



*International Day of Families
15 May 2003*

*"Preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year
of the Family in 2004"*



Preparations for the International Year of the Family in 1994

In resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989, the General Assembly proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family. The General Assembly decided that major activities for the observance of the Year should be concentrated at the local, national and regional levels, with a view to creating among Governments, policy-makers and the public a greater awareness of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society. The General Assembly also invited all Governments, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, as well as interested national organizations, to exert all possible efforts in the preparation for and observance of the Year and to co-operate with the Secretary-General in achieving the objectives of the Year.

Observance of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 1994

The International Year of the Family was observed at an important juncture in the history of the United Nations, on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary, and formed an integral element of a process of refining the concepts and mechanisms of development and social progress. The observance of the Year served to highlight the role of families as basic social units and the need to pay adequate attention to the family dimensions in the development process.

The Year's observance has resulted in a significant record of accomplishment. These include, among others: achieving the Year's immediate goal of increasing awareness of family issues; advancing the subject-matter of families in the context of development and in related international dialogue; an evolution and maturation of an approach to the family as an object and agent of social policy in many

countries and internationally; increased recognition of the importance of supporting families and of bringing about positive changes in the family realm as an integral part of efforts to achieve peace, human rights, democracy, sustainable development and social progress; an ever growing conviction that it is in the best interests of individuals and societies to promote democratic families and family-friendly societies; a myriad of new initiatives and long-term activities in support of families all over the world, particularly at the local and national levels; the development or strengthening of mechanisms devoted to family policy and research; the mobilization of a global network of partners; and the recognition that, despite the diversity of families, many key issues relating to families are common across countries and regions, and that international cooperation on family issues is valuable.

Preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

Objectives

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. In its 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 Year would be to:

- (a) Increase awareness of family issues among Governments as well as in the private sector;
- (b) Strengthen the capacity of 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 collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families.

The tenth anniversary of the Year will be launched in December 2003. The observance of the tenth anniversary during 2004 will culminate in the holding of one plenary session of the Assembly on the topic of families. It will be devoted to a reaffirmation of commitments made and the identification of further actions, including encouraging the incorporation of effective family policies and programmes into national development strategies as well as encouraging regional institutes to promote and undertake research and development of policies related to family issues.

National Guidelines

The commencement of the tenth anniversary is seen as an opportunity for advocacy and promotional efforts to achieve maximum visibility. Specific measures may include statements and speeches on the observance of the tenth anniversary by the head of State or Government, an announcement of policy and programme intentions on specific family issues, observance of a national family day or week, and festivals promoting the family. Governments are being invited to establish a national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary to plan, stimulate and coordinate activities by appropriate governmental and non-governmental agencies. Such a committee would also help to assure the integration of family issues into overall national development planning. Close and effective coordination among the numerous actors involved is desirable throughout the process of policy formulation and implementation. Such coordination can

be achieved through special institutional arrangements and procedures, which may take several forms, according to national political and administrative traditions and circumstances. The national coordinating committees or other coordinating bodies can serve as national focal points to liaise with the United Nations regarding the tenth anniversary.

Guidelines for the establishment of a national coordinating committee

Nature and composition

In order to accomplish its objectives, a national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary would need to possess adequate political influence and high public visibility, possibly at the highest policy- and decision-making levels. It is encouraged to reflect the multidisciplinary nature of family issues and provide for intersectoral consultation, coordination and implementation, with adequate structural support. The committee may include representatives, as appropriate, of governmental and non-governmental organizations, associations, the private sector and individuals. Governments may wish to ensure that they are widely represented and enjoy appropriate status in the national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary.

Objectives and functions

The overall aim and objective of a national coordinating committee is to promote and encourage family concerns and activities as an integral part of national development within the framework of the tenth anniversary. One of its main objectives is to achieve a coordinated and integrated approach to family-related issues.

The functions of a national coordinating committee can include the following:

- (a) Identifying, monitoring and evaluating various governmental and non-governmental programmes of both direct and indirect concern to the family, in connection with the tenth anniversary;

- (b) Providing an effective channel for the promotion of the tenth anniversary at the local and national levels
- (c) Elaborating and implementing a national programme of preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary in the form of an “agenda for national action”;
- (d) Reviewing and assessing the situation of the family, and identifying specific issues and problems;
- (e) Sensitizing public opinion on family-related issues and problems and providing a leadership role in articulating family concerns;
- (f) Monitoring and evaluating family policies and programmes;
- (g) Promoting and undertaking research on the family and serving as a repository for national information and data relating to the family;
- (h) Facilitating the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the preparations for and observance of the anniversary;
- (i) Encouraging incorporation of family programmes into national development strategies.

Concepts for national action

To encourage greater awareness among policy-makers and the public of issues of concern to families, and to ensure that their implications of government policies for the family will be more appropriately considered, Governments may wish to:

- (a) encourage a public information campaign to inform people of the observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, objectives and priorities with the active involvement of the private sector and seek the assistance of both international organizations and agencies as well as non-governmental organizations;
- (b) support and extend the process of dialogue and communication with local and grass-root groups

and organizations, and thereby encourage their active involvement in designing and implementing projects and activities for and with families;

- (c) continue the dissemination of information about relevant international legal instruments, including especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- (d) undertake a general review of national legislation to clarify its real or potential impact on families;
- (e) develop and implement, as deemed appropriate, national celebratory activities in observance of the Anniversary.

Other intergovernmental organizations

Many intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system are also implementing programmes that affect families, directly and indirectly. They are invited to carry out appropriate IYF-related activities. Their specialized competence, experience, resources and focused outreach could be of great significance in achieving the objectives of the Year.

Non-governmental organizations

International non-governmental organizations are major partners of Governments and the United Nations system in achieving the objectives of IYF. Valuable efforts by individual NGOs can contribute significantly to national and international action. The support of non-governmental organizations is crucial. To achieve their active involvement, Governments might consider: ensuring that they are widely represented and enjoy appropriate status in the national coordinating committee.

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