prioritizing maternal health as a smart investment: healthy mothers can ensure healthy lives for their children.
- Breaking the intergenerational vicious circle of violence against women can go a long way to achieve peace in the homes and communities, empowering mothers as agent of peace.
- Empowering girls through education and ending all forms of traditional harmful practices is essential for the future of societies.

By Olalla Michelena, Secretary General of the European Delegation of MMM and Valérie Bichelmeier, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, with assistance from Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna.

International Council of Women

Eleonore Hauer-Rona, representative of the International Council of Women, drew the attention of the participants of the Full Committee Meeting on May 23rd 2016, to the family related findings and activities of the Vienna based UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). Drug issues such as drug abuse, access to controlled medicines for the relief of pain in palliative care and their consequences for families and family related crime issues are on its agenda. A number of side events during the recent Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held at the UN in Vienna from 23rd to 27th May 2016 dealt for example with

- Elderly victims of crime
- Women and terrorism
- The role of justice systems to prevent and respond to violence against children
- Women meeting the challenges of extremism
- Gender based violence against girls and the criminal law

- Girls fleeing war, terrorism, catastrophies and the perils of flight: risks of exposure to death and crime
- Femicide

More details: www.unodc.org

Ms. Hauer-Rona also introduced a recently launched book “Die Mutter” (The mother): the reprint of a speech held by Marianne Hainisch in 1913 in the Austrian radio with a critical comment by Thierry Elsen and a preface by Eleonore Hauer-Rona, in her capacity as president of the National Council of Women Austria. Marianne Hainisch (1839-1936) was the founder of the National Council of Women Austria, affiliate of the International Council of Women, and mother of the first elected Austrian Federal President, Michael Hainisch. A summary of the book launch can be found on the editions website www.libica.org.



International Federation for Family Development:
Papers No. 55
Reaching Family Empowerment
Leaving no one behind means leaving no family behind
1. July 2016

After world leaders adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Development Programme will support governments around the world in tackling the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs aim to end poverty, hunger and inequality, take action on climate change and the environment, improve access to health and education, build strong institutions and partnerships, and more.

During decades, the UN has proven to be the main empowering institution to protect Human Rights, improve the world's women role and foster the next generation through the work on youth. Within the SDGs, a family approach is a step forward to the long-standing efforts of the UN intended to remove all barriers and ensure the active participation of families in society, especially including decisions on investments in health, housing and education.

"As basic and essential building blocks of societies, families have a crucial role in social development. They bear the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society. Families provide material and nonmaterial care and support to its members, from children to older persons or those suffering their existing from illness, sheltering them from hardship to the maximum possible extent. The very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Thus, policies focusing on improving the well-being of families are certain to benefit development." [Cf. A/66/62-E/2011/4] Henceforward, to most effectively reach the SDGs and ensure that no one is left behind, we are arguing that we will have to do a better job in leaving no family behind.

"I call on governments, businesses, institutions and other partners to recognize that caregiving is an essential part of family life. Everyone needs care from family members at some point in their lives – and all should be able to provide that care when the need arises.

Promoting supportive family environments and positive parenting through policies and laws can help families raise healthy, happy children who can grow into valued, productive adults.

Leaving no one behind means leaving no family behind.

On this International Day of Families, let us resolve to advance sustainable development by creating a supportive environment where all family members of all ages can realize their potential to contribute to our world."

From the United Nations Secretary-General's Message for the International Day of Families 2016.

Promoting Cohesive Families

IFFD has been working persistently in this family approach and has recently organized its 19th International Family Congress in Mexico City on October, 2015. The Congress hosted 1,836 delegates from 43 countries. In the final Declaration, the delegates emphasized that families have a crucial role in social development and confirmed their commitment to helping families worldwide and to contributing to universal peace and respect of human rights through Family Enrichment Courses and other programmes.

In the final Declaration it's also appreciated the work fulfilled worldwide since the article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The article set a starting point for any consideration of family-related issues. Where, the mere language and symbolism of family "has the potential to proffer the middle ground from which

compromise and consensus can emerge on even the most polarizing and divisive issues.” [Bogenschneider, 2014] Therefore, a family impact approach has built consensus in various resolutions and decisions on this matter by the United Nations General Assembly and other international bodies.

The mentioned Declaration was finally stated in February 2016 at the 54th Commission for Social Development and fully explained in a side-event themed precisely “Leaving no family behind” at the UN Headquarters. The IFFD delegates welcomed the recognition within the SDGs, especially 1 to 5, that the very design, development, implementation and monitoring of family-oriented policies and programmes are essential for the success of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. “Family can contribute to eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases”. [E/2014/99]

Various suggestions included on the Declaration help to achieve SDG1 and SDG2 when considering the family as a unit in which the well-being of their individual members is promoted while a breakdown can be both a root cause and an effect of poverty. A range of family-oriented policies play a vital role tackling with the intergenerational transmission of poverty, which also includes children’s health, development in nutrition and families’ financial resources and behaviours.

A family approach also helps to ensure healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages (SDG3) when the family facilitates intergenerational solidarity. Therefore, appropriate policies should be directed to promote equitable access to resources that strengthen family ties, such as family enrichment courses, positive parenting classes or mentoring programmes, and encourage volunteering of older persons in schools and offering community service requirements for highschool students, requiring young people to help older persons with their daily activities.

Again, on the SDG4 family approach is reinforced by mentioning “cohesive families” for the first time ever. Cohesive families are said to provide “a nurturing environment to children and

youth, for the full realization of their rights and capabilities”. [Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (A/RES/70/1), para.25] They also are a meeting point for generations offering “inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels for all people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and including persons with disabilities, all migrants, indigenous peoples, especially those in vulnerable situations”.

Furthermore, addressing cohesive families promotes gender equality and empowerment of women by recognizing the value of unpaid care, domestic work and economic dimension of their activity (SDG5). It is in such environment where girls and boys are treated equally and parents share care and household responsibilities. Policymakers may find in cohesive families a potential way to contribute to the achievement of several sustainable development goals and targets.

Evidence-Based Family Perspective

All the efforts made to protect human rights on women and young people could be enriched by adding the family as a political priority. A family approach would represent a logical step forward to ensure no one is left behind, especially women and young people who are naturally part of the family and proven to be the most vulnerable. This family empowerment would promote policies at the national, regional and international levels by removing social, political, legal and economic barriers to their active participation in society. Such a step forward would enable families to assert greater control over their resources and life choices and by providing instruments to recognize the time, effort and money that committed families invest in their children.

Due to policymakers may encounter difficulties valuing families and people, the IFFD is promoting the project “Making Families a Cornerstone in Policymaking: A Global Guide for Policymakers on Family Impact”. In this project the family impact lens pays attention to relationships between people and the fact that “family policies are most effective when targeting the family unit and its dynamic as a whole, rather than focusing on the needs of individual family members”. [Cf. Report of the UN Secretary General, 2014, A/68/61-E/2013/3.] Yet this conceptual distinction is often overlooked in policy discourse and decision-making. According to the Secretary General of the United

Nations, policies too often ignore the family unit and continue to target individuals.

The value of elevating families in policymaking is supported by a solid body of research evidence that endorses families as a fundamental component of a strong and vital society. Families are a cornerstone for generating the productive workers a sound economy demands and for rearing the caring, committed citizens a strong society requires. For example, researchers have documented the valuable contribution families make in promoting their members' academic success, economic productivity, emotional well-being, and social competence among other outcomes of interest. In addition, professionals who educate, administer, or deliver services to families espouse the desirability and viability of family-focused approaches for more effectively and efficiently achieving program goals.

Furthermore, dialogue and partnerships between social policy makers and relevant stakeholders, including families, family associations, the business sector, trade unions and employers should be enhanced to develop and improve family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace. This should include both housework and care, because, in reality, both are a form of care, housework having important implications for the wellbeing of all members of the family.

How can this be achieved? A proposal includes three very clear recommendations: policies to promote education about freedom and rights; information and advice regarding responsibility and duties; and legislation on both these areas. Sound family policies must be based on adequate research and analysis. Family policy monitoring and evaluation is also indispensable to advance policy development; continue policies that work and discontinue those that have proven ineffective. Support data collection and research on family issues and the impact of public policy on families and invest in family-oriented policies and programme design, implementation and evaluation.

Families, healthy lives and sustainable future

The central goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focus on ending poverty, promoting shared economic prosperity, social development and people's well-being while protecting the environment. Families remain at the centre of social life ensuring the wellbeing of their members, educating and socializing children and youth and caring for young and old. From a policy perspective, taking families into account in the implementation of Sustainable Develop-

ment Goals has a potential to speed up the achievements of many targets relating to individuals' well-being.

A number of family policies, such as those supporting the caregiving role of families, workfamily balance for parents, empowering families to support their individual members' health, education and well-being, have been found to contribute to overall development goals.

In particular, family-oriented policies can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 5 relating to doing away with poverty and hunger; ensuring healthy lives and promoting of well-being for all ages; ensuring educational opportunities throughout the lifespan and achieving gender equality.

The theme of this year's observance of the International Day of Families focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Families have a unique role in ensuring health and wellbeing of children. Parents can improve children's health outcomes by providing emotional support, ensuring preventive and sick healthcare visits, including timely immunizations and proper treatment in times of illness. In turn, a number of policies and programmes, can effectively assist parents in ensuring proper care and thus better health outcomes for their children.

Policies and programmes that increase family financial resources or improve caregiving behaviours also have the potential to positively influence child health and wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable families. For instance, cash or in-kind transfers, such as child allowances, or conditional cash transfers requiring parents to ensure their children's preventive healthcare and school attendance go a long way in to promoting children's health and education outcomes.

International Day of Families 2016 Observance, 'Families, healthy lives and sustainable future' - Background Note, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Well-Being Indicators

According to the resolutions from the Commission for Social Development and Commission for Population Development an evidence-based approach is definitive to policy development, monitoring, review and follow up. It will never be a family perspective without measurement tools. That is why we promote the delimitation of evidence-based quantification of family impact according to Global Well-Being Indicators. The scope should be both narrow and broad. Kaleidoscopic examining both (1) family policies intentionally designed to improve family functions (e.g., early childhood care and education, positive parenting, caregiving of the aging, reconciliation of work and family life) and prevent dysfunctions (e.g., child exploitation, domestic violence, family poverty) and (2) any pol-

icy that inadvertently influences family functioning and decision-making (e.g., education, gender equality, health care, sustainable economic development, urban growth). In a nutshell, we will promote the concept that families are what to think about and that the family impact lens is how to think in a more holistic way that recognizes the importance of commitment to others, which is first learned and practiced in families.

Evidence-based Global Family Well-Being indicators are projected to be an outcome of a research-based method that critically examines the past, present, or probable future effects of a policy on family relationships, family stability, family members' ability to carry out their responsibilities, and so forth. Analysis of family impact can help policymakers to better grasp how strong families support societies and how societies can support strong families. The goal is to turn family rhetoric into reality. To use the family impact lens to shift the current rhetoric from merely appreciating families in the abstract to substantively viewing families in more pragmatic, accurate, and effective ways.

Our initial thinking is outlined below on how we plan to encourage the world's decision makers to view policies through family-colored glasses, that is, developing policies that create the conditions for families to thrive and that consider any policy for its impact on families.

- Develop culturally appropriate principles and indicators that will serve as the core for a family impact checklist that builds on the knowledge and experience of family experts from around the world; we will begin with (but not be limited to) principles such as family responsibility, family stability, family relationships, family diversity, and family engagement.

- Our work will target family policies designed to promote the best interests of families. Also, we will focus on other policies that may not specifically address family interests, yet may have inadvertent consequences for them. For example, we will conduct family impact analysis on three or four 2015 sustainable development goals. We will strive to incorporate these findings into the UN's capacity building efforts and communicate

these findings to the policymakers who are developing implementation plans.

- Pilot test different methods for bringing the family impact lens to policy and practice with our partners in academia and civil society in different countries around the world in those jurisdictions where family policies are made; because policymakers typically seek out information in the context of trusted relationships, pilot tests will focus on jurisdictions where our partners have established trusting relationships with policymakers.

- Produce brief, accessible publications targeted to the issues and decisions policymakers face in their jobs such as why family impact is important, how policymakers can examine family impacts of policy decisions, in what ways the family impact lens has benefited policy decisions around the world, and so forth.

- Develop a toolkit that can be used as a prototype to encourage more widespread adoption of the family impact framework and methods.

- Evaluate whether our efforts are reaching our goals of encouraging policymakers to view issues through the lens of family impact, incorporate family considerations into their jobs, and take steps to build better public policies for families.

- Plan for dissemination through the development of resources, both written and video, that capture how much can be accomplished and what can be learned in the pilot tests and evaluations.

- Build on what is learned to vision what strategies and leadership are needed to promote widespread global adoption of the family impact framework.

If we really want to leave no family behind, we need to define the right well-being indicators to assess the impact needed for implementing a family perspective. From a Universal Human Rights perspective, it is also needed that these indicators should be globally pertinent in the definition but locally appropriate in the application.

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**Is there a better alternative to marriage?
Trends in family formation that are shaping the United States**

1 September 2016

As American women get an education and enter the workforce, they tend to delay marriage and motherhood.

An interesting article recently published in Business Insider tries to explain why if a woman has to choose between pursuing her career and starting a family rather than doing both at the same time, putting off having kids becomes more likely.

The progressive availability of the pill and other forms of birth control have definitely helped more women going that route, and some of the risks and benefits are coming into focus.

But “the draw backs of waiting to start a family are relatively intuitive. Because a woman’s fertility begins to decrease at age 32 and decreases more sharply after age 37, though every woman will have a different experience.”

It is worth mentioning, as the article does, that “contrary to what it may seem, invitrofertilization is not a cure-all for fertility decreasing with age. The percentage of IVF cycles that result in a baby declines from about 40% for women aged 32 and younger, to about 20% for 40-year-old women, to less than 5% for women 44 and older who use their own eggs.” [Ellie Kincaid, ‘Why having kids later is a really big deal.

In addition to decreasing fertility with age, the risks of older parenthood also include the parents having less energy and the grandparents having less involvement in the children’s lives.

On the other side and besides higher salaries, women who wait until they’re at least 35 to have kids generally have accrued experience and clout at work that helps them create what has been called a ‘shadow benefits system’ to supplement official benefits for parents. They may have lots of

stored up vacation time or maybe able to negotiate more flexible work schedules or the ability to work

from home, when more junior colleagues might not.

In other words, the absence of official benefits to make it easy for women to have a family while having a job has made putting off having kids to become less like a preference and more like a necessity. For that reason, “if the world finds the new later motherhood solution problematic, then we, as a society, need to offer other good options for combining family and career.”

Age-related decline in fertility and the increased likelihood of pregnancy complications with age also mean that waiting to have kids can put extra physical and psychological stress on the woman and her baby – something to be considered too.

In conclusion, marriage and parenthood are personal choices, but they always have effects on the children and on the whole of society. That is why the trend of older first-time parents is already reshaping our world in big ways.

The average age of first-time American mothers is increasing because more women are waiting until their 30s and 40s to start having kids and fewer women are having their first kids in their 20s. The majority of all births are still to women under 35 (about 85% of the total), but rates for all births, not just of a first child, to women over 35 have been rising over the past 20 years, while birth rates for younger women are stable or declining.

Young people will not enter a marriage without a stable income and they choose cohabitation for different reasons – though they still want children.

These trends are no small matter. They are already changing families, lives, and economies, and as having kids later becomes more common, those changes will become more widespread.

The rise of cohabitation

But there is another very important pattern to take into account. As another article published on Fortune explains, young people will not enter a mar

riage without a stable income — even though they still want children. A recent study published in the *American Sociological Review* states that “the greater the local level of income inequality, the less likely men and women are to marry before having a first child — an association that appears driven in part by the lack of middle-skilled jobs that pay above-poverty wages. These ‘middle-skilled’ jobs are those that don’t require a college degree, including electricians, manufacturing, and security guards.

One reason for this increased interest in cohabitation over marriage may not be the fear of the union itself, so much as a concern for the possibility of its collapse. In other words, it may be the looming prospect of divorce that’s driving more people to choose cohabitation over marriage.

This is why some have mentioned that another negative factor is the media’s constant repetition of the statistic that one out of two marriages is destined to fail, since this statistic is inaccurate: divorce rates have been declining over the last 20 years. “It seems that the contentious nature of how relationships are portrayed worry today’s young adults.” How the media may affect our perceptions of marriage has not been worked out, but given the fact that it’s the unhappy rather than the happy endings that are typically brought to our attention, it seems possible that this may have something to do with our changing beliefs about marriage itself.

Concerns about divorce are also reflected in who is likely to feel the potential cost of ending a marriage most. “Working-class people are twice as likely to raise concerns about marriage being difficult to extricate oneself from, and women are particularly apt to feel this way. They are also more likely to cite the legal and financial difficulties associated with divorce, rather than emotional or social, compared to middle-class people. Indeed it may be more difficult to extricate oneself from a marriage when one’s salary is lower, and this concern may be more likely for women.

Today it’s the middle-class and people with more education who are getting married more frequently — and staying married. That is a change, since highly educated women used to be less likely to be married than women with less than a college degree. The changing role of men in the workplace

may contribute to their preference for cohabitation over marriage when it exists. For men, avoiding marriage may free them of some of the responsibilities and financial pressures that have historically come along with marriage.”

What are the advantages of marriage?

The bottom line is that both sexes, and particularly people who are less financially stable, are more reluctant to get married than they were a few decades ago. There are very real hardships associated with divorce, and the current economic climate makes them scarier than they might be in easier times.

However, is not educated Americans who have turned their backs on marriage. A recent publication of The Brookings Institution confirms that “the well documented ‘marriage gap’ in the US is mostly due to a decline in marriage rates among the less educated. As a general rule, the more letters American women have after their names — and therefore the greater their economic independence — the more likely they are to be married.” In other words, marriage used to be a classless phenomenon, but not anymore. Among women in their early 40s (between 40 and 45), a clear gap has emerged in recent decades.

Despite all these changes in family patterns, marriage still offers benefits to one’s physical and mental health. Many studies show that married people have better health and live longer than unmarried people. And the research keeps coming into support its benefits, particularly as we age. Since it doesn’t seem as though this will be acknowledged with our behavior soon, we have to wonder how to reconcile the fact that young people are declining to marry while older people are reaping its benefits.

Even people who remarry after being divorced or widowed have better physical and mental health than their counter parts who remain single, though it’s still not as good as those married for the long-term. Divorce does seem to take a toll on people’s psychological and physical health, and the longer one is divorced, the greater the negative effects on health.

Like divorce, the loss of a spouse also affects over all mental and physical health. Widowers who remain single have more mental health problems than those who find a new mate. Several mental

health issues — depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and ‘emotional blunting,’ in which a person experiences reduced emotional reactions — are all more pronounced in men who do not develop another intimate relationship after the death of their spouse, compared to men who do find a new partner. Therefore, staying married or remarrying after the end of a first marriage seems to offer physical and mental health benefits throughout one’s life.

If being married is good for health, can we say the same of cohabitation? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Jamila Bookwala, a gerontologist who studies health, marriage, and aging, says that there’s a fundamental difference between marriage and cohabitation. The benefits of marriage don’t seem to translate to cohabitation, she says. People who cohabit do not enjoy the same health benefits that come with marriage. Of course, marriage is not a free pass to good health. The quality of a marriage has a lot to do with the health benefits the relationship may bring.

It’s the negative traits in one’s spouse that really affect a person’s physical health. On the flip-side is mental health. A close marriage is great for mental health. There are risks involved in taking any plunge in life. And there are clearly certain risks to marriage. But the overwhelming evidence suggests that if it is a satisfying one, the pros generally outweigh the cons.

Benefits and costs of a delayed marriage

The age at which men and women marry is now at historic heights — 27 for women, and 29 for men — and is still climbing. The age at which women have children is also increasing, but not nearly as quickly as the delay in marriage.

Delayed marriage has elevated the socioeconomic status of women, especially more privileged women and their partners, allowed women to reach other life goals, and reduced the odds of divorce for couples now marrying in the US.

Although many men and women have been postponing marriage to their late twenties and beyond, they have not put off childbearing at the same pace. In fact, for women as a whole, the median age at first birth (25.7) now falls before the median age at first marriage (26.5). This is associated with dramatic changes in childbearing.

Twenty-somethings who are unmarried, especially singles, are significantly more likely to drink to excess, to be depressed, and to report lower levels of satisfaction

with their lives, compared to married twenty-somethings.

Americans of all classes are postponing marriage to their late twenties and thirties for two main reasons, one economic and the other cultural. Young adults are taking longer to finish their education and stabilize their work lives. Culturally, young adults have increasingly come to see marriage as a ‘capstone’ rather than a ‘cornerstone’ — that is, something they do after they have all their other ducks in a row, rather than a foundation for launching into adulthood and parenthood.

But this capstone model is not working well for Middle Americans. One widely discussed reason for this is that Middle American men are having difficulty finding decent-paying, stable work capable of supporting a family. Another less understood reason is that the capstone model is silent about the connection between marriage and childbearing.

Marriage delayed, then, is the center piece of two scripts that help create two different outcomes and two different life chances for the next generation. For the college-educated third of our population, it has been a success. For the rest, including large swaths of Middle America, not so much.

Less births...

The Great Recession had a clear effect on fertility — it has happened every time there is a financial crisis, so it came as no surprise. But more than five years after economists announced the end of the recession, fertility levels have still not recovered, showing that it was not the only cause. As shown in figure 2, more than 3.4 million fewer babies were born in the US between 2008 and 2015 than would have been expected if pre-recession fertility rates had been sustained.

This decline in births is entirely due to reduced fertility rates. The number of women in their prime childbearing years (20 to 39) actually increased by 2.5 million (6%) between 2007 and 2015. With more women of childbearing age, the expectation would be for more babies. Yet the larger cohort of childbearing age women in 2015 produced fewer births than the smaller 2007 cohort did.

... and more children without a stable family

Also, of those who are born, fewer than half (46%) kids younger than 18 years of age are living in a home with two married parents in their first marriage. This is a marked change from 1960, when 73% of children fit this description, and 1980, when 61% did, according to a Pew Research Center

analysis. According to this analysis, today 15% of children are living with two parents who are in a remarriage. It is difficult to accurately identify stepchildren, so we don't know for sure if these kids are from another union, or were born within the remarriage. However, data from another Census source indicates that 6% of all children are living with a stepparent.

One of the largest shifts in family structure is this: 34% of children today are living with an unmarried parent — up from just 9% in 1960, and 19% in 1980. In most cases, these unmarried parents are single. However, a small share of all children (4%) are living with two cohabiting parents. And the remaining 5% of children are not living with either parent. In most of these cases, they are living with a grandparent.

Recent and Forthcoming events

2016

October 2016

- 5-7: European FGC Network Meeting – Family is asked to make a plan first (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) <http://www.fgcnetwork.eu/en/annual-meeting/>

November 2016

- 2-5: Families and Human Rights: Promise and Vulnerability in the 21st Century (Minneapolis, USA) <https://www.ncfr.org/future-conferences>
- 7: International Forum: Family Poverty – Causes, Consequences, Solutions. Dr. Michaela Moser, University of Applied Sciences, St. Poelten, Austria (United Nations Vienna International Centre) contact@viennafamilycommittee.org

2017

June 2017

- 5-7: 7th World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights (Dublin, Ireland) <http://www.world-congress.co/dublin-2017/>

July 2017

- 25-29: 16th ISFL World Conference: Family Law and Family Realities (Amsterdam, Netherlands) http://www.isflhome.org/conference?conference_id=16

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