

Commission on Population and Development
The Family as a Driver of Social and Economic Development

This year we are celebrating **the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family**. As UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in his 2011 landmark report asserted, “**the majority of the Millennium Development targets, especially those relating to the reduction of poverty, education of children and reduction in maternal mortality, are difficult to attain unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family.**” (SG Family Report 2011 (A/66/62–E/2011/4).

No development effort can fully succeed unless the family is expressly placed at the center. Throughout history governments have recognized the premiere status of the family. Indeed 110 countries have formally recognized its importance in their constitutions and commitments. Yet to date, these government commitments remain largely unfulfilled.

Experience shows that when families are respected and empowered, efforts to achieve development goals are much more likely to be successful. An example of this is the Family Preservation Program, a holistic approach to development that focuses primarily on working with families, targeting the poorest of communities in Africa with a high concentration of people living with HIV/AIDS, and which has already addressed 14,000 people. An independent evaluation of the program found that communities achieved unprecedented results after participating in this family-centered program in terms of child access to education, use of treated water, ownership of family businesses, health improvement or maternal death rate (not 1 in over 1,000 births).

The Family Impact Institute, a research organization based in the United States, has found that a family-centered approach that uses “a family lens” for developing and implementing policies yields much better results in many areas, including poverty reduction, health, and education.

Could it be that the global community has not been as successful as hoped for in eradicating poverty, preventing disease and death, and achieving the full and fair participation of women in society, because the most fundamental unit of society that empowers nations to achieve such goals has largely been ignored?

We support the statement recently presented by the Republic of Belarus and join their effort and that of so many other countries which share this same awareness, calling upon all UN Member States, UN Agencies, and civil society to put the family at the center of the post 2015 development agenda, and adopt a stand-alone goal to strengthen the role of the family as a driver of sustainable economic and social development.