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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: social integration**

Statement submitted by Foundation for the Rights of the Family, 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.

* E/CN.5/2009/1.



Statement

Social Integration and the family

The family should be seen as the central social agent, as the first link in the social chain; if this first link snaps, the whole chain breaks.

The family is the reflection of the strength and weakness of the social fabric and, as such, offers a comprehensive approach to understanding of global problems, which families must solve, in a spirit of genuine solidarity, to the best of their capabilities.

The family, as agent for socialization, has the capacity to give strength to the process of social integration by promoting values of respect for pluralism and diversity among its children.

Families are also basic in the context of citizenship, notably in respect to the educational functions they fulfil for youth. Recognition and support of families providing care are important elements to promote social integration. In fact, families have been most effective in their efforts to promote the social integration of their disadvantaged members.

The main causes for social exclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of persons are: poverty, gender, age, disease, drug and alcohol dependence, class, race, religion, difficult (or no access at all) to education, unemployment.

Social integration, at the family and community levels, is adversely affected by drug abuse and trafficking.

Throughout the world, the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS has ravaged family life.

Responsibility for disabled or elderly members falls mainly on their families. Perhaps the most important issue is the support of families themselves in their care-giving role.

The Family and the economic crisis

The greatest source of poverty is unemployment. In fact, the search for sound and sustained employment opportunities is a profound aspiration of those who are excluded from the labour market. Work not only makes it possible to secure resources but also to acquire the feeling of “belonging”, to become socially integrated. Employment is the key factor of integration into society.

Many families are confronted with unemployment, with only one wage earner or no earner at all. Poverty can destroy families, but in times of trouble, the family represents a source of strength; the poor strive to keep the family together because that is their last hope to survive.

The present international crisis directly impacts families, with its aftermath of unemployment; of old people trying to survive on a very low pension. The middle class is getting poor and the poor are

getting poorer. As a consequence of the increasing mortgage rates, families must face the permanence of young women and men in their parents' household.

Unemployed immigrants bear the worst part of the economic crisis; those who are house-owners are unable to pay their mortgage.

A Universal Declaration on the family

For many years, a Declaration on the Functions, Responsibilities and Rights of the Family has been at the centre of concern of PRODEFA.

Societies worldwide recognize that the family has a number of social functions and responsibilities. The International Conference on Population (Cairo 1994) implicitly recognizes the rights of the family alongside its functions in Chapter VI of its Programme of Action: "The Family, its Roles, Rights, Composition and Structures".

The explicit articulation of the responsibilities, functions and rights of the family can be a source of inspiration to support families.

We, therefore, suggest that an open-ended group be created within the Commission for Social Development, to review and extract relevant provisions on the family from national laws, international instruments and existing draft declarations, to form a coherent universal declaration on the family.
