

Family and Social Development

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We, the undersigned international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC,

Welcome the United Nations decision to hold a World Summit for Social Development. Noting the preparatory documentation for the World Summit for Social Development, we are confident that the deliberations on the core issues identified will enhance social progress and social development.

Express deep concern that Draft Declaration and Draft Programme of Action does not recognize the family as a basic social institution and an undisputable social network, nor reflect its vital contributions to individuals and its impact on society.

Refer to the Preparatory Note of the Secretary General and read that "the world is suffering from a social and moral crisis" (A/CONF.166/PC/6, para 17) because, inter alia, "...societies have lost part of their capacity to balance individual and societal needs and reconcile the particular interest with the common good" (para. 60). This imbalance was one of the concerns of governments and NGOs that led the United Nations to proclaim the International Year of the Family and state that "the family constitutes the basic unit of society and therefore warrants special attention" (1994 International Year of the Family, United Nations, Vienna 1991).

Recognize that the impact of socio-economic changes in our society has much affected and altered the family in its function and as an institution. Despite the often delicate and difficult situation in modern society and the rapidity of change, families continue to provide the basic and practical life experience of responsibility and of values such as loving, caring, sharing; and families are an ongoing factor of social cohesion.

Underline that stable families are main agents of sustainable social development because of their fundamental role as intermediate body between individuals and society. Social progress implies the constant and dynamic interaction between family structure and functions and the larger social, economic, cultural and physical environment.

Urge the participants at the Second Preparatory Committee to consider the Malta Statement of the World NGO Forum Launching IYF, which was distributed at the 48th session of the UN General Assembly (CONF.Doc A/48/712), as an expression of the need to consider family in policy development.

Hope that, when considering REDUCTION AND ELIMINATION OF WIDESPREAD POVERTY, attention will be given to the widespread social phenomenon that poverty is particularly complex and dramatic when affecting families. Policy measures to assist the poor have to empower families by increasing their capacities and self-help potentials. They should be enabled to define their own essential

needs and to act upon their own problems. On the other hand, poor families in adverse circumstances are very often the sole providers of security and dignity for their individual members, hence they have to be respected and involved in support programmes.

Stress that long-lasting solutions to the REDUCTION AND ELIMINATION OF WIDESPREAD POVERTY depend on the social, emotional, spiritual, cultural and political maturity of individuals. The family is the first environment to teach the values of democracy, human rights, social responsibility, tolerance and peace, enabling their individual members to contribute to the fight against poverty as advocates for social justice.

Urge that policies relating to PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND THE REDUCTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT include consideration of programmes which will allow family members to harmonize activities of professional life with family life. Institutions responsible for work and employment should be encouraged by Governments to take into account the needs of family members to combine their income earning and wishes to meet family obligations.

Hope that in discussions on PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND THE REDUCTION OF UNEMPLOYMENT, visionary policies and programmes will be developed which respect activities in the household, food production and health service at the family level, social and voluntary work; which reconsider the value and prestige of profit/non-profit and paid/non-paid work for society.

Request that, when considering SOCIAL INTEGRATION adequate recognition is given to the social problems of marginalized families, especially single parent families, large families, migrant and refugee families.

Expect that consultation on SOCIAL INTEGRATION will consider the conditions of street children, unemployed youth, homeless, elderly, disabled people, etc. Social policy measures must not regard individuals as isolated persons but always as members of an interacting social network. Hence, a variety of assistance and training programmes for families are required so that families can better fulfill their supportive functions and educational tasks, including transmission of sense of responsibility, culture, and skills.

Stress that many intergovernmental meetings, for instance the Fourth Ad Hoc United Nations Inter-Agency meeting of IYF, recommended that "Organizations and agencies of the United Nations system should give adequate attention to family issues in their substantive contributions to the international events, such as the World Summit for Social Development" (ACC 1994). Also, non-governmental organizations have emphasized the intrinsic role of families in social development and the necessity to focus on its importance in the context of the three core issues to be discussed at the World Summit.

Urge that the participants of the Second Preparatory Committee take into account the work and programmes carried out in connection with the International Year of the Family when developing the DRAFT DECLARATION AND DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION for the World Summit for Social Development.

