



FAMILY MATTERS



Circular No. 29

Follow up of the International Year of the Family

December

FAMILY UNIT

The Follow up to the International Year of the Family is the responsibility of the Family Unit, Division for Social Policy and Development within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The follow-up activities to the International Year of the Family are in accordance with intergovernmental mandates e.g. General Assembly resolutions 50/142 of 21 December 1995, 52/81 of 12 December 1997, and 54/124 of 17 December 1999 respectively. [The Family Unit welcomes ongoing information and data on family-related policies and programmes from concerned actors and focal points].

The Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family constitutes an important opportunity to give a new impetus to the follow-up of the Year. With resolution 54/124, the General Assembly reaffirmed the importance of the follow-up to the Year and of the observance of its tenth anniversary.

The objectives of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family would be to:

- (a) Increase awareness of family issues among Governments as well as in the private sector;
- (b) Strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families;
- (c) Stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families;
- (d) Undertake at all levels reviews and assessments of the situation and needs of families, identifying specific issues and problems;
- (e) Enhance the effectiveness of local, national and regional efforts to carry out specific programmes concerning families, generate new activities and strengthen existing ones; and

- (f) Improve the collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families.

The Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family could be launched in December 2003 at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly. The observance of the Tenth Anniversary during 2004 could also culminate in the holding of plenary sessions of the General Assembly on the topic of families. Results sought from the General Assembly plenary sessions in late 2004 would be devoted to: (a) an assessment of global trends that impact on families; (b) a review of progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of IYF objectives since 1994; (c) a reaffirmation of commitments made and the identification of further actions including to encourage the incorporation of effective family policies and programmes into national development strategies; as well as to encourage regional institutes to promote and undertake research and policy development on family issues.

Preparatory activities would start in 2001. At this point, it is envisioned that these preparations by the United Nations Secretariat will entail a wide range of activities, including one interregional meeting along with efforts to encourage action-oriented research and the development of frameworks on family policy development. The United Nations will strive to promote dialogue and consensus for furthering international cooperation on families. Greater efforts will be made to support the efforts of Governments in formulating family policies and programmes and in building their national capacities. Attention will be devoted to monitoring trends, identifying significant family related issues and analyzing their policy implications, with a view to helping the international community to respond to long term and emerging family related issues.

While activities for the Tenth Anniversary could be undertaken at all levels, the primary focus should be on activities at the national and local levels. The value of active

participation of civil society should be recognized and utilized as a prerequisite for attaining the IYF objectives.

2004 could be seen as a target year by which concrete progress should have been made to identify and elaborate issues of direct concern to families and to provide practical guidelines for national, regional and global actions as part of a sustained long-term effort to strengthen the economic and sustainable livelihood of families.

Governments will be encouraged to set up a mechanism for the Tenth Anniversary of the IYF to stimulate, plan and coordinate activities by the appropriate governmental and non-governmental bodies and agencies. This mechanism would liaise with the United Nations regarding the programme for the Anniversary. Governments will also be invited to undertake, as part of their activities for 2004, sustained action at all levels concerning family issues, including studies and applied research, and concrete measures and approaches to promote the role of families in development and pursue national priorities related to family issues. Governments could furthermore be invited to prepare an agenda for national action for the Anniversary identifying specific family needs and proposing action programmes for implementation in 2004.

Governments will also be encouraged to consider developing family-impact assessments in their own development activities and to formulate, implement and evaluate family-sensitive policies and programmes in accordance with the objectives of the International Year of the Family. This could involve establishing or strengthening appropriate national mechanisms in respect of families.

National initiatives for the Anniversary would be adopted by each Government in light of its own situation and priorities and of the strategy for the International Year of the Family elaborated in General Assembly resolutions on the International Year and further supplemented by major UN conferences, summits and meetings held since 1994.

The Year 2004 should also be the occasion for a discussion by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Social Development and other bodies of Specialized Agencies of the global

situation of families and of how the United Nations system might approach family issues as an integral part of development. The organization of the United Nations system should be encouraged to give wide support to the Tenth Anniversary, and specifically to those aspects of the Year that are of particular relevance to their programmes.

As the lead entity for the Tenth Anniversary of the IYF, the Department will stimulate and coordinate activities for the preparation for and observance of the Tenth Anniversary. To this end, activities will be undertaken on five main substantive themes: Approaches to family policy development; Technology and its impact on the family; Parental roles and intra-familial support systems; Statistics and indicators for family well-being; and HIV/AIDS and its impact on families.

The Department will support the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Council on the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Reports and results of expert group meetings will assist the intergovernmental bodies in monitoring the progress achieved in the preparations for the Tenth Anniversary and provide relevant analysis and information to support the debate on relevant family policy issues.

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