



ROME DECLARATION ON THE FAMILY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROME, 25TH MARCH 2007

On the occasion of the appointment of a new Secretary General of the United Nations, the signatories to this declaration wish to offer their wholehearted cooperation.

In addition,

(+) the ninety family enrichment non-governmental organisations from forty-seven countries on all continents, which are part of the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), a body in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, gathered in Rome at the 17th International Family Congress with the theme: "The Family: Rights and Responsibilities",

(ii) as well as the family organisations that support this declaration,

wish to make the following observations and put the following requests to those in positions of responsibility at the United Nations (UN) so that they may take them into consideration when drawing up their recommendations and policies concerning families:

OBSERVATIONS

1. We acknowledge the importance and irreplaceable role of the family for the happiness of its members, the peace and cohesion of society, the general welfare and educational development, economic growth and social integration.

2. The need to pay appropriate attention to childhood and young people in a rapidly-changing world of social and economic globalisation is a priority. The difficulties parents experience in gaining access to the training, tools and time they need to carry out their role as the main carers of their children is the cause of many of the worrying rates of failure at school, addictions, violence, traumatic family break-ups and an absence of civic values among so many children and adolescents around the globe. These factors are ameliorated when steps are promoted to strengthen families together with generous social and economic support policies.

3. In an ever-growing number of countries, parents face difficulties in responsibly having the number of children they freely wish to have within a context of equal opportunities and social support for maternity and parenthood. Economic hurdles, the impossibility of achieving a work/life balance and, generally speaking, the absence of a family-friendly social environment that promotes recognition of families and social support are contributing to a widely extended family crisis, preventing people from becoming parents and from playing their full role as parents.



4. A process is currently underway, at various levels and paces in different countries, whereby the fertility rate is progressively falling, while populations are ageing. This process is creating uncertainty as to whether welfare systems will be maintained, especially care for the elderly and dependents, and whether sufficient public funds will be provided in the short and medium term for health and education in particular. In this context, in all cultures and countries, the family plays a key role in social cohesion between the generations.

5. In compliance with previous declarations of the United Nations ¹, we acknowledge again that the family provides the natural framework for the emotional, financial and material support essential to the growth and development of its members, particularly infants and children, and for the care of other dependants, including the elderly, disabled and infirm; remains a vital means of preserving and transmitting cultural values; serves as agent for protecting human values, cultural identity and historical continuity; can function as income-generating enterprise; provides a supportive environment for learning; and offers valuable resources for the prevention of crime and delinquency.

These remarks lead us to make the following:

REQUESTS

1. The United Nations (UN) should continue to provide the necessary tools to monitor the extent to which family rights are honoured, especially in what concerns the denounce of any infringement of the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the family is the "natural and fundamental group unit of society", article 16) and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ("the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family", article 10). Any form of discrimination based on the number of children, the fact of being a parent, or situations affecting the weaker and more defenceless family members such as children and the elderly and the families that look after them should be especially closely monitored.

2. The United Nations (UN) should promote the "family perspective", i.e. the importance of analysing the impact on family welfare of all of the policies the same organisation promotes, as well as those followed by member states, in a similar way to the "environmental perspective", for example. In the same way, it should promote the concept of "family-responsible policies", in particular considering family circumstances in the sharing of social burdens and benefits, which should be a mainstreaming priority in the United Nations' (UN) Millennium Goals.

3. 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.

¹ See *Proclamation of IYF*, United Nations, Vienna, 1991.