



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission for Social Development**

#### **Fifty-fourth session**

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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.

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\* 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 Well-Being: 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](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.