

Final Declaration of the 18th Family Congress

The families from fifty-one countries attending the 18th International Family Congress in Valencia and the national, regional and local family organizations which they represent sign the following

Declaration

Considering the importance of the family as the main actor for human rights, the welfare and stability of which guarantees the future of society and the State (1).

Recalling that, as stated by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/24, 7th Session, 10 October 1994), "the family is an essential agent for creating awareness and preservation of human rights, and respect for human values, cultural identity and heritage, and other civilizations", because it is the place where these values and rights stem from, are respected, conveyed and where they acquire their true status (2).

Convinced that the rights of the family cannot be limited to only the rights of its members and therefore, as a social subject, the family has its own rights that society and the State have a duty to recognize and protect.

Bearing in mind that the family, as a community of life and love, is able to renew society as a school for the fundamental rights of justice, peace, solidarity, acceptance of diversity and true equality (3).

Address

To the United Nations Organization, international bodies and the governments of the various States and request them to implement the following

Proposals

According to the Report of the Secretary-General on the Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of



During the 18th International Family Congress (Valencia-Spain, October 2010).

the Family (13 July 2009), "recommend that Governments establish an institutional mechanism, if they have not already done so, such as a Ministry of Family or focal point for family policy within an existing Ministry, with sufficient organizational, fiscal and human resources capacity to promote the family as a policy priority; develop family protection measures; ensure that all legislation considers the roles and rights of the family and family members; and promote partnership with all family stakeholders at different levels of governance."

Moreover, according to such Report, "invite Governments to recall that, in its resolution 59/111, the General Assembly decided to celebrate the anniversary of the International Year of the Family on a 10-year basis and further invite Governments to begin preparations for the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 and use the anniversary to advance family policymaking."

To encourage and promote the fulfill-

ment of the mission of the United Nations Programme on the family, in particular regarding "promote the integration of a family perspective into policy-making at the national, regional and international levels" and "support family research and diagnostic studies."

To request that this family perspective is considered in the projects to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (4) and, as already mentioned in the Declaration of Rome, at the previous International Family Congress, "awareness-raising and educational campaigns should be carried out in member states in order to enable parents to carry out their role as the first and foremost educators of their children. In order to achieve this goal, steps to provide a work/life balance to help rather than penalise parents for spending time with their children should be promoted, family stability and cohesion among family members should be promoted, and initiatives to advise and train parents should be supported."

In Valencia (Spain), on 2 October 2010.

(1) As established in the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR Art.16.3), "The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by Society and State". And also in Art. 23 International Covenant on civil and political rights (CCPR, 1966), "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."

(2) As established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989, Art.18), "States parties shall use their best effort to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents shall have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child."

(3) As established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989, Preamble), "Convinced that the family, as the fundamental unit of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community... Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding". And also art.29, "Education of children should be directed to... full respect of human rights, development of his personality, talents and abilities, respect for child's parents, his cultural identity language and values, and natural environment,

preparation of the child for responsible life in free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin."

(4) For this reasons and in order to monitor and encourage this objectives, we urge also UN Secretariat to allocate more resources, economic and personal, to the UN Programme on the Family to be able to undertake this responsibilities, and also request that States should inform about the measures they undertake to protect family, as it is established in the Human Rights Committee, General Comment 19, Art.23 (Thirty-ninth session, 1990), "Ensuring the protection provided for under article 23 of the Covenant requires that States parties should adopt legislative, administrative or other measures. States parties should provide detailed information concerning the nature of such measures and the means whereby their effective implementation is assured. In fact, since the Covenant also recognizes the right of the family to protection by society, States parties' reports should indicate how the necessary protection is granted to the family by the State and other social institutions, whether and to what extent the State gives financial or other support to the activities of such institutions, and how it ensures that these activities are compatible with the Covenant."

And moreover, States should report to the Committee on the rights of the Child about how they respect and promote the parent's and family responsibility with their children.



IFFFD

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About Us

Activities in the Family Enrichment Programs started in the 1960s to aid parents in child rearing and is based on the case method which applies the concept of participative methodology.

After more than 30 years of course experience, IFFD was then established in the United States in Orlando, Florida, during the 14th International Family Congress in January 1998.

The IFFD Family Enrichment programs currently operate in 58 countries on the five continents:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Estonia
- France
- Germany
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Hungary
- India
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Ivory Coast
- Japan
- Kenya
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Panama
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Puerto Rico
- D. R. Congo
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Trinidad Tobago
- Uganda
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

Each year, more than 500 courses are conducted accounting for approximately 18,000 participants as well as over 600 events encompassing another 34,000 attendants.

The Family Enrichment course and activities directly benefit over 50,000 people annually.



Towards a World Family Perspective

IFFD International Congresses have been held regularly since 1976, resulting in a remarkable development in the activities related to the family in a large number of cities and countries across the five continents.

These Congresses are also designed to allow the participants to develop new skills in order to promote and conduct educational and Family Development programs. Therefore, those who desire to become moderators, team leaders or coordinators may obtain training from those who are more experienced.

The 18th International Family Congress was held in Valencia (Spain) on the 1st and 2nd of October, 2010, with participation from more than 1,000 experts from 51 countries. The Congress's conclusions will be sent to the United Nations Organization and will be incorporated into hundreds of Family Enrichment courses that are coordinated and run by the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) throughout the five continents.

Members of Parliaments and Governments of various countries have participated in this Congress, as well as some international experts. Some examples include the minister of Economy of Lithuania, the minister of Education of

Panama, the Vice President of the Valencia Region, the President of the Basque Parliament, an Italian Senator and a Senator from Argentina.

Several different and important conclusions have been taken from this congress, such as children raised in a stable family atmosphere are five times less likely to commit crimes, six times less likely to become addicted to drugs and alcohol, two times less likely to have a negative and tumultuous relationship with their mother and three times less likely when it comes to the father.

The results and findings of this congress reveal the clear and dire need for a proposal to governments in order to establish an institutional mechanism to promote the family as a priority and ensure their rights in all levels of legislation.

As IFFD President, Mrs. Marina Robben from Belgium, stated, "Only when family perspective is integrated into making national and international policies true equality can be reached, and those who learn how to live human rights within the family will be in better conditions to promote their exercise in society. Consequently, the family is the key agent to create the conscience and keep the exercise of human rights".

Mortality rates are higher in unmarried people and people divorced after the age of 25, especially in people divorced after the age of 40 (Office for National Statistics, 'Mortality Statistics: Review of the Registrar General on Deaths in England and Wales, 2005', London 2007). The number of suicides among divorced people is almost double that of people in stable marriages. (Johnson, G.R. et al., 'Suicide Among Adolescents and Young Adults: A Cross-National Comparison of 34 Countries', *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 30[1], 2000, pp. 74-82; Lester, D. 'Domestic Integration and Suicide in 21 Nations, 1950-1985', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* XXXV, 1994, pp. 131-137; Kessler, R. C. et al., 'Prevalence of Risk Factors for Lifetime Suicide Attempts in the National Co-morbidity Survey', *Archives of General Psychiatry* 56, 1999, pp. 617-626).

A British study carried out with 33 year old women found that of the women surveyed, those who were either divorced or single mothers had suffered from 240% more mental illnesses than those who were married. (Hope, Power and Rodgers, 'Does Financial Hardship Account for Elevated Psychological Distress in Lone Mothers?', 1999) Another study concluded that although couples who live together without being married only make up 40% of the population, they make up 90% of the people in homes for the elderly, mental health institutions and other social care centers (Prior, P.M. and Hayes, B.C., 'The Relationship Between Marital Status and Health: An Empirical Investigation of Differences in Bed Occupancy Within Health and Social Care Facilities in Britain, 1921-1991', *Journal of Family Issues* 24[1], 2003, pp. 124-148).

In the United States, it is four times more likely for single mothers and divorced women to be victims of abuse than it is for married women (Bachman, R., 'Violence Against Women', A National Crime Victimization Survey Report NCK-45325, Washington DC.: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, January, 1994). Furthermore, single mothers are eight times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse and four times more likely to be raped. Divorced women are five times more likely to be abused and six times more likely to be raped (Myhill, A. and Allen, J., *Rape and Sexual Assault of Women: 'The Extent and Nature of the Problem'*, Findings from the British Crime Survey, London: Home Office, 2002).

In comparison with children from stable marriages, the risk of infant mortality increases 25-30% for children whose parents cohabit but are unmarried and 45-68% for children with single parents. (Schuman, J., 'Childhood, Infant and Perinatal Mortality', 1996; *Social and Biological Factors in Deaths of Children Aged Under 3*).

When parents remain married, under-age drug and alcohol abuse in their children is significantly lower. (Sutherland, I. and Shepherd, J.P., 'Social Dimensions of Adolescent Substance Use', *Addiction* 96, 2001, pp. 445-458; Turner, R.A. et al., 'Family



The Sustainable Family

Many recent studies agree on the negative effects marital breakdown has on the happiness of children and parents involved in it and on national economies as well. In light of these findings, the report produced by The Family Watch attempts to ascertain the requirements that enable a family to be 'sustainable' according to the definition coined by the Brundtland report in 1987: 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

The International Institute for Family Research – The Family Watch is a think tank committed to researching the family and finding solutions to the problems it faces. The Institute uses inter-disciplinary research to analyse the social context families find themselves in today. Findings are presented in the form of reports, proposals and initiatives that aim to deepen society's knowledge of the family and

encourage its fair treatment based on the functions it performs in society.

The organisation was founded in 2007 under the inspiration of the International Federation for Family Development. Its main activities include publishing research papers, exchanging information and services, integrating initiatives, promoting teaching activities and research projects, content production, and organising events geared towards the promotion, creation and presentation of awards

Accordingly, a 'sustainable family' as one in which its members strive for their own wellbeing without compromising the wellbeing of their descendants.

Benefits for spouses and children

The results from these studies indicate that spouses who build stable families have a higher life expectancy, lower risks of mental illness, alcoholism and domestic violence.

With regard to children from stable families, studies show the following benefits:

- Lower infant mortality rate
- Lower risk of alcoholism and drug addiction
- Lower incidences of engaging in criminal activities after puberty
- Higher academic achievements
- Lower incidence of mental illnesses
- Lower sexual activity in minors and, as a result, fewer teenage and unwanted pregnancies

Benefits for the State

A few studies also show that from an economic perspective, a stable family is the lowest cost option for both its members and the State.

Some studies have concluded that family breakdown costs the State several billion Euros a year. These figures take the consequences of family breakdown into account as well as the strain it puts on social benefits, social security, social services etc. Furthermore, these studies also suggest that members of stable families are more disciplined when it comes to fulfilling legal and social norms and, therefore, are the ones who best contribute towards financing social security.

According to some studies, the current economic crisis demands a greater awareness of the inconveniences posed by uncontrolled economic growth.

Consequently, they suggest that 'well-being' is not limited to a person's own happiness, but that it extends to the capacity that person has to contribute to the happiness of others. It is never directly related to how much money a person has,

but rather to how that money is spent.

It follows, then, that family policy-makers must consider both the social and economic ways in which society benefits from families.

Promoting well-being

If stability is the key to promoting the well-being among family members and their descendants, it is also the key to making families 'sustainable'. In broad terms, then, a sustainable family is a stable family.

While still respecting an individual's freedom to choose their own lifestyle, it is vital for public authorities to...

- Facilitate information that will give people a deeper understanding of the potential consequences of the relationship status they choose.
- Encourage the development of those who promote marital stability.
- Support those who strive to achieve stability but find themselves in impoverished circumstances.

This general rule whereby stability equals sustainability does not suggest that cases where sustainability is reached in other circumstances do not exist. More, it does not mean that every marriage fulfills its function properly. Both these cases must be regulated by the law without turning a blind eye to the fact that stability is more common and more beneficial for individuals and society as a whole.

It is therefore necessary to have mechanisms that encourage stability and support spouses in their efforts to sustain their marriage, rather than offering them legal certification of the failure of their marriage as the only viable solution.



The Family Watch have organized events in several cities to explain their reports.

Structure, Family Processes, and Experimenting with Substances During Adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 1, 1991, pp. 93-106; Flewelling, R.L. and Bauman, K.E., 'Family Structure as a Predictor of Initial Substance Use and Sexual Intercourse in Early Adolescence', *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52, 1990, pp. 171-181; Hoffman, J.P., 'Exploring the Direct and Indirect Family Effects on Adolescent Drug Use', *Journal of Drug Issues* 23[3], 1993, p. 535).

Twice as many 30 year olds from single parent families are sentenced to jail and three times as many 30 year olds with divorced parents are sentenced to jail compared to those with married parents.

In the UK, the number of 33 year olds who have a university degree and whose parents are married is 36% higher. (Kiernan, K., 'The Legacy of Parental Divorce: Social, Economic and Family Experiences in Adulthood', London: CASE paper 1, 1997.)

Children of single-parent families have a 15% chance of suffering from a mental illness while children of divorced parents have an 11% chance. The overall average probability of suffering from a mental illness is 7%. (Meltzer, H. and others, 'Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Great Britain', London: The Stationery Office, 2000).

Teenage pregnancy rates are twice as high in girls whose parents are divorced than among girls whose parents are married. (Cherlin, A.J. and others, 'Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood', *Demography* 32, 1995, pp. 299-318).

In Great Britain, as in the rest of Europe, co-habitation acts as a prologue to marriage or as a trial period that lasts for an average of two years before dissolving or becoming a stable relationship. (Ermish, J. and Francesconi, M., 'Cohabitation in Great Britain: Not for Long, but Here to Stay', Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, 1998; Ermish, J., 'Premarital Cohabitation, Childbearing and the Creation of One-Parent Families', ESRC Research Centre on Micro-social Change, Paper Number 95-17, 1995).

Statistics show that when people do cohabit before getting married, their marriage is more likely to fail. (Nock, S., 'A Comparison of Marriages and Cohabiting Relationships', *Journal of Family Issues* 16, 1995, pp 53-76; Rindfuss, R.R. and VandenHeuvel, A., 'Cohabitation: A Precursor to Marriage or an Alternative to Being Single?' *Population and Development Review* 16(4) 1990, pp. 702-726).

In the US, marriage and family have been the subject of thorough studies. The results of these studies have brought a group of some of the most prestigious social experts to affirm that "marriage is a social good of great importance because a large number of positive consequences for both children and adults depend on its strength." (Bradford, W. et al, 'Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences', New York: Institute for American Values, 2002 and further updates).