



FAMILY MATTERS

Circular No. 39

Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2004) August 2002

FAMILY UNIT

Preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2004) is the responsibility of the Family Unit, Division for Social Policy and Development within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Interim Progress Report on Preparations for the observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

Commission for Social Development

At its fortieth session (11-21 February 2002), the Commission for Social Development reviewed the report of the Secretary-General entitled *Follow-up to the International Year of the Family in 2004* (E/CN.5/2002/2). It recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption draft resolution E/CN.5/2002/L.3, entitled *Preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family*. In the terms of that draft resolution, member Governments would agree to the invitation to establish national mechanisms to prepare for, observe and follow up the tenth anniversary. In addition, the Secretary-General would be invited to launch the tenth anniversary in early December 2003. It was decided that the General Assembly should devote one plenary meeting to the observance of the tenth anniversary at its fifty-ninth session.

During the session, representatives of Governments expressed considerable interest in the observance of the tenth anniversary. All delegations followed the preparations for it closely. Various countries announced the establishment of national coordinating committees (Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Suriname, Thailand and Zambia).

Special session of the General Assembly on children

Second World Assembly on Ageing

The United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing was held in Madrid from 8 to 12 April 2002, to respond to the rapid ageing of populations during the twenty-first century and to promote a *Society for all ages*. In its resolution 54/262 of 25 May 2000, the General Assembly decided to convene the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 20 years after the first World Assembly on Ageing was held in Vienna, to adopt a revised International Plan of Action on Ageing, organized according to three priority directions: older persons and development, advancing health and well-being into old age and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. In addition, special emphasis was given to measures to mainstream ageing within the context of current global development agendas; appropriate forms of public and private partnerships at all levels to build a society for all ages; and measures to strengthen the solidarity between generations.

The topic of the family was central to the deliberations of the Assembly. Care of older persons by the family and family support structures were major issues that were debated. The Second World Assembly on Ageing adopted a Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, which committed Governments to act to meet the challenge of ageing populations and provided a set of 239 concrete recommendations. Of the 131 paragraphs of the Plan of Action, 31 make specific reference to families.

At the final meeting of its special session on children, held in New York from 4 to 10 May 2002, the General Assembly adopted the outcome document, entitled

AA world fit for children@which contains a Declaration and a Plan of Action. Topics such as trafficking in children, child prostitution, child pornography, child labour, the disparity between boys and girls in access to education, and female genital mutilation were tackled. Many Governments highlighted their family-related policies that provide an environment conducive to the positive development of children.

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

As the lead entity for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has concentrated its efforts since 2001 on a four-pronged approach: (a) taking the programme, strategy and objectives of the tenth anniversary to the national level; (b) strengthening channels of communication between the Department and the United Nations system, the non-governmental sector and intergovernmental organizations; (c) enhancing research capacity for family policy development; and (d) servicing relevant intergovernmental bodies.

With regard to actions at the national level, the Department has promoted the establishment of national coordination mechanisms or other bodies and assisted Member States, at their request, in establishing national priorities concerning families, as well as in initiating specific action programmes for the tenth anniversary. In this connection, the Family Unit website (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html>), the bimonthly web-based circular *Family Matters*, and the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities are vital instruments for garnering needed support and for disseminating information to the national and grass-roots levels.

To strengthen channels of communications, the Department has continued to promote collaborative efforts within the United Nations system, as well as with Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to

single-parenthood); (b) increased migration; (c) demographic ageing; (d) the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and (e) the impact of globalization on families. Such transformations have had a manifest impact on the capacity of families to perform social functions such as the socialization of children, caregiving for younger and older generations and creating social capital. These trends place a heavy burden on family members and challenge their ability to fulfil basic functions of production, reproduction and socialization. A report on these topics will be

enhance their active participation. Various Governments have received relevant information and have been provided with policy guidance about the approaches and strategies for the tenth anniversary. Cooperative efforts have been initiated with the Caribbean Community Secretariat, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the International Organization for Migration, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the League of Arab States. For example, the Organization of African Unity requested its Member States to establish national mechanisms for the anniversary and envisages a regional meeting in 2003, which would elaborate an African Acharter on the family@ Furthermore, in 2001 the Council of Europe set up a new body called the Forum for Children and Families, which will focus on the tenth anniversary. The Directorate of Human and Social Development within the Caribbean Community Secretariat is conducting a review of family themes and is devising an integrated approach to the tenth anniversary.

To initiate a research capacity for family policy development as a contribution to the observance of the tenth anniversary, the Department has embarked on three specific, novel initiatives: (a) the establishment of an inter-university network on family policy development; (b) the preparation of a global study on regional trends; and (c) continuing the ongoing research work of the Family Unit. With regard to the inter-university network, there is a need to increase cooperation between numerous institutions of higher learning in respect of family policy development, streamlining and delineating main substantive themes.

With the cooperation of the Regional Commissions, five major trends have been identified that have transformed families to a considerable degree. In the last 50 years, family life worldwide has been transformed by (a) changes in family structure (smaller households, delayed marriage and childbearing, and increased rates of divorce and

presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, in 2004.

As part of its regular programme of work, the Department finalized two research studies on family issues, entitled AFamilies affected by HIV/AIDS in selected countries@and AIndicators and statistics for family well-being@ These studies encourage reflection on the types of strategies and policy options available and enhance capacity for improving the conditions of families. It is expected that they will become available shortly.

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