



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

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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 Women's Board Educational Cooperation Society, 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**

### **Family-oriented policies: a path to social development**

Our society today has presented many varied views on how to accelerate human and social development. No matter the strategy proposed, the question remains: how can development be achieved without protecting the basic unit of society?

It is when the family, which is the foundation of society, develops that every human community can reach true development. Every nation's strength and the well-being of its people depend largely on the stability and strength of its families. Families are the essential building block of society, and they therefore have an indispensable role to play in social development.

It is the family that bears the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children and instils in them the values of citizenship and a sense of belonging in society. It is within the structure of the family that both the material and non-material care and support that each individual needs are provided. This care is important, especially in the case of children, older persons or those suffering from illness. The family shelters its members from excessive hardship to the extent possible.

Every individual needs a family. Development cannot be measured only by the many goods and services available in a country, since sustainable social development is not merely an economic concept. It also embraces a profound ethical dimension for each person.

The role of culture in development cannot be overlooked, and it has a bearing on the way we understand and appreciate natural resources and each other. Indeed, it is also from this very perspective that the family plays an important role, as the environment that is naturally conducive to the transmission of ethical and cultural values to every individual.

For there to be true social development, each individual needs to form part of a stable microcommunity, which is the family. This is important, because it is in this microcommunity that we all learn values and we learn to live in harmony with others. If what we learn by being part of a family is lacking in the life of an individual, then to talk about the contribution of each person to social development is daydreaming. A child without a home is impaired, because children suffer a lot when they grow up in an environment that lacks love and married, biological parents who share responsibilities.

Since the year dedicated to the family has come to an end, it is important that we all keep fighting for the family as an important way of strengthening development in our world today. We must recognize that the years following the celebration of the International Year of the Family provide an opportunity for increasing cooperation on family issues, and for undertaking concerted action to strengthen family-centred policies and programmes as part of an integrated, comprehensive approach to development. If this is neglected, we run the risk of paying only lip service to sustainable human development.

Policymakers must recognize that the family plays a key role in social development and, as such, should be strengthened. Attention should be paid to the

rights, capabilities and responsibilities of family members, as a sure path to sustainable social development.

Since 1972, the Women's Board Educational Cooperation Society has strived, through its activities, to strengthen the family and, hence, contribute to social development. Families will be stronger if their girls or women are duly educated and empowered with the needed human and intellectual formation.

For instance, in parts of rural Africa, it is the custom for girls to marry at a very early age and, in most cases, they become the breadwinners of the family. Having left school at an early age, these young girls have very little knowledge or skills to help them earn a living. The educational work that our organization carries out in such rural areas contributes directly and indirectly in many ways to strengthening rural families.

The need to achieve strong families for sustainable development has become urgent, considering the weakness that the institution of the family has experienced in recent years. Every policymaker needs to have in mind family-oriented questions when discussing, modifying or formulating new policies. For example, such questions as "how does this policy affect family members' ability to carry out their responsibilities?" and "how does the policy affect family stability?" should be considered.

According to studies carried out by Linda J. Waite, a stable family leads to children in such families being more likely to finish school and less likely to suffer economic deprivation, among other benefits. Another study shows that dual parenting plays an important role in developing law-abiding citizens. Michael Gurian, through research conducted at the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, has concluded that the single most important factor in determining if a boy will end up incarcerated later in life is whether or not he has a father in the home.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage Governments and organizations to carry out more detailed studies to continue measuring the many benefits for and contributions to sustainable development of stable homes. Such studies will also help to expose previously adopted policies that work against the family and, hence, slow the pace of the social development that we urgently need in our society today. Policymakers should also consider the benefits of the various policies on the well-being of the family. Certainly, the post-2015 sustainable development goals must be an avenue to ensure that the well-being of the family receives attention in development policies.

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