

World Youth Alliance Oral Statement

49th Commission on Social Development
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Thank you Mr. Chair, esteemed delegates and members of civil society.

1. The World Youth Alliance, a global coalition of young people promoting the dignity of the human person in policy and culture, welcomes the opportunity to review the current year's priority theme for the Commission for Social Development: poverty eradication. We are convinced that people are the most important drivers of development and that human creativity is a critical resource and a catalyst for development. In preparation for the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, we want to re-affirm the importance of the family as the fundamental unit of society. The family is indeed the fundamental community where poverty can first and efficiently be fought, thus addressing the primary needs of the most vulnerable members of our communities such as young people, older persons, and persons with disabilities.

2. Poverty eradication takes place at an individual level, by educating and investing in persons, and enabling their creativity and natural capacities to develop and flourish. It requires whole communities to work together for the common good. Poverty eradication, which disproportionately affects young people, requires strong families who take their duties and responsibilities in caring for their members and building intergenerational solidarity seriously. The State must support efforts that encourage person-centered solutions for the eradication of poverty, as well as encouraging the development of opportunities and programs that contribute to human flourishing.

The Family

3. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society. The family is the first and fundamental environment where children are welcomed in life, and first experience what it means to be loved and accepted unconditionally. We recognize this as the primary purpose and function of the family.

4. The family is "natural" because it is both prior to, and necessary for, the development of free, healthy and flourishing States. Thus support for the family should be accorded at the political and the cultural level because of its importance for social functioning, and because of the essential role the family provides in caring for children, the aged and the most vulnerable.

Youth

5. The launch of the International Year of Youth on 12 August 2010 marked the beginning of a year's worth of activities aimed at encouraging youth participation and dialogue and mutual understanding. Young people commit themselves to dialogue on issues affecting them.

6. For youth, family is of primary importance since the family influences the way in which young people see the world. Family support directly impacts the ability of a child to do well in school, and to overcome the effects of poverty. Supporting and strengthening the family is essential to combating poverty.

Persons with Disabilities

7. Promoting the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for disabled persons shows our respect for the diversity of the human condition. Persons with disabilities have a unique contribution to make in society, and encourage us to fulfill our duty to aid and protect them.

8. There are approximately 690 million persons with disabilities in the world and 80 percent of them live in developing countries, many in conditions of poverty. They suffer isolation because of stigma, discrimination, myths,



misconceptions, and ignorance. While poor people are more likely to have a disability because of the conditions in which they live, disability is likely to make people poorer because of limited opportunities and discrimination. Too often, governments and communities fail to provide special health care and education needed for the integral development of persons with disabilities, which generates cycles of poverty through generations.

9. Both in developed and developing countries, individuals are targeted for termination based solely on their disability; genetic diagnosis and prenatal screening technologies are often used to identify persons with disabilities prior to birth. Member States should adopt measures to eradicate these violations which encourage poverty and underdevelopment.

10. The family is the primary place where persons with disabilities can be cared for and learn how to care. It is within this institution that the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society are defended and protected.

Older Persons

11. Older persons are those persons ages 60 or 65 and older, reaching retirement ages in most developed countries. In the past few decades, issues related to ageing populations have risen to the forefront of the development agenda, since greater numbers of persons are surviving into the advanced stages of life.

12. Legalization of euthanasia has followed from the debate on issues of an ageing population. Under the framework of "dying with dignity," some countries have legalized assisted suicide for people suffering chronic physical and mental pain. It is acknowledged that in various cases assisted suicide was carried out for people who appeared to be lucid. Nevertheless, respect and care for the elderly, which has been one of the few constants in human culture everywhere, reflects a basic interplay between self- preserving and society-preserving impulses which have ensured the survival and progress of the human race. Assisted suicide will lead, over time, to a decrease in political will to provide palliative care and health-care services. Pressuring the terminally ill to take their own lives when they believe they have become a burden violates human dignity.

13. Since the family is the school of solidarity, it is necessary to enable the family as a whole, including its male members, to participate in and share the burden of caregiving. Elders fulfill the role of educating and passing on values to the younger generation; this role has ensured man's survival and progress and promoted a culture in which intergenerational solidarity fosters the common good, especially the realization of responsibilities towards future generations.

14. Worldwide, the overall responsibility of the family to provide the traditional care and support the needs of the ageing is diminishing. Therefore, there is an evident need to educate the general public, and in particular families, with regard to the ageing process.

Conclusion

15. Poverty eradication requires recognizing the role that families play in the lives of all persons, including young people, persons with disabilities and older persons. Social development, and therefore economic development, cannot occur without this fundamental recognition by the State and society, and a corresponding support structure for the family. We call upon the commission to reflect these recommendations in the resolution "Poverty Eradication."

