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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES**

**15 May 2003**

In 1994, the international community observed the International Year of the Family, an initiative aimed at increasing awareness of family issues and improving the institutional capability of nations to tackle serious family-related problems with comprehensive policies. Governments, civil society groups and others are now preparing to observe the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Year, and are hoping to use the occasion to sustain momentum in an area of vital importance for human progress.

Putting families closer to the centre of the public policy process will require greater political commitment. The issues involved are at the heart of the social welfare agenda: changes in family structures, demographic ageing, the rise of migration, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and globalization. I hope leaders will comprehend these links and give these questions the attention and resources they merit.

It is heartening that preparations for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration have already witnessed a multitude of national initiatives and the creation of institutional arrangements to deal with family issues. Non-governmental organizations have been especially active and creative, and they will continue to play a crucial role. As we look ahead to the launch of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in December 2003 at UN Headquarters, let us all reaffirm our commitment to improving the well-being of families throughout the world.