



FAMILY MATTERS

Circular No. 45

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

August 2003

PROGRAMME ON THE FAMILY

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

The Programme on the Family is currently focusing on: (a) the global study on major trends; (b) the report of the Secretary General to the Commission for Social Development; (c) UN Expert Group on Mainstreaming the Family Issue; and (d) the linkages with the NGO sector.

The Secretariat of the United Nations in June 2003 sent out a "Note Verbale" to Governments concerning General Assembly resolution 57/164 of 18 December 2002 entitled '**Preparations for and observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family**'. It invited all States to take prompt action to establish national mechanisms, as appropriate, to prepare for, observe and follow up the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in particular for the purpose of planning, stimulating and harmonizing the activities of the governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations concerned with the preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary, and to cooperate with the Secretary-General in achieving the objectives of the tenth anniversary.

The Secretariat also recalled to Member States that General Assembly resolution 57/164 "requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council on the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels".

International Day of Families 2003

The International Day of Families 2003 was commemorated on 15 May 2003. A message of the Secretary-General, a background note as well as an information note were distributed. At UN headquarters a panel discussion was held at the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium. The theme for this year's International Day of Families (IDF) was "**Preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004**". Organized jointly by DESA's Programme on the Family, the Department for Public Information and the New York NGO Committee on the Family, the event provided various speakers the opportunity to talk, inter alia, about preparations for the observance of the Tenth Anniversary of IYF from their considered perspective. The three speakers were: Ms. Nicole Elisha of the Mission of Benin, Ms. Mary Power, the Former Director of the Office for the Advancement of Women of the Baha'i International Community, Mr. Robert Venne, Associate Social Affairs Officer of DESA and Maxwell Haywood, Social Affairs Officer of DESA.

Global Issue

The Programme on the Family will publish a global study entitled 'Major trends affecting families world-wide'. Five trends were identified that impact on family life everywhere: **(1) Changes in family structure** including (a) a shift from extended to nuclear families as well as rise of one-person households and of cohabitation which became evident during the last 50 years, (b) falling fertility rates, increases in divorce rates and increase in the number of older persons are responsible for smaller-size households, (c) the age at first marriage has risen to between the mid to late twenties in all regions of the world, and (d) women have fewer children later in life. **(2) Demographic ageing** due to lower fertility rates and higher life expectancy that contribute to a larger share of older persons within the overall population with its implications for families. **(3) Rise of migration** where seasonal and internal migration of men contributes to higher number of female-

headed households around the world and can cause major stress on family life due to cultural, ethnic, racial and religious differences and lack of integration. **(4) HIV/AIDS pandemic** that affects the most productive members of society who often just started their own families which lead to change family structure due to increasing adolescent and grandparent headed households in some regions of Africa. In addition care for infected relatives, coping with the loss of numerous family members and the increase of the number of orphans cause major stress on families and societies. Finally, **(5) the impact of globalization** on families that have to cope with reduced services due to spending cuts in the areas of education and health, in unemployment benefits as well as in general welfare provisions. All of the outlined trends put greater strains on families regarding their societal functions.

The Programme on the Family has contracted ten (10) consultants to carry out research on ten sub-regions of the world taking into account the five trends as outlined above. The consultants are: Hoda Badran; Betty Bigombe; Robert Cliquet; Weraduwege Indralal de Silva; Yahia H-Haddad; Dimitar Filipov; Elizabeth Jelin; Nazek Nosseir; Stella Quah; and Godfrey St. Bernard.

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