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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: promoting empowerment of people in achieving
poverty eradication, social integration and full employment
and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by Vida y Familia de Guadalajara, a non-governmental organization in special 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

Vida y Familia de Guadalajara is a private Mexican welfare institution helping pregnant women to achieve their rightful dignity and social integration. The organization welcomes the priority theme for the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, “Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all” and wishes to address the theme in the context of social groupings including disabled persons, youth, the elderly and the family.

The United Nations Population Division reports that the fertility rate in 48 per cent of the countries of the world is below replacement level and that by 2100, 82 per cent of nations will be below replacement level. In the short-term, nations reap a “demographic dividend” from lower fertility rates, but in the long-run this dividend must be repaid as a large elderly population retires and a smaller younger population struggles to support them. The economic and social impacts of fewer and fewer young people are massive. In 2010, Mexican health programmes cost about \$5 billion. By 2050, they will cost \$51 billion as the population over the age of 60 increases from 10 per cent to 27 per cent of the population. Governments should take steps to promote healthy childbirth and family growth, such as those under way in Turkey and Kazakhstan, in order to maintain population stability.

Broad access to education is also a factor in the composition of the working population. A substantial working population is necessary to sustain aging retirees and to fire the engines of economic growth. The relationship between education and demographic and social changes is one of interdependence. Instead of viewing young people as consumers of scarce resources, the world must see them as producers of medicine, technology and information; creators of economic growth that will lead the world to a brighter future.

Desiring to encourage youth to continue education in order to equip them for a better life and increase their human potential, in accordance with the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development, the organization reaffirms the need for educational programmes in favour of life planning skills, healthy lifestyles and the active discouragement of substance abuse so that society can meet the needs and aspirations of youth. Particular attention must be given to the needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality, including voluntary sexual abstinence.

The organization’s 27 years of experience in the field of maternal health and post-natal care verifies the language of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child:

“The child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.”

Governments should take legal action to protect the fundamental rights of life and dignity for pregnant women and their children, both before and after birth.

The organization is particularly concerned by the trend of prenatal testing for disability and its correlation with abortion. Approximately 92 per cent of women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome turn to abortion. Others who discover that their child may have a disability choose abortion over life. Persons with disabilities should not be exposed to violence and discrimination, either before

or after birth. Governments should take strict actions against such discrimination and focus on providing proper medical care for these individuals.

The organization affirms that the family is the basic, fundamental unit of human society. Families are the primary source of protection from victimization for women and girls. When family ties break down, young women are increasingly exposed to risks such as dropping out of school, labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, premature pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Marriages where husband and wife are equal partners create the stable environment necessary to provide adequate health and education for youth, allowing them to defeat poverty and attain productive employment. In accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development, Governments and civil society should take steps to provide the family with comprehensive protection and support.
