



FAFCE

FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS
FAMILIALES CATHOLIQUES EN EUROPE

FÖDERATION DER KATHOLISCHEN
FAMILIENVERBÄNDE IN EUROPA

FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILY
ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights (OHCHR)
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Brussels, 28 October 2015

SUBJECT: Input to Human Rights Council resolution 29/22 on the protection of the family

The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) warmly welcomed Resolution 29/22 adopted by the Human Rights Council on 3 July 2015. The full title of this important and encouraging Resolution is: "Protection of the family: The contribution of the family to the realization of the right to adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development". Now, FAFCE and its members will use this Resolution both at the national and international level in order to promote family friendly policies: in fact the Resolution "*Urges States, in accordance with their respective obligations under international human rights law, to provide the family, as the natural and fundamental group unit of the society, with effective protection and assistance, and encourages States in this regard to take, as appropriate and to the maximum of their available resources*", a number of concrete measures.

This Resolution came at a very crucial moment for the negotiations, in New York, on the Final Draft of the Post-2015 Summit Outcome. In this context, the contribution of the family is a key element for an integral development: as stated in the above mentioned UN Human Rights Council Resolution, "the majority of the internationally agreed development goals, especially those relating to the reduction of poverty, education of children and the reduction of maternal mortality, would be difficult to attain unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family, which can contribute positively to, inter alia, eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases".

Nevertheless, despite the clear stand of the majority of UN Member States and the positive approach of the UN Human Rights Council, the role of the family seems to be neglected in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: on the contrary, an attempt to make the family the battleground of an ideological agenda is ongoing. This happens also because some States demand the introduction of a vague reference to "all families", abandoning the legal concept of the family as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society", as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For this reason FAFCE decided to support a [Joint Statement on Family in the Post-2015 Summit Outcome](#), promoted by several international Civil Society organizations. In this way we stress the fact that the "UDHR formulation is the most unambiguous way to ensure that the post-2015 summit outcome reflects the majority view that the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society, where children are the natural fruit of the love between men and women". In this Joint Statement several civil society organisations point out that "the insertion of ambiguous family language would give rise to the impression that family is an arbitrary and unaccountable sexual and emotional bond between adults, where children are commodities to be manufactured, contracted for, and ultimately purchased". At the UN, as well as within the European Union institutions and Member States, we are facing a clash of conceptions on human rights: an individualistic conception seems to be more and more supported by hegemonic powers which tend to impose their partial views on developing countries within the international economic and political arena. As also declared by the Holy See Delegation to the United Nations, FAFCE strongly believes that the UN post-2015 Development Agenda "should avoid the usage of ambiguous or controversial terms and concepts. This agenda is universal and should speak to all, it should be idealistic and compelling, designed to inspire and not to frustrate, to unite and not to divide" ([Intervention](#) of the Holy See to the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *General Statement on the Final Draft, Post-2015 Development Agenda*, New York, 20 July 2015).

The family needs to be promoted as "the fundamental unit of society by its nature and by the indispensable contribution that it is called to make in the achievement of security and development" ([Statement](#) by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations before the Plenary of the 59th General Assembly, on Item 94: *10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family*, New York, 6 December 2004). The family, intended as the stable and lasting union of a man and a woman, is essential for the economic growth, not only because of demographic dynamism, that occurs by a reproduction assuring the replacement of the generations. Beyond this demographic dimension, other natural virtues of the family need to be taken into account: first of all, the formation of the "human capital", through the role that the parents have as the primary and foremost educators of their children (Cf. the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 26,3; Cf. also John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, §36). From here, we see the necessity of a national family policy which must be a completely separate policy, and not a part of social policy. Family policy it's different, first of all, in its objectives: "to promote a model that at the very least does not penalise those who wish to have children; then, its modalities: a just compensation of the costs linked to education and a true recognition of domestic work; and finally, its

own requirements: a long-term action, based on criteria of justice and of efficiency because the family is an investment for tomorrow” (Cf. *ibidem*).

In the same vein, precisely because of all the virtues that the family brings in itself in favour of the whole society, we strongly believe in the necessity of promoting and supporting the institution of marriage between a man and a woman, as the first place where children can flourish in a safe and loving environment. This means that the international community should support States in promoting the family, concretely, in implementing an independent and effective family policy, while working to diminish the high divorce rates in the world. Divorce, if in some cases can be the only way out from certain situations, is not always the good solution for couple in crisis, having huge negative consequences on the society and, above all, on children: vulnerability, emotional problems, teen pregnancies, drug and alcohol problems, smoking, poverty and crime can be listed among the consequences of high divorce rates. Not only conciliation laws and longer waiting periods, but also divorce-reduction legislations must be promoted and implemented, for the benefit of the whole society; the idea of the “good divorce” is an oxymoron which does not make any sense, especially if children are involved, as many studies demonstrate. With this regard, we point out the lack of coordination and knowledge at the international level and urge international bodies to take action in this sense.

FAFCE firmly believes that if Resolution 29/22 will be fully implemented and taken into account by Member States this will pave the way to the real implementation of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which provided that “the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children (Art. 10, paragraph 1).

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