



## **Economic and Social Council**

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**Social and human rights questions: social development**

### **Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, 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 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

The International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council welcomes the possibilities to be heard at the deliberations of the Council and to contribute to issues of critical concern to the global development agenda. The Federation agrees that scientific and technological innovation is playing a crucial role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As the Federation is an independent, non-profit organization that promotes and supports initiatives in favour of the family, we would also like to stress the importance of families in this respect, due to the fact that their very contribution to the attainment of these development goals is largely overlooked.

In his 2010 report on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond (A/66/62-E/2011/4), the Secretary-General highlighted that the outcome document of the Millennium Development Summit did not mention the family, though the majority of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, 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. He also stressed that, despite the lack of an explicit international family framework, many Governments recognize families as agents of development and actively pursue family-oriented social policies at the national level with positive outcomes in terms of the intergenerational transmission of poverty, education and health issues. He emphasized that, notwithstanding national efforts, at the international level the family is appreciated but not prioritized in development efforts, while there seems to be a consensus on the fact that the stability and cohesiveness of communities and societies largely rest on the strength of the family. As a result, a more comprehensive approach towards development is necessary while evaluating the current development goals and formulating new targets.

One result of the Rio+20 Conference and its outcome document, entitled “The future we want”, was to give priority to sustainable development as a key concept and basis for formulating post-2015 goals. The document notes that confronting challenges in every aspect will require significant changes in human behaviour that can only be achieved if people participate effectively in the formulation and implementation of plans, policies and programmes. This requires a shift in traditions, conceptions and assumptions relating to the multi-facets of the life of individuals and their families.

At its fifty-first session, the Commission for Social Development held a discussion on empowerment with a focus on the participation in decision-making processes by all peoples as an integral element of development and as an effort in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the main framework for 2015 development. During these discussions, the Federation had already proposed to empower families through the four dimensions of empowerment, namely, social, economical, legal and political, to ensure that the time, effort and money families invest in their children finds social, economic and policy incentive from the society benefiting from them. In effect, the promotion of sustainable development cannot be set aside from investing in families or empowering them.

This thought was also endorsed in the spring of 2013, by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament. The Committee

had recognized the importance of families for development in its opinion on the Parliament's report on the Millennium Development Goals, entitled "Defining the post-2015 framework". The document also urged the member States to support the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, which comes on the eve of the target year of the Millennium Development Goals, as it provides an opportunity to refocus on the role of families as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development. At the same time, the twentieth anniversary offers a great opportunity for sub-State entities and international and intergovernmental organizations to reformulate their concepts on the family in this respect so that families can benefit from the achievements of the International Year as well as focus on confronting family poverty, ensuring work-family balance and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

Families also play an important role in both culture and innovation. As highlighted by the declaration of civil society on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, families are basic and essential building blocks of societies that have a crucial role in social development, bearing the primary responsibility for the nurturing, protection, education and socialization of children, while preserving cultural traditions, instilling values of citizenship and belonging in society. At the same time, the family is also the entity where innovation can be promoted, as it is constantly evolving and adapting to the changing circumstances.

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