



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-third session

4-13 February 2015

**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 Global Helping to Advance Women and Children, 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.



## Statement

Global Helping to Advance Women and Children welcomes the opportunity to review the priority theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission for Social Development: “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world.”

We recognize the enormity of the task at hand as the Commission examines the best ways to strengthen social development in the contemporary world. In that regard, we would encourage the Commission to explore how the family, as the most basic and fundamental unit of society, holds the key to robust social development, and to fully recognize the essential role of the family in shaping and fostering human development.

Already in 1990, Member States recognized in the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s that the family had the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children from infancy to adolescence, and that the introduction of children to the culture, values and norms of their society began in the family. Similarly, it is recognized in the preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

It is also stated in the Plan of Action mentioned above that all institutions of society should respect and support the efforts of parents and other caregivers to nurture and care for children in a family environment, since it is generally within the family that the members of the rising generation learn to develop the social, moral and intellectual skills and work ethic that enable them to become positive contributors to society.

Certainly, no other institution plays as great a role as the family does in shaping the heart and mind of the rising generation. Thus, no other institution contributes more to the social development of societies worldwide. It is likely that this is why, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, the General Assembly proclaimed that the family was the natural and fundamental group unit of society and was entitled to protection by society and the State, and also why five major binding United Nations treaties recognize the obligation of States Members of the United Nations to protect and strengthen the family.

In this regard, we draw attention to resolution 26/11 of the Human Rights Council on the protection of the family, which it adopted at its twenty-sixth session, in July 2014, as well as to the panel on the same subject that the Council convened on 15 September 2014, at which States reaffirmed their obligation to protect the family unit. States not only identified the gaps in the fulfilment of those obligations, but also recognized the alarming worldwide trend towards family disintegration, which has had a devastating impact on social and economic development.

We also regret that policies and programmes of the United Nations too often target individuals rather than families, despite evidence that a family-centred approach yields better results.

We call attention to Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/8 on the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and

beyond, wherein the Council recognized that the family could 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.

For the rethinking process facing the Commission, due consideration and recognition of the family as the most basic and indispensable social institution must be given, and efforts to strengthen the family as an agent of social development must be increased.

We therefore urge the Commission to examine the growing body of research suggesting that stable, intact families are critical to the welfare of the individual and of society, as well as research showing the negative impact that family breakdown has on them, with enormous cost to States.

We also urge the Commission to develop and promote policies and programmes that will strengthen families worldwide for, as the Secretary-General observed, in November 2010, in his report on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, there seems to be a consensus on the fact that, so far, the stability and cohesiveness of communities and societies largely rest on the strength of the family.

We encourage intergovernmental organizations and international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector to engage in cooperative arrangements aimed at providing the technical and expert assistance necessary to enhance the capacities of the family unit in its empowering role and to help families in their supporting, educating and nurturing roles.

We call upon States and the United Nations system to focus on available data and best practices showing how the family unit is critical to social development. We echo the following statements made by the Secretary-General in his report mentioned above:

- The majority of the Millennium Development targets, especially those relating to the reduction of poverty, education of children and reduction in maternal mortality, are difficult to attain unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family.
- 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.

Finally, we regret that the family, which should have been at the centre of the Millennium Development Goals, was not even mentioned in the Goals, and that attempts have been made to exclude the family from the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. Therefore, unless immediate steps are taken by Member States to put the family in the sustainable development goals, the family will continue to be neglected to the detriment of societies and nations.

Consequently, we call upon the Commission to establish a family perspective in all its actions and to establish family-based approaches to social development in order to strengthen the capacity of families to fulfil their critical role.