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**Preparations for and observance of the twentieth  
anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [67/142](#) of 20 December 2012. The report focuses on the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the national, regional and international levels. It further elaborates on civil society initiatives for the twentieth anniversary and offers conclusions and recommendations on advancing family policy development in overall development efforts.



## I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution [67/142](#), requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels.

2. The General Assembly invited Member States to consider undertaking activities in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year at the national level and invited Member States, United Nations organizations and bodies, regional commissions, civil society organizations and academic institutions to continue providing information on their activities in support of the objectives of and preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year and to share good practices and data on family policy development.

3. The resolution encouraged Member States to continue their efforts to develop appropriate policies and programmes addressing family poverty, social exclusion, work-family balance and intergenerational issues and share good practices in those areas. Among the strategies for family poverty reduction recommended are social protection and social transfer programmes. Member States are also encouraged to strengthen parental leave provisions, flexible working arrangements, gender equality and support for childcare arrangements and enhance paternal involvement to improve work-family balance. In the area of social integration and intergenerational solidarity, social protection assistance and investments in cross-generational facilities, volunteering programmes for youth and older persons and mentoring and job-sharing programmes have been recommended.

4. In its resolution [2013/27](#) of 25 July 2013, the Economic and Social Council requested the Commission for Social Development to continue reviewing the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family as part of its agenda and its multi-year programme of work until 2014 and to hold a panel discussion in observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year at its fifty-second session. The resolution also encouraged Member States to strengthen or, if necessary, establish relevant national agencies or governmental bodies responsible for the implementation and monitoring of family policies and to research the impact of social policies on families.

5. The present report is the fourth report on the status of preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The previous reports set out a framework for the preparations based on the three major themes relating to poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity. The present report reflects on policies and programmes being developed by Member States mainly on the basis of their responses to the note verbale sent by the Secretariat in May 2013 (see sect. II.A. below). It also describes preparatory activities undertaken at the regional and international levels and focuses on civil society activities. The report puts forward several conclusions and recommendations on future family agenda development at the international level.

## II. Preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

### A. Preparations at the national level

6. A number of Governments shared their views on family policy development and offered examples of good practices in family poverty reduction, work-family balance, intergenerational relations and other areas. Some Governments referred to specific initiatives as part of preparations for the twentieth anniversary and offered suggestions for the upcoming panel discussion on the anniversary, to be held at the fifty-second session of the Commission for Social Development.

7. In Argentina, protection and support for the family forms a fundamental part of public policies aimed at social integration, the protection of human rights, full development and the social inclusion of all family members. *Familia Argentina* (Argentinean Family) and *Argentina Trabaja* (Argentina Works) are central programmes in this area. Since 2009, the universal child allowance has been paid to adult caregivers who are unemployed or employed in the informal economy and/or receive the minimum wage. The allowance has covered over 3.5 million children from vulnerable families. Other initiatives support child development centres (*centros de desarrollo infantil*) for young children, a national home caregivers programme (*programa nacional de cuidados domiciliarios*) aiming at improving the quality of life of older persons, especially those with disabilities, or *Nuestro Lugar* (Our Place), a programme for young people encouraging educational, sports and cultural initiatives.

8. In Burkina Faso, the national plan for the protection and the promotion of the family, developed in line with the recommendations of the Plan of Action on the Family of the African Union, guides family policy and programmes. Priority areas include social protection for family poverty reduction and the improvement of living conditions for vulnerable groups. Family capacity development and training for income-generating activities also form part of the overall poverty reduction efforts. Activities in support of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family focus on educational campaigns on a variety of topics, including combating traditional harmful practices, such as excision and forced or early marriage, and violence against women, and promoting family planning and reproductive health.

9. The Colombian Institute for Family Well-being carries out training support programmes in the areas of care provision and relationship-building. The Institute assists in the development of guidelines for national family policy in Colombia with the objective of ensuring economic, legal and cultural resources for families as agents of development. The national programme on generations and well-being (*Generaciones con Bienestar*), based on the principle of shared responsibility between the family, communities and the State, promotes the protection of children and adolescents in families, communities and at the institutional level, benefiting 240,000 children nationwide.

10. In Cyprus, the low-income housing scheme covers the housing needs of low-income families, including single parent families, young married couples and those with special needs and disabilities. It also offers low interest and long-term loans for qualifying families.

11. In Ireland, the national women's strategy, with a key objective of enhancing the work-life balance for women, aims to address inequalities in the sharing of family and caregiving responsibilities between women and men. The family and community services resource centre programme, with 106 centres nationwide, delivers universal services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country based on a life cycle approach. Family resource centres are participative and empowering organizations that support families while building the capacity and leadership of local communities. Each centre provides a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities, such as education courses and training, counseling, access to information technology, childcare and after-school clubs and other facilities. At the policy level, family resource centres build partnerships with community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders, contribute to the understanding of the impact of policy decisions upon families and communities and play a role in influencing the decision-making process relating to family support and community development.

12. In Montenegro, basic rights of social protection stipulate the provision of family allowances, disability and foster care benefits and special care provisions, as well as education and health benefits for children with special needs. Recent amendments in labour law extend maternity leave, offer paternity leave and improve employment protection provisions. Special protection of employment status is offered for single parents with a child under the age of seven in terms of mobility, overtime and structural changes at work.

13. In Romania, a universal state allowance covers all children under 18. In addition, the child-raising allowance provides a new formula for granting benefits for children born from 2011 onwards, where parents have several options regarding monthly subsidies for lost income or several labour market insertion incentives when the children are two years old. Low-income families receive additional family support allowances and housing subsidies.

14. In Spain, the new national plan for childhood and adolescence (2013-2016) (*Plan estratégico nacional de infancia y adolescencia*) aims at assisting families in their care, educational and overall child development responsibilities, including the conciliation of work and family life measures. Its social protection and inclusion provisions focus on children and adolescents in risk situations. The new national plan of action for social inclusion (2013-2016) (*Plan nacional de acción para la inclusión social*) focuses on fighting child poverty, promoting inclusion through employment and the provision of basic services to the most vulnerable households. Spain's comprehensive plan for assistance to families (*Plan integral de apoyo a la familia*) advances the social, legal and economic protection of families, strengthens intergenerational solidarity and improves parental competencies. Several governing and coordinating mechanisms for family policy implementation at the regional and local levels have been established and collaboration with civil society and academic experts has been expanded.

15. Sweden follows the child perspective in national family policy development, striving to create good conditions for both children and parents to develop and grow, within the family and as individuals. A number of reforms have been introduced since 2010, including the large family supplement within the child benefit system, as well as a higher housing allowance and increased parental benefit for low-income parents. Sweden's national strategy for parental support aims to promote children's

health and development. Ensuring work-family balance is also a priority for the Government. Its gender equality bonus, a form of tax relief, promotes the equal sharing of parental leave between parents. A child-raising allowance offers financial support to parents who take care of children at home as a substitute to childcare services.

16. In Switzerland, the national programme for preventing and fighting against poverty seeks to improve the educational opportunities of disadvantaged children, young people and adults. Efforts are under way to expand family allowances and the provision of childcare facilities to help parents with reconciling their work and family responsibilities. A review of parental leave is under way. As part of the population census, a new thematic survey on families and generations will be conducted, starting in 2013, to obtain information on the changes in families and their impact on intergenerational relations.

17. Family policy in Tunisia has been undergoing transformation in response to legal changes, improvements in education, migration, urbanization and other socioeconomic factors. Tunisia's personal status code, which prohibits polygamy and provides for legal divorce (thus putting an end to the traditional practice of wife repudiation), has been expanded with a new provision to recognize the joint responsibility of parents for children's well-being based on marital partnership. In addition, the new institution of family judge has been created to ensure the equal treatment of women with regard to influencing the different spheres of their children's lives. Tunisia's plans of action for the family have aimed at promoting family cohesion by investing in marriage stability, the socialization of children and the economic and physical well-being of households. Several activities are planned in observance of the twentieth anniversary at the national level.

18. Family policy in Ukraine mainly focuses on improving the living standards of families with children. In the light of demographic challenges and falling fertility, support for large families is of special importance and includes lower rates for housing expenses, including utilities, and free use of public transportation for children. To promote the recognition of maternity, special pensions are awarded to mothers who have brought up five or more children. A social support programme, targeted towards families and administered by the State, has recently been put in place. The programme promotes family life education, positive fatherhood and the prevention of violence. Awareness-raising events for family days and mother's day are also organized.

19. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, protection of the family is an important element of the country's new model of development based on human rights, social justice, social inclusion, equitable redistribution, social protection and effective mechanisms for the reduction of poverty and inequality. The Government develops family policies with a view to strengthening family relations on the basis of equality of rights and responsibilities, solidarity and mutual respect. Its national plan for family inclusion aims at reintegrating children who had been institutionalized to their families of origin. Efforts to improve maternity services and child protection are also under way.<sup>1</sup>

20. Several Member States offered suggestions for the issues to be addressed during the panel discussion to be held at the fifty-second session of the Commission

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<sup>1</sup> More examples of family-oriented programmes can be found in section II.C of the present report.

for Social Development. Among them are: demographic challenges, parental leave, working life, fertility, the pivotal role of universal childcare provisions and parental support, including arrangements regarding how to reach target groups and the type of support to be provided. Other topics for discussion suggested are family life education for young people, in order to prevent conflict, divorce and violence in the family and the promotion of responsible fatherhood and the enhanced involvement of men in family life. Children in vulnerable situations, time-use surveys and their inclusion in national accounts and policy development based on their results could also be considered by the panel.

## **B. Regional initiatives**

21. The expert consultation on the family in Africa was held on 22 and 23 November 2012 in Addis Ababa. The meeting was organized by the African Union in cooperation with the focal point on the family within the Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Issues under discussion included: socioeconomic and demographic trends affecting African families and the need for a policy response; boosting social protection safety nets in order to address household poverty among vulnerable groups; and gender inequality in families and society as an obstacle to poverty eradication.

22. Over the years a number of socioeconomic trends, such as persisting unemployment and underemployment, increased migration, growing numbers of female-headed households and high rates of HIV infections and AIDS, have stretched and in some cases exhausted the support mechanisms traditionally offered by extended families in Africa. Such trends have often resulted in persistent family poverty, increased work-family conflict, intergenerational disjuncture and overall family disintegration, all taking place against the backdrop of inadequate social security mechanisms.<sup>2</sup>

23. The consultation focused to a great extent on family rights, duties and responsibilities, as well as such harmful traditional practices as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Discrimination against women in family law in terms of divorce and custody of children is still widespread in Africa. It is not surprising, therefore, that policy responses have mostly focused on women, girls and children. However, policies focusing on family units, enlisting men and boys as partners in the empowerment of women, are indispensable for creating long-lasting solutions. The meeting adopted a common position for the anniversary of the International Year of the Family, emphasizing some of these issues. The common position was subsequently presented at the Ministerial Meeting of the African Union, held from 26 to 29 November 2012.<sup>3</sup>

24. The regional expert group meeting on the Middle East and North Africa, entitled “Protecting the Arab family from poverty: employment, social integration and intergenerational solidarity” was held in Doha on 2 and 3 June 2013. The

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<sup>2</sup> See the draft African common position on the family for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, available from [www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/docs/egm12/AUCOMMONPOSITIOFAMILY.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/docs/egm12/AUCOMMONPOSITIOFAMILY.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> More information on regional meetings, including those discussed in the present report, can be found at <http://undesadspd.org/Family/InternationalObservances/TwentiethAnniversaryofIYF2014/RegionalMeetings.aspx>.

meeting, organized by the Doha International Family Institute, assessed family-oriented policies in the region. The topics under consideration included: recent social and economic trends affecting families and the need for adequate policies in that regard; challenges faced by families living in poverty; the participation of women in the job market and its impact on family-work balance; the importance of parental leave, flexible working arrangements and childcare of good quality; the participation of men in household responsibilities; building adequate social protection systems for families; demographic, social and economic trends affecting intergenerational relations; and the participation of youth in social, economic and family life.

25. The discussions pointed out that despite the rhetoric in support of the family in the region, family allowances as well as adequate maternity leave and childcare provisions are practically non-existent; labour market participation by women remains the lowest in the world, while the rate of unemployment among women is the highest in the world. Child marriage is prevalent, with little progress in gender equality. Concerns were also expressed about the consequences of the Arab spring for gender equality, with some experts noting a scaling back on advances for women. Moreover, research on families and family-oriented policies is very limited in the region. The recommendations from the meeting addressed the above-mentioned issues and were disseminated to Governments in the region.

26. The capacity-building workshop on family-oriented policies for poverty reduction and work-family balance in Latin America, organized by the Technical Cooperation Unit of the Division and the focal point on the family, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was held in Santiago from 27 to 29 August 2013. The workshop aimed to inform Government officials of the importance of a family focus in policymaking in order for overall development efforts to succeed, and gathered Government representatives from 15 countries in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Uruguay).

27. Officials from the Division and ECLAC made a number of presentations on poverty and work-family balance in Latin America, while Government representatives presented good practices from their respective countries. Most presentations focused on family-oriented policies for poverty reduction. During the discussions, views were exchanged on family policy development and general progress in social development in the region. Overall, participants agreed that most social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean are focused on women with children, rather than family units as a whole and that more efforts should be made to include men in policy design. Moreover, better integration of the family perspective in overall policymaking is needed. Cash transfers focusing on poor households dominate in the region, with several evaluations showing not only overall poverty reduction but also a positive impact on education variables, such as school attendance, achievement and cognitive skills. In the health dimension, the evidence showed the positive impact of some programmes on health outcomes, for instance child nutrition and psychomotor development.<sup>4</sup> Comprehensive work-family balance policies have been developed in only a few countries (e.g., Argentina and

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<sup>4</sup> Cecilia Rossel, "Políticas para las familias en América Latina: panorama de políticas de reducción de pobreza y conciliación entre trabajo-familia", July 2013.

Chile) but even where they exist in a limited form, they only benefit workers (mostly women) in the formal economy.

## **C. Preparations at the international level**

### **Commission for Social Development**

28. The Commission for Social Development has reviewed the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family 2014 on an annual basis. At its fifty-first session, held from 6 to 15 February 2013, Member States reaffirmed the important role families play in society and in overall development efforts and noted that the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 offered a useful opportunity to draw attention to family-focused policies as part of development strategies.

29. Establishing partnerships with civil society, the private sector and academic institutions in support of family-oriented policies and programmes was viewed as especially important, as was informing the public of the objectives of the anniversary.

30. At the regional level, the African Union, under the aegis of the Council of Ministers of Social Development, has finalized the African position for the commemoration, addressing family and poverty, intergenerational solidarity and work-family balance. The European Union viewed the upcoming anniversary as a further opportunity for the exchange of best practice on the development of family-focused policies.

31. Preparations in support of the anniversary at the national level were reported in Botswana, Jamaica and South Africa. In South Africa, the observance of the anniversary has been used to identify the challenges faced by families, share best practice models to address those challenges and provide integrated services to families.

32. In terms of policy development, Governments noted the importance of adapting social policy to meet family needs and strengthen family cohesion in order to enable the family to play proper roles, including educational and care-giving roles, in society. The European Union agreed with the recommendations on policy development contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/61-E/2013/3) and acknowledged the vital importance of family support measures when it comes to enhancing intergenerational solidarity and fighting poverty. It also noted European Union initiatives on families to address demographic change and promote family policy evaluation and the exchange of good practices. It viewed the development of work-family friendly policies and combating child poverty as especially important.

33. Several delegations welcomed the recognition that the family is the backbone of intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion and bears the primary responsibility for the development, education and socialization of children. They also noted the need to advance a perspective supportive of the family in all aspects of development.

34. Delegations noted the importance of family-focused policies for breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and moving families from welfare to well-being. Implementing family-oriented policies and improving economic opportunities for

women was regarded as an investment with a high rate of return. Several Member States noted the shift of focus from individually based to household-oriented cash transfers and other benefits, for example, in some countries, the social protection approach has seen a shift from individual beneficiary focus to family support systems. In several countries family policy focused on ensuring the same rights and obligations regarding family and work for women and men. The reunification of children with their families was also mentioned as an important policy area.

35. Family support programmes were seen as vital for enhancing intergenerational solidarity, fighting poverty and improving work-family balance. Delegates highlighted many family-oriented programmes at the national level. The *ingreso ético familiar* (ethical family income) programme provides payments to around 170,000 of the most vulnerable families in Chile in order to combat poverty. Beneficiary families, especially those headed by women, also receive capacity-building support to obtain gainful employment. In Paraguay, the *Tekopora* programme offers conditional cash transfers for families living in extreme poverty to promote their gradual social inclusion, reaching 24.5 per cent of poor families and 42.6 per cent of those living in extreme poverty.

36. Delegates emphasized that both families and the Government share responsibility for investment in the human capital of family members, and that it was important that families are not seen as passive recipients of benefits but as primary agents of their future required to comply with their responsibilities. In El Salvador, rural vouchers for health care and education have been provided to 91,000 poor rural families. Cash transfer programmes are prevalent in other Latin American countries, with Nicaragua and Brazil providing monthly stipends to poor families who commit to keeping their children in school and ensuring they undergo regular health checks. *Bolsa Familia* in Brazil is a programme that helps to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, reduces child labour, promotes access to education and has had a key role in reducing poverty by 40 per cent and reducing extreme poverty by 52 per cent since 2003. A new federal programme, *Brasil Carinhoso*, intends to benefit families in extreme poverty with children up to 6 years of age. The green grants programme in Brazil (*Bolsa Verde*) consists of small transfers paid to families in extreme poverty in order to promote conservation efforts. In Ecuador, a conditional human development stipend emphasizing family co-responsibility provided to poor families has helped to improve children's health and school attendance. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Bolivarian Missions are a series of social welfare programmes, with *Misión Alimentación* and *Misión Madres del Barrio* recognizing the value of domestic work of women. Jamaica provides benefits to 140,000 families through its "Advancement through health and education" cash transfer programme. It also finalized its national parenting policy and passed legislation establishing a national parenting support commission to empower parents.

37. In China, subsidized housing is being provided to low and middle-income families. Programmes promoting women's entry and re-entry into the labour market and the provision of affordable childcare of high quality are also available. In Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Programme offers basic services and invests in human development. Eligible households are identified on the basis of a poverty scorecard survey. The programme also provides vocational training to one member of each beneficiary family and interest-free loans for the support of a small business

or self-employment. Assistance in education and health care have been added as new components of the programme.

38. In Morocco, a family solidarity fund has been created to support vulnerable women, including widows. Indonesia has reduced the poverty rate of vulnerable families by improving the quality of education and health care. Its joint business schemes for women as well as family empowerment institutions aim at strengthening programmes for children. The social assistance fund was established in the Syrian Arab Republic to empower women economically through income-generating projects. In Kenya, bills on marriage, family protection and matrimonial property are being developed to strengthen families. The harmonized social cash transfer scheme in Zimbabwe provides unconditional monthly cash income and access to basic services for poor and labour-constrained households.

39. In South Africa, the white paper for families has recently been finalized. The paper views the family as a key development imperative and seeks to mainstream family issues into government-wide policymaking initiatives in order to foster family well-being in the country. Similarly, in Botswana, there are ongoing consultations on the draft family policy framework.

#### **Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

40. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department organized several meetings, workshops, panel discussions and seminars in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in cooperation with United Nations and regional entities as well as civil society organizations (see also sect. II.D).

41. A panel discussion on advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity was held as part of the International Day of Families 2013 at United Nations Headquarters, organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, in the framework of the weekly non-governmental organization briefing of the Department of Public Information to raise awareness of intergenerational issues among civil society organizations. The panel recognized the vital role played by intergenerational programmes in promoting intergenerational solidarity in families and communities. Such programmes offer a platform for developing positive relationships across generations and strengthen the quality of ties between family members and are developed with respect for reciprocity and the strengths of each generation.

42. The panellists noted that intergenerational programmes vary around the globe and generally fall into four categories: (a) youth serving older persons, such as programmes where young people teach older people how to use information and communications technologies; (b) older persons serving youth, for example older persons tutoring in schools, mentoring adolescent mothers or providing safe passage for children walking to school; (c) youth and older persons serving together, through meal delivery programmes, or teaching mathematics and science together to younger children; and (d) intergenerational shared sites, such as an adult day care co-located with a childcare centre or an after school programme at a senior centre. The national family caregiver support programme and the Fostering Connection to Success Act in the United States of America have been proven to save dollars and to be effective. The panel recommended the creation of offices for intergenerational solidarity at the national level; a review of family policies, taking into account the strengths of each

generation and including support for grandfamilies; calling on Member States, in the context of the twentieth anniversary, to promote intergenerational dialogues and mutual understanding; and promoting intergenerational centres and use of space to encourage interaction across generations.<sup>5</sup>

43. The activities of the Intergenerational Work Study Program in New York, a collaborative initiative of the Department for the Aging and the Department of Education of New York City were also presented at the observance of the International Day. The programme delivers services to older adults while combining academic study and work training for selected students in public high schools. The students provide services to seniors who in turn serve as mentors to the students, offering tutoring and other support, which lends a grandparent-grandchild dimension to the programme.

44. In the area of technical cooperation, the Division for Social Policy and Development has recently provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia in preparing a national family policy. The policy is a major step in strengthening families, incorporates the existing system of entitlements to the framework of the national strategy of social development and advances further support to family issues in Armenia. The work on the policy was a joint effort between staff of the Division and international and national experts. In Belarus, the Division has been providing assistance to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on the design and implementation of the national family survey since 2011. The Division worked jointly with the Government and national academia on preparing survey methodology and questionnaires. The results of the survey will provide national policymakers with data that will be used in adjusting the national demographic security strategy and amending national family legislation. The methodology of the survey will be replicated and used in similar surveys in interested countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

#### **D. Civil society initiatives**

45. The preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year have been primarily driven by civil society. It is civil society, working with and for families on the ground, that recognizes and supports the irreplaceable roles families play in the life of their members and society at large. Numerous non-governmental and community-based organizations work at a grass-roots level to help families cope with their many responsibilities. Several civil society organizations have actively supported the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family by organizing local awareness-raising events, seminars, workshops and media forums. A review of civil society initiatives that took place in 2013 follows.

46. The International Federation for Family Development organized a side-event, on 12 February 2013, in the context of the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, entitled “Towards 2014: promoting the empowerment of families”,<sup>6</sup> as well as several awareness-raising meetings in Europe, South America and Africa. The side event presented the outcome of the European expert group

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<sup>5</sup> Donna Butts, “Advancing intergenerational solidarity”, a paper presented at the Observance of the International Day of Families, United Nations Headquarters, 16 May 2013.

<sup>6</sup> For more details on some of the events described in section II.D, see [www.family2014.org/seun.php](http://www.family2014.org/seun.php).

meeting, held in Brussels in 2012, and the new declaration of civil society that is being promoted on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (see also para. 59). The Veneto region in Italy was awarded an award by the Federation for its efforts to promote family-friendly policies. In the Veneto region, quality certification is awarded to local public authorities or private organizations that have developed family-first policies, activated flexible means of supporting parental and family relations, and promoted the cultural value of the family. The “Audit family and work project”, designed to initiate a documented and systemic evaluation of the human resources policies of public and private companies, grants certification to public and private companies based on the merits of their family-friendly approach to work, with significant benefits to both employers and employees. The objective is to jointly design measures to improve the balance of work and life and at the same time enhance productivity at the company or department.

47. A conference on “Challenges facing the family in the 21st century”, focused on family-oriented policies in the European Union, in particular in Poland, mainly in the area of work-family balance, was held in Warsaw on 3 and 4 April 2013. Experts indicated that flexible working arrangements have been linked to higher fertility rates in some European countries. The conference, conducted under the patronage of the President of Poland and attended by Government officials and civil society representatives, was organized by *Akademia Familijna* (Family Academy), a non-governmental organization offering family enrichment courses for couples.

48. A conference on “Balancing family and work”, convened in observance of the International Day of Families, 15 May, was organized by several European family-oriented non-governmental organizations in the European Parliament. It was hosted by Members of the European Parliament from Slovakia and Germany, with the participation of the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and several members of the European Parliament.

49. The commemoration of the International Day was also marked by the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union, with the launch of a book on demographic change, women’s participation in the labour market and reconciling work and family life, entitled: “Fertility rates and population decline: No time for children?” The Confederation has also continued with its social media outreach on family and social policy, and conducted the advocacy campaign for 2014 as the European Year for Reconciling Work and Family Life. To gather support for this initiative, a road map towards the European Year was developed.

50. The Women’s Board Educational Cooperation Society, in cooperation with the United Nations Information Centre in Lagos, Nigeria organized an media forum for non-governmental organizations on the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in observance of the International Day of Families, 15 May. The forum was held to create awareness of the anniversary and discussed the issues concerning the family in Nigerian law: the legal mechanisms for empowering Nigerian children through education; the marginalization and identity crisis of youth; and issues of intergenerational solidarity and social integration.

51. Sensitive to the urgent need to build and strengthen family security and stability, the Service and Research Institute on Family and Children strived to continue its long-term committed service to create a positive climate for families in India and around the world and to understand the nature and complexities of the

stressors that affect family life and its gamut of relationships. As part of the International Day celebrations, the Institute launched a publication on the family at the heart of society, held several seminars on child protection and commissioned a study on violence against children within the family.

52. The International Center for Work and Family organized its fifth conference on work and family, held in Barcelona from 1 to 3 July 2013. During the conference, academics discussed corporate family responsibility; the benefits of flexible work arrangements and developing evidence-based work-life research assessments and organizational interventions. Research topics at the conference included work-family and the age of austerity; work-family policies and culture; dual-income couples; and work life and women's careers. One of the findings of the conference was that researchers need to continue analysing what triggers conflict between work and family responsibilities and be more precise about how the term "flexibility" is used when conducting future studies.

53. The seminar entitled "Sustainable family: the key to development", organized by *La Fundación para la Educación y Orientación Familiar Hacer Familia*, was held in Santiago on 26 August 2013. The seminar was attended by politicians and civil society representatives. Several good practices from Chile were highlighted in the meeting, such as *Bono al trabajo de la mujer*, offering labour incentives to the most vulnerable women. The experts also discussed the importance of family structure and parental education for family well-being. In addition to parental guidance courses, the foundation publishes a variety of educational materials for parents. Its monthly journal reaches 14,000 families in Chile.

54. A health project in Lisbon (Projecto de Saúde em Lisboa) has promoted the objectives of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year by organizing workshops, conferences and awareness-raising meetings. In 2013 it organized a workshop entitled "What's missing in policy for the family — retrospects and prospects"; a meeting on drug addiction, ageing, exclusion and intergenerational relationships; and its twenty-third congress on family policies, on the topic: "Family and ageing: Promoting social integration and intergenerational solidarity", held on 1 October.

55. The National Council on Family Relations in the United States of America organized a seminar on the twentieth anniversary of the International Year, "Family policies across the globe" at its conference on the well-being of children and youth in families and communities, held in San Antonio, Texas, on 8 November 2013. The seminar addressed the importance of family policy development from a United Nations perspective and reviewed family-focused policies in several regions.

56. The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Family in New York holds monthly programmes to promote the importance of the family in achieving the goals of the United Nations, both by examining the challenges faced by families and exploring practical solutions to those problems. Over recent months, several topics were presented by academics, professional practitioners and non-governmental organizations, such as family-focused evidence-based practices, changing gender roles in the family, parenting autistic children, assessing ethnic and cultural differences in the family structure and changing family structures. The Committee also co-sponsored side events: during the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, on poverty reduction for older persons and during the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on strategies to

convince men in developing countries to stop sexual violence. The Committee is actively planning for and promoting the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014, with several events and monthly meetings planned.

57. The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Family in Vienna maintains an international network of 139 families-oriented civil society organizations as a knowledge resource and interactive forum for those involved in family issues (see [www.civilsocietynetworks.org](http://www.civilsocietynetworks.org)). The Vienna Committee has further committed itself to carry out the update of a study on documenting contributions of civil society organizations to the well-being of families. The present stage of the process is the analysis of the data submitted by participating organizations and creating a further knowledge resource for family issues. The documentation and the results of the analysis will be published in time for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014.

58. Several civil society organizations welcomed the Global Day of Parents, to be observed annually on 1 June. The General Assembly, in its resolution [66/292](#) of 17 September 2012, invited Member States to celebrate the Day in full partnership with civil society, particularly involving young people and children. The Universal Peace Federation organized events to celebrate the day in several countries and held an observance of the Day at United Nations Headquarters on 4 June 2013. The event, sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Burundi, Malaysia, Mali, Nigeria, Romania, Saint Lucia and Samoa, mainly focused on the multiple roles parents play in their children's lives and emphasized the ongoing commitment of the Universal Peace Federation to strengthening marriage, family and parenting. A public debate on the role of the family and its portrayal in the media was organized to celebrate the Day by The Family Watch, in Madrid on 27 May 2013.

59. The declaration of civil society on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family has been proposed and disseminated by the International Federation for Family Development. The declaration emphasizes that family-focused policies have proven both valuable and efficient in many areas of social development and urges Member States to promote and implement family-friendly policies aimed at providing sustainable, affordable and quality living conditions for families; and to empower families and recognize their role in social cohesion and economic development. Specific policies are noted in the areas of poverty eradication, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity. The declaration has been sponsored by 21 international entities and signed by over 350 civil society representatives from 173 national organizations, as well as by politicians, academics and individuals.<sup>7</sup>

### III. Conclusions and recommendations

**60. Over the years, the international community has recognized the importance of family-centred policies and programmes as part of an integrated rather than sectoral approach to development. The international community has agreed that the family is the fundamental unit of society, entitled to protection by society and the State, and acknowledged that notwithstanding different family forms and structures, families are fundamental to social development.**

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<sup>7</sup> Available from [www.family2014.org/declaration.php](http://www.family2014.org/declaration.php).

61. Focusing on families offers a comprehensive approach to solving some of the persistent development challenges, such as the intergenerational transfer of poverty and inequality. For instance, the economic status and stability of families and the quality parenting are vital for children's well-being and the quality of family life is itself an important contributor to a future society which responsible, just and equal.

62. The present report showcases the efforts of Governments and civil society actors in support of families worldwide. Some national policies and programmes focus on women with children, rather than family units as such. Such an approach may be justified as a result of prevailing discrimination against women and the urgent need to combat this historic injustice. The focus on children is equally understandable and relates to the desire to break the cycle of poverty and ensure at least a minimum standard of living for children. Focusing on women and children however, may not be sufficient not only for poverty reduction but for advancing gender equality and children's rights as well. As recently noted by the Head of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the campaign for gender equality has been dominated by women and it needs to be broadened to include boys and men. Similarly, taking into account family dynamics in policy development and service provision is bound to result in improved outcomes for all family members.

63. The preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 have mainly resulted in regional reviews of family policy development. The research undertaken focused on the issues of concern to the international community and families themselves: family poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity. Both the regional reviews carried out at expert meetings and research undertaken so far point to the fact that family-oriented policies contribute to poverty reduction, better outcomes for children, greater gender equality, improved work-family balance and strengthened intergenerational bonds. There is ample evidence that policies in those areas are effective and need to be advanced further.

64. The future follow-up on family policy development and the exchange of national good practices in the areas noted above should be continued and facilitated at the international and regional levels. Similarly, future regional and international expert meetings could review family policy development and offer recommendations based on available evidence.

65. In addition, appropriate regional supporting mechanisms (such as the Plan of Action on the Family in Africa of the African Union) could be developed or strengthened in order to (a) monitor the impact of socioeconomic policies on families; (b) promote and monitor family policy development in relevant areas; and (c) support research on families and on policy impact assessment studies. Moreover, Member States may find it useful to develop a long-term strategy to guide future United Nations action on families, such as an action-oriented review mechanism focusing on specific areas in family policy development.

66. The two policy areas bound to grow in importance in the coming years are work-family balance and intergenerational concerns. Recent trends, such as rapidly falling fertility rates in developed countries, family instability, growing divorce rates as well as mounting difficulties in family formation encountered

by young people require urgent action, especially in the area of work-family balance and sustainable livelihoods. Similarly, changing family structures, urbanization and mobility, as well as the rapid increase in the proportion of older persons among the population and the challenges of ensuring human rights and dignity for older persons require a serious look at policies supporting healthy and reciprocal intergenerational interactions so that generations are not perceived as competing against one another.

67. Both subjects are not sufficiently addressed at the international level, despite their growing implications for issues such as the future of women's labour participation and ageing. With the support of Member States, a systematic follow-up on family policy development in such areas could be pursued and coordinated at the national and regional levels with the assistance of the focal point on the family within the Division for Social Policy and Development.

68. As noted in previous reports on family issues, the Millennium Development Goals, especially those relating to poverty, education and the reduction of maternal mortality are difficult to achieve unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family. Women, children and youth are among the major priorities for the United Nations and will remain a top priority in the post-2015 development strategy. Adding families to this agenda would be a step forward in the direction of empowerment and reduction of inequality and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

69. Member States and other stakeholders are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Governments, the United Nations and regional entities, civil society organizations, the private sector and academic institutions should promote and advance family empowerment through appropriate family-centred policies and programmes;

(b) Member States may consider family empowerment an important tool in fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequality and make it part of the post-2015 development agenda;

(c) Member States should promote family policies in support of work-family balance, including equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women and the promotion of responsible fatherhood as part of their broader gender equality agenda;

(d) Governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to invest in intergenerational programmes for helping families in their caregiving responsibilities and facilitating intergenerational exchanges and support;

(e) The Commission for Social Development may want to take into consideration the conclusions of the panel discussion to be held in observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year in order to guide its future deliberations on family issues, with the aim of establishing an appropriate follow-up mechanism to guide national policy development;

(f) Member States may consider appropriate ways to advance the "family agenda" at the international level in a coordinated and systematic way. Work-family balance and intergenerational issues should continue to be the focus of attention at the national, regional and international levels.