United Nations

**General Assembly
Economic and Social Council**

A/78/61-E/2023/7

Distr.: General
11 November 2022

Original: English

**General Assembly**
**Seventy-eighth session**
**Social development: social development, including**
**questions relating to the world social situation and to**
**youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family**

**Economic and Social Council**
**2023 session**
**25 July 2022–26 July 2023**
**Agenda item 19 (b)**
**Social and human rights questions:**
**social development**

# Preparations for and observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/139. As part of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the Secretary-General focuses on the analysis of urbanization and migration trends and their impacts on families and family-oriented policies. He furthermore describes the current state of preparations for the observance of the anniversary at all levels.

## I.  Introduction

1.    In its resolution 76/139, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its seventy-eighth session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the resolution, including a description of the state of preparation for the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels.

2.    In the resolution, the Assembly called upon Member States, United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders to promote the preparations for the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024 at the national, regional and international levels through practical initiatives, including family-oriented policies and programmes responding to the needs of all families. Moreover, the Assembly invited relevant stakeholders, as part of the preparations, to support research and awareness-raising activities on the impact of technological, demographic, urbanization, migration and climate change trends on families.

3.    In his previous report (A/77/61-E/2022/4), the Secretary-General focused on new technologies and families. In the present report, he continues the analysis of megatrends focusing on migration and urbanization. Moreover, in accordance with the resolution, he also includes the description of the state of preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the national as well as regional and international levels.[1]

## II.  Migration and families[2]

4.    Migration-related issues are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goal 10, target 10.7 of which refers to the importance of facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-

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[1] Based on, inter alia, the responses to a note verbale, sent by the Secretariat to permanent missions and regional entities, enquiring about national and regional policies relating to megatrends affecting families, received from the Governments of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Hungary, Jordan, Mongolia, Poland, Qatar, Singapore, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and Uruguay, as well as the European Commission and the World Food Programme. Available at www.un.org/development/desa/family/2022/10/13/good-practices-in-family-policy-making/. The information relating to new technologies, migration and urbanization contained in the responses to the note verbale was used in the present report, while the information on demographic and climate change trends contained in the responses will be used in the subsequent report of the Secretary-General.

[2] The data in the present report are drawn from the following sources: *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* (United Nations publication, 2022); *Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary: Shaping the Trends of Our Time* (United Nations publication, 2020); Bahira Sherif Trask, "Migration, urbanization and the family dimension", background paper prepared for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, Division for Inclusive Social Development, May 2022; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Migration trends and families", policy brief No. 133, May 2022; papers prepared for the expert group meeting on the theme "Megatrends and families: focus on digital technologies, migration and urbanization", held on 7 and 8 September 2022; Economist Intelligence, "The global liveability index 2022"; Daniela Bas, "Urbanization and families", *UN Chronicle*, 13 May 2022; report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (A/76/639-E/2022/10); summary of deliberations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development (CEB/2019/1/Add.5); presentations prepared for the 2022 International Day of Families observance on families and urbanization; and proceedings of the families and migration side event at the sixtieth session of the Commission for Social Development.

managed migration policies. Other targets also make direct connections to migration topics, including labour migration and remittances as well as migration data issues. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the need for support of migrants through adequate policies.

5.      Migration, linked to globalization, demonstrates economic disparities between different regions as well as growing inequalities among societies, with migrants primarily relocating in search of better economic prospects. The number of international migrants grew from 2.8 per cent (173 million) of the global population in 2000 to 3.6 per cent (281 million) in 2020. Women and men accounted for 135 million and 146 million migrants respectively in 2020.

6.      Migration is driven by: (a) macro drivers, including demographic, economic, human development and environmental factors; (b) meso, sociocultural drivers; and (c) micro, individual drivers. The decision to migrate is often a family decision. In the decision-making process, not only are members of the nuclear family considered, but also members of kinship or extended family networks and even the wider community. Even if the decision to migrate is made on an individual basis, most migrants have a sense of family obligation and want to contribute, at least financially, to the families they leave behind.

7.      Remittances made by migrants are critical for economies, accounting for over 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in many low- and middle-income countries. They reached $589 billion in 2021 and, for a second consecutive year, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries exceeded the sum of foreign direct investments (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA).

8.      Defying initial forecasts of the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, remittances registered just a 1.7 per cent drop in 2020 and have remained strong, growing by 8.6 per cent from 2020. This rise has been fuelled primarily by migrants sending more money home to families facing economic hardships during the pandemic. Remittances constitute a primary form of income for many households in migrants' countries of origin and a financial safety net for family members in these countries. Remittances have been associated with improving human development outcomes with regard to poverty, health, education and gender equality.

9.      With some regional variations, family is a major driver of contemporary migration. Family migration can be divided into four categories: family formation, accompanying family, family reunification and international adoption. Although data on family migration is limited, the available data for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries indicate that in 2018, 41 per cent of all permanent migration was family migration, with approximately 1.9 million new migrants moving to OECD countries for family reasons.

10.      The relatively new trend of family migration, in which families migrate together, can be observed in migration flows from Central America to the United States of America. The "migrant caravan" phenomenon in Central America constitutes a collective migration of large groups of migrants transiting together and has been growing due to lack of job opportunities, poverty and social and gender violence experienced in the subregion. The caravans are composed of whole families, unaccompanied minors, older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with chronic diseases. These migrants are often exposed to predatory violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking, food insecurity, discrimination and social exclusion. The number of asylum applications from displaced migrants in the United States and Mexico has been growing, with the migrant profile changing from single men to whole families, women and unaccompanied children and adolescents.

11. A growing phenomenon of the irregular migration of children seeking work in another country or reunification with parents who previously migrated poses great risks to unaccompanied minors, who are often abused and exploited during the migration journey. Large inflows of unaccompanied minors also pose great challenges to host countries, especially in terms of housing, education and reunification with family members.

12. International migration has an impact on family life in many ways. Transnational families often suffer from the impacts of family separation with some adverse effects, including marital abandonment, separation, divorce, teenage pregnancy and poor school performance. Individual family members leave behind families embedded in social networks, which are difficult to recreate in their host countries. Moreover, labour migration may contribute to family breakdown and strained intergenerational relations between parents, grandparents and children. Young parents migrating to other countries may have to leave their children behind in the care of grandparents, which may lead to disagreements about parenting styles and responsibilities.

13. Despite the negative impacts noted above, transnational families construct and reproduce their lives beyond national borders and have the capacity to cope with the constraints they face in their daily interactions. Migration transforms, reorients and changes the dynamics of family relationships. This includes spousal, parent-child and other family relationships which move into the transnational social space, often with the help of new advancements in transportation and communication technologies that facilitate frequent contact and interactions and enable family members to maintain close ties and relationships.

14. Decision-making regarding mobility implies that family structures and arrangements, views about gender and intergenerational relations, family roles and parenting may be transformed, reoriented and negotiated among members of the nuclear family and the kinship or extended family network. Such redefinitions often involve considerable tensions and conflicts. It is common for the family structure to change while some traditional views and gendered attributions of family responsibilities often remain unchanged, thus forcing members of transnational families to mediate existing inequalities in access in such areas as mobility, individual and family resources, different types of capital, and lifestyles.

15. With the expansion of work in manufacturing and service sectors, women currently account for 48 per cent of all international migrants. Transnational motherhood, characterized by mother-child separation, is becoming more prevalent as young mothers in search of economic opportunities lacking in their countries of origin leave their children in the care of other, mostly female, family members.

16. As grandmothers primarily assume the care of grandchildren whose parents have migrated, their role (and that of grandfathers) is crucial for reinforcing the culture and identity of the native country. They convey to their grandchildren language, values and customs and promote a sense of belonging to the native culture. At the same time, grandchildren learn about the culture of the destination country of their parents through their relationship with their migrant parents. Grandparents can also provide emotional support when children's parents migrate or for the integration and maintenance of ties at a distance. Although the positive role of grandparents in caring for their grandchildren cannot be overstated, geographic and legal restrictions accompanied by varied expectations between grandparents, parents and grandchildren may create conflicts and sometimes weaken intergenerational relationships.

17. As transnational mothers mostly take on the economic provider role, they redefine gender roles but also struggle to meet the social expectations of the societies they have left behind. Studies on transnational motherhood indicate that women find

it difficult to justify and negotiate their parental roles at home and abroad. However, little is known about the broader impacts of transnational motherhood on the families left behind, with the exception of the negative impacts on children, who often struggle emotionally and psychologically.

18. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) indicates that in the 56 countries it covers, integration policies create as many obstacles as opportunities for migrants to settle and integrate in their host countries. Immigrants mostly enjoy basic human rights but do not have equal access to opportunities to participate in all areas of life in their host countries. Current migration policies in place benefit families and promote family reunification and social integration in host countries only to some extent.

19. Family reunification policies have an impact on family relations, as they establish the terms under which migrants and their family members are allowed to enter and settle in destination countries. There is a close relationship between policies, migratory trajectories and transnational families, with such regulations being assessed by families when a member wishes to migrate and make decisions about migration. These policies may facilitate or restrict migratory flows and the conditions under which they occur. Thus, they can either contribute to family well-being or expose families to the processes of exclusion and risk.

20. Family reunification is often constrained, with some countries imposing barriers to reunification with restrictive policies. Several countries tightened their border controls and imposed restrictive laws to prevent migrants from entering and obtaining legal status, with COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions making family reunification even more difficult. Such policies resulted in household fragmentation and at the same time exposed inequalities associated with international migration.

21. Although reunited families with legal residency status and basic rights contribute to social cohesion in their host countries, the definition of family varies across countries, as do the conditions of reunification. For example, some Western European countries restrict reunification eligibility to nuclear families and require transnational family members to have high incomes and pass language or cultural tests.

22. In response to a note verbale from the Secretariat enquiring about national and regional policies relating to megatrends affecting families, several Governments and regional entities noted their efforts. For instance, as reported by the European Commission, the Family Reunification Directive of the European Union requires member States to authorize the entry and residence of an unaccompanied child's parents who are third-country nationals when it is not in the child's best interests to join the child's parents abroad.

23. Some countries offer incentives for nationals to return to their countries of origin. In Hungary, a generous family policy and home creation programme has been credited with an increased number of Hungarian families returning from abroad. The period spent working abroad is taken into account to establish eligibility for family policy support.

24. In Mongolia, a general project for population and settlement development is being developed to improve access to services, develop the labour skills of migrants from rural areas and address urban poverty. To reunite families of mining workers, the Government entered into agreements with mining companies to create adequate family living conditions in mining areas.

25. In Uruguay, migrants and their families enjoy rights to health, work, social security, housing and education on an equal footing with Uruguayan nationals. The children of migrants are able to exercise their right to education regardless of the legal status of their parents. Migration itself is never criminalized and families have a right to reunification.

## III. Urbanization and families

26.   Urbanization, closely linked to migration, can work to alleviate poverty, reduce inequality and protect the environment, with appropriate foresight and planning. Sustainable Development Goal 11 of the 2030 Agenda focuses on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Various targets under Goal 11 note the importance of safe and affordable housing and public transportation. Target 11.7 emphasizes providing universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

27.   Urbanization differs by global location, with over 80 per cent of the global population living in urban areas in high- and middle-income countries, while in low- to lower-middle income countries, the majority live in rural areas. However, estimated and projected urban population trends indicate rapid urbanization in less developed regions.

28.   The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated inequalities in urban areas. The initial phase of the pandemic in 2020 affected 2.7 billion workers globally, representing 81 per cent of the global workforce. The pandemic negatively affected living conditions in urban areas due to its impacts on the health-care infrastructure, with restrictions and lockdown measures having a negative impact on businesses and access to services.

29.   The pandemic also highlighted the existing inequalities in urban areas between low-wage workers in the informal sector who had to work outside their homes and most white-collar workers, except for those in health care and a few other professions, who were able to work in safety from their homes. These inequalities, combined with overcrowded slums and informal settlements, made urban areas especially dangerous for the most vulnerable: families in extreme poverty, older persons and persons with disabilities.[3]

30.   The pandemic highlighted an urgent need for sustainable urban development with high-quality infrastructure and universal access to basic services; such development is indispensable for recovery and preparedness for future crises. Currently, with rising food and fuel prices, the cost of living has rapidly risen in cities. The sharp increase in inflation puts the quality of life in many cities at risk. Rising interest rates in most countries also make borrowing and debt repayment more expensive, reducing consumer spending and access to affordable housing.

31.   Urbanization affects individuals and families in many ways, providing both opportunities and challenges. It offers more access to employment, education, leisure and entertainment than rural areas do. Families move to cities in hopes of better education for their children and better employment. Rapid and unplanned urbanization, however, creates challenges for families worldwide.

32.   Most challenges are related to unaffordable housing and inadequate infrastructure with limited public transportation. Low-income urban households expend more than 50 per cent of their income on housing; the global average is 30 per cent. They pay higher costs per unit for basic services from informal providers and their transport costs are also more expensive. Moreover, their food security relies on cash from unsteady sources of income. Poor urban households are especially sensitive to price increases and internal and external economic factors beyond their control.

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[3] United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization* (United Nations publication, 2020).

33.    Another challenge, especially in low- and lower-middle income countries, is the lack of public spaces such as parks and playgrounds, compounded by high levels of air pollution and climate risks. In lower-income countries, households are faced with decreasing access to fresh water, inadequate access to sewage and sanitation and lack of access to green spaces.

34.    Globally, over 23 per cent of individuals, equating to over 1 billion people, live in slums in urban areas. There is a need to improve the housing conditions of slum dwellers, especially in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where over half of the urban population live in slums. Estimates show that growth of 1 per cent in an urban population increases the incidence of slums by 5.3 per cent in Asia and 2.3 per cent in Africa. Slums are also often in areas prone to natural disasters.

35.    Inadequate housing and homelessness are directly linked to migration and urbanization as people migrating from rural to urban areas mostly move directly into slums and/or housing that is inadequate because they lack alternative opportunities. Although the most prevalent form of homelessness in urban areas, living on the streets, is the most visible, less visible forms of homelessness, mostly occurring in the global South, manifest in precarious, overcrowded or inadequate housing conditions with no basic services or tenure. An estimated 2 per cent of the global population is homeless and an additional 20 per cent live in inadequate housing.

36.    The number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness is growing throughout the world. Family homelessness, where a household lacks habitable space with the security of tenure rights, is a manifestation of extreme poverty and the failure of multiple systems. Family breakdown is often both a cause and effect of family homelessness. Consequently, families are split up in shelters, and children from low-income families are subject to State and other interventions.

37.    Globally, women, children and girls are vulnerable to adverse personal and familial circumstances in addition to the structural and systemic causes of family homelessness and the accompanying issues of displacement and trauma. Housing First, an intervention to support individuals and families in breaking the cycle of homelessness by providing them with permanent housing, basic necessities and the services they need to recover from trauma, has proven to be an effective approach in homelessness prevention.[4]

38.    Rapid urbanization without sufficient planning often leads to urban sprawl and disregard for the benefits of public spaces. In high-density areas, the standard for public space is generally considered to be approximately 45 per cent at minimum, with two thirds of the allocation for streets and sidewalks and one third for open spaces. Adequate public space is necessary for access to services, employment and movement networks. In addition, research indicates that the nature-based play opportunities provided by green spaces support the early development of children and positive outcomes for young people. Being in natural surroundings may also have a positive effect on mental health and relationships. As new cities develop, however, public space allocations decrease.

39.    Several family trends are linked to urbanization. Fertility is lower and the nuclear family type is on the rise while the extended family type is declining. There are also many family configurations in cities, with more couples cohabiting and more children born out of wedlock than in non-urban areas. Divorce is also more common as women gain economic independence. In urban areas worldwide, an increasing number of older persons are "ageing in place", remaining in their homes for as long as they are able as they age.

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[4] More information is available at https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/.

40.    Family-oriented policies related to urbanization mainly focus on the provision of affordable housing and the facilitation of intergenerational living arrangements. For instance, in Belarus, housing assistance, such as soft loans and housing loan reductions, is offered in particular to young families and large families. Large families are also entitled to housing subsidies. In Hungary, family housing subsidies are offered to families raising at least one child or those who undertake to raise at least one child when buying a new or pre-owned house or flat or enlarging their existing home. Family housing loans at low interest rates are also offered.

41.    In Mongolia, a sustainable housing financing system programme was launched in 2013 to provide affordable housing. Several housing projects have been implemented, benefiting over 18,000 households and targeting single parents, persons with disabilities and young families. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the national housing strategy drives comprehensive urbanization and works to secure affordable housing during city planning.

42.    In Singapore, as a consequence of government subsidies, four out of five households live in affordable, quality public housing, of which around 90 per cent own their homes. Singapore is also committed to building an inclusive urban environment where families can access affordable housing and intergenerational living arrangements and enjoy public spaces that enhance the well-being of all generations.

43.    Intergenerational living arrangements are rising in some parts of the world. For instance, according to the Pew Research Center, in 2020, 19 per cent of Americans lived in a house with at minimum two adult generations together, up from 12 per cent in 1980. Families that choose multigenerational living arrangements improved their finances and had more supportive care arrangements and stronger social relationships.[5]

44.    Intergenerational living arrangements are promoted in Singapore to strengthen mutual care and support within families through multigenerational flats and priority schemes. For instance, "3-Generation" flats enable multigenerational families to live under one roof. Priority in public housing is also given to families who wish to live with or near their parents or married children through the Multi-generation Priority Scheme and the Married Child Priority Scheme. Proximity housing grants are also offered to eligible buyers who are purchasing a resale flat to live with or near their parents or child.

45.    Singapore is also committed to building inclusive infrastructure that is accessible to families with different needs, as well as designing public spaces where different generations can interact and feel part of a larger community. For instance, the Government strives to ensure that key essentials, such as grocery stores, recreational facilities and health-care facilities, are within 400 metres of residents. Public housing development incorporates universal design features, such as barrier-free routes, that seamlessly link up blocks, major activity nodes and amenities. The Code of Accessibility in the Built Environment of Singapore stipulates accessibility provisions, including ramps, lifts and accessible toilets. Some family-friendly features include lactation rooms, accessible changing rooms and accessible parking lots. Such inclusive design principles are also incorporated in new parks and parks undergoing redevelopment. Social, community and health-care facilities are often co-located to promote intergenerational interactions. As an illustration, as of December 2021, there were 13 care centres providing day care and rehabilitation services for older persons, co-located with childcare centres.

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[5] Generations United, Family *Matters: Multigenerational Families in a Volatile Economy* (Washington, D.C., 2011). Available at http://www.gu.org/OURWORK/Multigenerational.

46. As regards civil society initiatives for sustainable and family-friendly urbanization, the Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Families project, promoted by the International Federation for Family Development and active since 2017, aims to build a global alliance of cities and regions that would be responsive to the needs of families. By signing the Venice Declaration of the project, they pledge to take action in the areas related to housing, new technologies, education, health care, safety, clean air, transport, affordability, leisure and tourism, and vulnerable families, and commit themselves to submitting an annual monitoring report on their progress.

## IV. Status of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024

### A. National level

47. In addition to their efforts to benefit families as concerns the migration and urbanization trends noted above, Governments highlighted their actions in response to new technologies, another trend guiding the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Governments noted their family-oriented efforts in support of managing the use of new technologies, citing increased use of media campaigns to communicate their family policy strategies and raise awareness of specific issues relating to family life, such as domestic violence, rights of children or gender equality.

48. In Azerbaijan, in observance of the International Day of Families, events drawing attention to family issues are held, including scientific and practical conferences aiming at finding solutions to challenges faced by families. Moreover, training courses on topics such as gender equality in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, gender and reproductive rights, and the future of the family through the eyes of youth, as well as intergenerational activities such as the "get to know your families" project highlighting the life stories of older persons, are regularly conducted. Belarus has been undertaking a media campaign on family strengthening, including on parenting co-responsibility and responsible parenthood.

49. In Hungary, the Digital Success Programme, consisting of strategies addressing digital education, export development, start-ups and child protection, aims to empower all Hungarian citizens to benefit from digitalization. The Digital Child Protection Strategy equips children, parents and educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable children to use the Internet in conscious, beneficial ways and avoid unsafe content.

50. In Jordan, a media campaign and a communications strategy were launched to reduce violence against children. The strategy includes a series of awareness campaigns to correct undesirable behaviour through non-violent methods. During the COVID-19 pandemic, media campaigns have been organized to raise awareness of cyberbullying and its prevention.

51. Mongolia celebrates the International Day of Families with special events. A website was recently launched to provide legal and psychological counselling to families and training on positive parenting. In addition, advocacy efforts include events promoting family values. As a way to prepare for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, Mongolia revised its family law and undertook initiatives on the reduction of domestic violence and the strengthening of human resources capacity in the social sector working with families. At the international level, Mongolia plans to organize regional conferences and workshops on family support to provide an opportunity for other countries to learn from one another.

52. In Poland, the annual "Family First!" programme features numerous online and in-person events, such as a series of workshops, training sessions, social campaigns and research projects, to raise awareness of the importance of family and to contribute to the strengthening of family ties. Moreover, amendments to the Polish Labour Code have been made that increase the availability of flexible forms of work for parents through the provision of remote work, reduced hours and individual work schedules.

53. Singapore dedicated 2022 as the Year of Celebrating Singapore Families. It was led by the Families for Life Council and comprised volunteers from the public and private sectors, with support from the Alliance for Action to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships. The National Family Week raised awareness about the importance of core family values, including care, concern, commitment and respect at home.

54. The Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Information and the United Nations Children's Fund, launched a parental care campaign through social media. Furthermore, a national campaign involving social, educational and economic activities was launched in 2021 in a collaboration between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs to support and empower Syrian families. In Türkiye, the Digital Spring Project launched by the Ministry of Family and Social Services and the private sector seeks to improve the digital literacy of older persons. The project facilitates access to digital communication technologies so that older persons can keep in touch with their families. Following the pilot phase, expansion of the digital and financial literacy training throughout the country is planned.

55. A national strategy on early child development for the period from 2020 to 2025 was launched in Turkmenistan, aiming at strengthening policies and practices and ensuring the good health of children. Radio programmes on the "first 1,000 days" were also launched to provide information for new parents on the psychosocial development of children and their nutritional needs.

## B. Regional level

56. In terms of new strategies and awareness-raising at the regional level, the new European Union strategy on the rights of the child, adopted in 2021, stipulates that the family is an essential part of the life of the child and all children have an equal right to live with their families and in a community. The strategy, inter alia, promotes the speeding up of deinstitutionalization and the transition towards quality, family- and community-based care services for children, including unaccompanied migrant children, through national strategies and programmes.

57. Recent studies on digital deprivation in the European Union indicate that in some European countries, approximately 20 per cent of children live in households that cannot afford a computer or an Internet connection at home. Forty per cent of rural households do not have access to fast broadband and, in some areas, over 15 per cent of young people who are 15 years of age feel digitally disengaged. In Europe, 8 per cent of those that age lack digital confidence. To remedy this situation, the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children was updated in May 2022 in an effort to respond to the digital transformation that has been taking place since 2012 and, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, to address children's digital rights by encouraging digital literacy and healthy digital habits. The strategy supports large-scale media literacy campaigns to reach children, families and teachers to raise awareness of risks for children as consumers of digital tools as well as awareness of the use of personal data.

58.   In preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the Doha International Family Institute, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Arab States Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, organized an expert group meeting on the theme "Technological change and the family in the Arab region" which was held in Cairo from 2 to 5 June 2022. Experts presented conceptual papers and empirical results on topics such as cyberbullying and violence; technology as a facilitator and an obstacle to work-family balance; technology, marriage and fertility; digital addiction; and technological change and family well-being. The meeting highlighted the impact of technological changes on family relations, including marital, parental and intergenerational relations; showcased the differences between the Middle East and North Africa region countries in relation to new technologies and their impact on families; and provided recommendations with policy responses, best practices and approaches towards supporting families with technological changes. In addition, the Doha International Family Institute, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations and the League of Arab States, organized a high-level panel on the theme "The plan of action of family and SDGs in the Arab region: pathways of post-pandemic" in New York on 5 July 2022.

59.   As part of its ongoing activities in support of sustainable urbanization and in preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the Institute for Family Policy Analysis, a Mexican non-governmental organization promoting public policy with a family perspective, organized the Mexico northern regional meeting of the Venice Declaration from 27 to 29 October 2022 in Chihuahua, Mexico. The meeting brought together mayors and local governmental representatives to exchange experiences and recognize good practices in family-friendly urbanization in Mexico and beyond.

## C.   International level

60.   In 2022, preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the international level focused on advocacy, awareness-raising and research activities analysing the impacts of migration and urbanization on families, and offered a review of good practices and recommendations.

61.   "Families and migration", an online side event at the sixtieth session of the Commission for Social Development, emphasized the role of remittances in poverty reduction. In all regions of the world, migrants have increased their support to their families back in their countries of origin, especially when it has concerned countries affected by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, remittances made by migrants have supplemented government cash transfer programmes to alleviate the financial strain experienced by their families. Government policies can ease the process and expense of remittances to encourage an economic recovery. Speakers also noted that the ability of potential migrants to exercise choice in international migration can be extremely limited, depending on where they were born and the circumstances in which they live.

62.   The 2022 hybrid observance of the International Day of Families focused on families and urbanization and highlighted that urbanization is often considered the single most important contemporary demographic trend as it represents a crucial shift in how humans use the environment. Presenters noted the importance of designing cities for children and families, explaining how the environment affects health, well-being and physical and cognitive development. It was noted that families need public spaces for social interaction and joint engagement.

63. Good practices from cities around the world were given at the observance, including urban "thinkscapes" which transform public spaces in neighbourhoods into opportunities for playful learning in the United States. For instance, puzzles placed at bus stops stimulate spatial skills, and movable parts on park benches provide opportunities for exploring language, colours and numbers, encouraging caregiver-child interactions. Moreover, on-site signage provides websites for additional information and resources about the connections between play and learning. The Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network brings together educators, learning scientists, community organizers and architects to create playful learning spaces.

64. In the Kujawsko-Pomorskie region in Poland, the project "Family in the Centre" aims at increasing access to support services for biological and foster families in the region, including through legal, pedagogical, psychological and psychiatric counselling. The project had to be updated following the inflow of refugees, mostly mothers with children, from Ukraine. The region mobilized to provide housing, nutrition, education and employment assistance services to Ukrainian families. Inter-institutional cooperation where specialists from many sectors assist families with diverse needs has resulted in improved efficiency and effectiveness.

65. In terms of research and advocacy, the background paper entitled "Migration, urbanization, and the family dimension" was launched during the observance of the International Day of Families. It contains an analysis of the impact of migration and urbanization on families; gender and urbanization; urbanization and family life, in particular the importance of affordable, safe housing, child and youth developments and intergenerational issues; urbanization and globalization; urbanization and green spaces; and the promotion of civic life and participation in urban areas, social cohesion and social stability. Moreover, a policy brief by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on migration trends and families and an article on urbanization and families in the *UN Chronicle* were issued to coincide with the observance of the International Day.[6]

66. The international expert group meeting on the theme "Megatrends and families: focus on digital technologies, migration and urbanization" organized as part of preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family gathered academics and civil society representatives who analysed current migration and urbanization trends and their impact on families and offered recommendations in the areas of the use of new technologies, family-friendly migration policies, affordable housing, homelessness and sustainable urbanization. The experts recommended, inter alia, to increase cooperation and information-sharing between countries about migration, including the collection of comparable data that could benefit researchers and policymakers, and to integrate the perspectives of local governments into international discussions, given their role in implementing urban agendas.

67. The Doha International Family Institute, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of the Qatar and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized a virtual event on the theme "Towards the protection and empowerment of families: the impact of megatrends" on 20 October 2022 as a side event at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. The event discussed the impact on families that technological, demographic, urbanization and migration trends as well as climate change have and the ways of protecting families from the negative impacts of those trends.

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[6] Available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-no-133-migration-trends-and-families/ and https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/urbanization-and-families

68. The Civil Society Declaration for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, a civil society initiative under the leadership of the International Federation for Family Development, with its initial stakeholders including the Doha International Family Institute, Generations United, the National Association of Large Families of Hungary, the European Federation of Parents and Carers At Home, Haro's Platform on Family Politics and the European Large Families Confederation, was launched on the occasion of the International Day of Families in Brussels and has been gaining signatories.

69. The annual technical meeting of the signatories to the Venice Declaration was held in Brussels in March 2022. The main conclusions included creating an online platform to compile good practices; creating a thematic working group on food security, energy security and the circular economy; and updating the Venice Declaration. With these conclusions, the project engages with the challenges faced by many regions, cities and municipalities related to the consequences of the pandemic, climate change and natural disasters.

70. Future activities in preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family will focus on the analysis of demographic trends in 2023 and climate change in 2024. In addition to background papers on the impact of these trends on families and policy implications, awareness-raising events will be organized at the upcoming sessions of the Commission for Social Development. Moreover, International Day observances will address the topics noted above, as will the international and regional expert group meetings to take place in the near future.

71. In response to the note verbale, Qatar announced that it was preparing to host an international conference in 2024 in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The conference, on the theme "Family and contemporary megatrends", is planned to take place from 19 to 20 May 2024 in Doha. The main organizer of the conference is the Doha International Family Institute, a member of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. Partners will include the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Federation for Family Development. Other potential partners involve the Ministry of Social Development and the Family, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, the Planning and Statistics Authority and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Qatar, which are the relevant national ministries to the four megatrends, and relevant United Nations entities. In addition, relevant international and national non-governmental organizations and regional organizations will be invited. The conference will have a high-level opening ceremony and plenary sessions, followed by interactive panel discussions.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

72. Family migration and transnational families deserve more attention from researchers and policymakers. Focusing on transnational family units and not only their members is essential to understanding how family members organize their economic and social obligations and continue to care for one another.

73. As family migration is an important component of overall migration, migration policy analysis needs to incorporate a family perspective. As families socialize and provide economically and emotionally for the next generation, they should be considered essential for the integration of migrants into new societies, making policies facilitating family reunification and social protection for migrants key to successful integration.

74.     In terms of family reunification and as noted in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, it is important to facilitate access to procedures for family reunification for migrants at all skills levels through measures promoting the right to family life and the best interests of the child. This may require reviewing and revising requirements relating to income, language proficiency, length of stay, work authorization, and access to security and services.

75.     Moreover, migrants and their families need various forms of support in addition to economic assistance. They need access to quality education, health services and housing. As transnational motherhood spreads as a global phenomenon, policies supporting migrant women and facilitating reunification with their children are key.

76.     To help migrant families, especially those comprised of women with children, measures to encourage job skills training and the provision of childcare centres are also needed. It is also important to address mental health services for migrants and services that support positive parenting in a transnationally, culturally and normatively differentiated context.

77.     In order to design good migration policies, more investments are also needed in data gathering. Currently, global data on migration is fragmented and incomplete. Increases in the availability, quality and comparability of data disaggregated by migratory status, as well as in the use of different types of data sources, such as statistical descriptors and qualitative evidence, supplemented by case studies at the local level, are indispensable for evidence-based policymaking.

78.     Better data is also necessary in order to facilitate orderly migration and recognize the contributions of migrants, who should be seen as capable and active agents of their own lives, eager to become productive and economically independent citizens working to improve the well-being and prosperity of their families. Immigration policy frameworks should focus on the potential contributions of each family member to society.

79.     Migration fuels rapid urbanization in much of the world. When cities are well planned and managed, they have the potential to lift families out of poverty, offer quality educational opportunities for children, provide support for older persons, accommodate persons with disabilities, as well as migrants, and contribute to social cohesion.

80.     Urbanization is closely tied with current demographic trends affecting families around the world. These include extended lifespans, lower fertility rates, narrowing of gender gaps in education and employment and significant technological changes having an impact on family life. Urban families have better access to employment, education, health care, childcare and other social support systems. However, the rapid growth of urban areas can have negative impacts, burdening housing, transportation and infrastructure services, and raises concerns about the negative impact on the environment.

81.     Urbanization can improve the lives of individuals and families when it is a deliberate and sustainable process with relevant stakeholders involved in the process. This requires a family perspective and an understanding of the complexity of family life in urban contexts, including family needs and family supports for city dwellers and newcomers, whether they are rural to urban or international migrants.

82.     Low-income households are the most affected by rapid urbanization, and adequate and affordable housing is fundamental to improving their living conditions. Besides adequate housing, reliable, safe transportation and access to education, social services and green spaces where all generations can interact are key. Public spaces must be accessible to older persons and persons with disabilities to help with the social cohesion of neighbourhoods and communities.

83. Family homelessness has sociocultural, economic and political causes that governments, civil society and the private sector can address. Although personal circumstances leading to homelessness may differ for each family, many of the structural and systemic failures contributing to family homelessness are quite similar, in particular in urban environments. As privatization of housing is occurring globally, emergency accommodation overshadows other approaches to housing and homelessness. The Housing First approach and providing families with good quality homes with support helps cities to play an important role in empowering families and meeting the urban targets of the 2030 Agenda.

84. Family-oriented policies should target vulnerable families and social safety nets should be put in place, especially for families in precarious housing situations, those living in conflict zones and refugee camps, and those in areas susceptible to natural disasters. For low-income families, cash and in-kind transfers and subsidies have proven to be a successful mechanism.

85. Proper urban planning can focus on job creation and support entrepreneurial activities. As noted by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), cities can reduce spatial inequality by investing in public spaces, adopting mixed-use planning methods and involving low-income households in municipal planning and budgeting.[7] Inclusive urban planning should identify the needs of underserved households and involve them in urban planning processes.

86. It is also important to promote research on the impact of urbanization on family dynamics and cohesion, examining the consequences of household size on fertility decisions and exploring the impact of migration on the well-being of nuclear families and their extended families back home. Moreover, it is essential to focus on the impact of urban policies on the family unit. Assessments should indicate the needs of families for inclusive cities to become a reality. To achieve this objective, families may need to be provided with adequate tools to strengthen their ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged and capable agents of sustainable development.

87. Strengthening of urban financing is a key element to enable sustainable urban development by increasing fiscal authority and instruments that allow the capture of the value generated by urban development and promote public-private partnerships, regulatory asset base models, private investment, international cooperation and increasingly diversifying sources for climate finance.

88. Considerations of migration and urbanization often fail to account for broader family networks and family well-being of the people who migrate and/or move to urban locations and their family members who stayed behind. Policies related to migration are typically developed as individual or population-level initiatives, neglecting vulnerable families, in particular those with persons with disabilities and Indigenous families. Families should be at the centre of housing policies with long-term solutions focusing on increasing affordable housing for low-income families, revitalization of neglected neighbourhoods and promotion of job creation in urban areas.

89. Effective policy frameworks should aim to treat family well-being as the desired outcome. Policies must recognize family structure and other characteristics and support and enhance the material, relational and subjective well-being of families as they adapt to migration and urbanization, the two trends deeply affecting family life.

90. **Member States are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:**

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[7] UN-Habitat, *City-wide Public Space Strategies: a Guidebook for City Leaders* (Nairobi, 2020).

(a)    **Integrate a family perspective into overall policymaking relating to migration and urbanization;**

(b)    **Promote fair reunification policies, with family well-being and the best interests of children as a key objective;**

(c)    **Promote universal social protection systems and target vulnerable families, such as migrant families, those in precarious housing situations, those living in conflict zones or areas susceptible to natural disasters, Indigenous families and families with a member with disabilities;**

(d)    **Promote planned and well-managed urbanization through effective coordination between local and state governments and long-term public-private financial partnerships;**

(e)    **Incorporate into urban planning a wide range of stakeholders, including low-income households, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities as well as the homeless and other socially marginalized populations;**

(f)    **Invest in sustainable urbanization, including through the provision of adequate infrastructure, accessible transportation, affordable housing and intergenerational living arrangements;**

(g)    **Invest in safe and accessible public spaces, including green areas, to benefit all urban residents, including vulnerable families, women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities;**

(h)    **Invest in awareness-raising and media campaigns on housing, employment, educational opportunities and social services for families and their members;**

(i)    **Expand evidence-based research on migration and urbanization and their impact on families in order to develop adequate policies supporting migrant and urban families;**

(j)    **Maintain a gender perspective in overall family policymaking, in particular as it is relevant to transnational motherhood and family homelessness;**

(k)    **As part of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family preparations, continue to support research, awareness-raising activities and policy actions at the national, regional and international levels on the impact of technological, urbanization, migration, demographic and climate change trends on families.**[8]

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[8] For detailed recommendations, see Trask, "Migration, urbanization and the family dimension"; and recommendations from the expert group meeting on the theme "Megatrends and families: focus on digital technologies, migration and urbanization".