



International Day of Families
15 May 2004
"Observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the
International Year of the Family in 2004"



Preparation 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 was 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.

Activities undertaken for the observance

The focus of activities for the observance of the tenth anniversary remains at the national and local levels. In many cases, national coordination mechanisms for the tenth anniversary were established by the head of State or Government. Generally, they were created at the senior governmental level, often

involving several national ministries under the leading role of the authority concerned with family matters. Many involve the active participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, the academic community, the private sector and the media.

Long standing national priorities for family policies have been given new impetus through the preparation and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Those priorities encompass, inter alia employment; social security; gender equality; reconciliation of work and family responsibilities; family leave domestic violence; migration; poverty; children; street children; children's rights in the family and in society; family life education; responsible parenthood; role of fathers; the girl child; marriage and divorce issues; changing family forms notably single-parent female-headed household.

In many countries, the tenth anniversary is seen as an opportunity to update, refine or develop legislation concerning families as well as to address that broad spectrum of family-related priority issues. In particular, the anniversary encourages the adoption of legislative and other measures required to implement international conventions, notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has produced reports and communications, and organized meetings to promote awareness of the positive role families play in their respective societies. It has monitored developments in policies, socio-economic transformations and political changes that affect families. It has also stimulated action-oriented research on family issues.

Intergovernmental organizations continue to contribute to the tenth anniversary by disseminating information, organizing meeting and seminars, promoting research, assistance and guidance for policy development, and integrating a family focus in their existing activities. The governing bodies of the Caribbean Community, the Council of

Europe, the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States have played important supportive roles for national actions and have adopted statements and decisions expressing support for the anniversary by calling for action by their respective member States.

NGOs have contributed substantially to the growing body of knowledge on the global situation of families and have played an equally important role in the dissemination of information. A variety of studies on such diverse subjects as poverty, the social situation of families, family welfare, reform of legislation and family counseling have been published. Those studies have frequently resulted in action programmes. Various regional meetings and seminars have been organized.

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