## THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ---MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 15 May 2000

There is no single view or universal consensus on what makes up a family. Families are far too diverse and dynamic to be pigeon-holed or strictly defined. Yet in any culture, the family provides a natural framework in which individuals -- and especially children -- can receive the emotional, financial and material nourishment and support that is indispensable to their development.

The traditional observance of 15 May as the International Day of Families focuses on this fundamental unit of social cohesion and coexistence. This year's theme --"Families: Agents and Beneficiaries of Development and Social Progress" -- emphasizes the crucial role of families in society. A strong family structure is conducive to the well-being of its members and of society at large. It is within the family that children can learn positive values that will guide them for the rest of their lives, and it is within the family that people can learn key lessons about equality, tolerance and shared responsibility.

While families are engines of development, they are also its beneficiaries. Where development is slow or absent, a family's ability to meet the needs of its members will be impaired. And where development is undermined by conflict, and instability prevails, families are undermined as well, robbing societies of an essential building block for peace and prosperity.

Families can be real bastions of humane values and human progress. Let us do our utmost to create the conditions families need to fully realize their potential.