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**Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

**Statement to the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development**

**The Eradication of Poverty and the Family**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council appreciates the opportunity to address the Commission on Social Development and wishes to emphasize the importance of family in the consideration of the Commission's priority theme of Poverty Eradication.**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the family as the basic unit of society, entitled to protection by society and the State. Several General Assembly resolutions have emphasized that the family be strengthened and receive comprehensive support.**

**Governments have made progress in poverty eradication but according to the Secretary General's report people living in extreme poverty remain around one billion. Families living in poverty experience lack of income, hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, limited access to education, inadequate housing, unsafe environments, and social exclusion.**

**According to a report from the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University poverty stymies performance of children in school and negatively affect their mental and physical health. Poor children are more likely to suffer a higher rate of cognitive delays and development disorders**

**Absent intervention, these children face difficulty in transcending the disadvantage of their early lives and as adults are likely to perpetuate a cycle of poverty that can consume generations.**

**Millennium Development targets especially those relating to the reduction of poverty are difficult to achieve unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family.**

**The world's poorest families live in rural areas. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for poor women and men. Small and medium-size farms provide employment to a majority of the population in developing countries. According to the Secretary-General's report, small and more flexible family farms are the key drivers of agriculture productivity.**

**The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council in partnership with the International Orthodox Christian Charities, the Autocephalous Church of Albania and the Agricultural Department of the University of Maryland has been undertaking a regional effort to help rural farmers in Albania increase their income and improve sustainable access to food for families. Farmers receive training on insects and diseases that affect late season vegetables and instruction is given on how to conduct tests to measure soil texture. Field schools held in the region have given farmers the opportunity to discuss problems they face. The proper preparation and care of a seed bed, transplanting measures for saplings, tomato production in greenhouses and technical information for mushrooms, herbs, onions, lettuce and garlic are taught. Farmers learn new methods to increase farm income and expand market opportunities . This project helps farmers to be more productive but also supplies more food to the local communities. The same program has been conducted in Kosovo and Montenegro.**

**Mr. Chairman**

**The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council urges Governments to help farmers be more productive and expand market opportunities by having partnerships between farmers, agricultural experts and NGO's.**

**The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council urges Governments to increase their investment in small scale agriculture in order to help feed the majority of the world's populations.**

**Thank you.**

