



# BELARUS

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## COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT 52<sup>nd</sup> session

### Panel Discussion on the Family

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### STATEMENT

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here today with our distinguished panelists and to address the Commission for Social Development on the family issues.

When the UN General Assembly proclaimed **1994 as the International Year of the Family** it started an event aimed at strengthening and supporting families in performing their societal and developmental functions.

As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Year of the Family this year, it is an opportune time to ask **how the observations have resulted in positive and lasting changes** in the lives of the families in different regions and to **assess gaps between family-oriented policy and practice** on its implementation around the world.

Affirmed by civilizations for millennia, the family forms the basis of natural procreation, upbringing of children and educating youth, honoring parents and grandparents, and of our development as spiritual and rational beings.

The Secretary General in his report acknowledges the family environment as **“the first layer of a protective environment”** and devotes significant attention to the **indispensable role** of the family for the **protection of young people**.

### The family as a contributor of the development

The family is the basic unit of society and it plays key role in social development and is a strong force of social coherence and integration. The family plays crucial role in ensuring the balance of the social system and sustainable development of any society.

But the problem is that that many of us saw **the families more as a recipient, rather than a contributor for development.**

I could suggest that such an approach was the reason why the core MDG documents and in particular 2005 World Summit Outcome document did not even mention the role of the family towards achieving important world goals.

How do we think these goals will be accomplished without the important contributions of the individual family units of the world? How do we think the child mortality rate will go down or the primary education rate will go up without the facilitating action of parents?

All that calls for **systematic mainstreaming of family issue as minimum across sustainable development goals.**

It is important to share our experiences and gather the experiences of others during today's panel discussion as well at other UN forums to understand how vital the family unit is - towards accomplishing these goals.

**The family** is one of the main actors and a **primary agent of socialization.** Parents actively foster and assess child's talents, opinions and skills.

The **family unit** is the **center of a children and youth education**, for good or for bad. The powerful influence of the positive and supportive parental role in a child's and youth' education cannot be substituted by any other offering.

Obviously, the rights of children and youth for education, cultural development, recreation, health, work etc., will be implemented in different ways, depending on what social, behavioral norms, values and traditions they acquire in the family.

As we address gender equality and women's empowerment, families are **the agents of change to** resolve and **end discrimination**, encourage women education and the family's **model for gender complementarity** could be considered as the model of the world and teach the world the value of each gender.

Social relations and institutions underpin any efforts to create more equitable and sustainable societies. We believe that **the family** is one of the basic societal institutions that play an **important role in achieving such social goals as poverty and inequality reduction, and enhancement of well-being of the society.**



The **household income**, according to some research, may be a **better prosperity indicator than business production** while **median incomes of families describe societal inequality better** than mean averages.

Some of the newest and most successful of today's technology corporations were started in family garages and basements often with moral and financial support of family members. **Growing family business** around the world is a vibrant part of many national economies and could be considered as an important **factor of prosperity of the society**.

**In other words, synergy of the strong family** based on positive human values, social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity of its members: mother and father, grandparents and children and youth **could produce an effect on the development of the community and society greater than the simple sum of their individual members' effects**.

Therefore I believe, that, **the family** should be considered as **one of the stakeholders of sustainable development** and adding the **family focus to the post-2015 development agenda** would signal commitment of the international community not only to the well-being of families but to the achievement of sustainable development goals **in a comprehensive manner** as well.

Member States and the UN system should promote appropriate actions to meet the needs not only of individual members of the family but also of the family as social institution, **contributing to** overall development efforts.

#### Challenges facing the institution of the family

Despite considerable achievements in shaping family-centered policies at the national level the institution of the family, is clearly facing a number of **challenges** that will **require attention** of the governments and international community **in the years ahead**. Many of these can be addressed through creative initiatives at the national policy levels; others will require collaborative action of Member States, the UN system and civil society.

Among the factors negatively affecting the role of the family as primary agent of socialisation, and important role of parents in the education of children is **substitution of the family by other agents** such as **mass media, virtual community, peer groups**, which can have both constructive and destructive impact on the socialization and education of the young person.

Value of procreation as one of the main family values is becoming uncompetitive compared with such values as career, money, success, leisure.

Today in many countries the institution of **the family** has been deeply **wounded by a culture of divorce**, the widespread practice of **non-marital sexual cohabitation**, habitualisation of **non-marital childbearing** and other practices.

In general all these factors dramatically lead to **depopulation**.

According to the UN development forecast in 2050, 147 out of 196 **countries will face a lowest fertility rate** in the family: one child per one woman.

Obviously, the consequences of the **global depopulation** will affect the working population in the first place and could **provoke deep socio-economic crisis in the world**.

Dangerous social and economic consequences of this are obvious: it is the family (not the state) that generates the next generation of society.

Without consistent efforts to sustain and uphold the institution of the family even global sustainable development is put into question.

**Failure to** highlight today the need to **ensure respect for the family values** in the world **will lead to the decay** of this fundamental social institution and will have a detrimental effect on health of the society and the **very future of humankind**.

#### Belarus' priorities and the family-oriented policy

In recent years **Belarus** like many other countries in European region and beyond also **faced the perspective of depopulation**. It negatively affected economic situation and could lead to serious consequence in terms of overall security of the nation.

In order to foster and protect the institution of the family and to promote the family values in society the **Government has launched a large-scale programme of measures**.

The main objectives of the national family-oriented policy are:

- to **rebuild culture of the family** in Belarus' society;
- to create a **model of the prosperous and successful family with two or more children**;



○ to create socio-economic, legal and other conditions for **improvement of well-being** of the family;

○ to provide financial and **targeted social assistance** to **large** families and **young** families.

As a result of such policy more children have been born in traditional two parents families. According to public research almost 70 percent of young people prefer family lifestyle and family with more than one child.

We believe that **empowerment of families** must be **based on** the **principle of partnership** between the state and other stakeholders.

**Government provides** a positive **framework** enabling local communities and **civil society** to be actively involved in promoting the family lifestyle and responsible parenthood among youth and fostering the family values in society in general.

#### Rebuilding the family culture

**Public-private partnerships at the national levels**, including nongovernmental institutions such as NGOs, church and media as well as **joint efforts** of the Member **States and the UN** entities will be essential **to promote the institution of the family and rebuild the family culture in society**.

Rebuilding the family culture is not impossible, but it will require a very special effort. It will require concrete measures to prepare men and women more adequately for **family-building**, to promote the family values among youth as a basis of strong family relationships and assist those who are dealing with problems.

Creation of such partnerships also requires **open and honest discussion** in the UN and other international fora of the issue of the family and recognising the family issue as one of the most topical on the international agenda.

In this connection on behalf of the delegation of Belarus to the Commission for Social Development I would like to make a **practical proposal to include agenda item "Family and development" to the ECOSOC agenda** and further to consider this issue at the **high level segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC**.

This determination of fighting for the family that we call for is not a matter of simply 'going through the motions'. It is about 'going an extra mile'. Let us walk this mile together.

I thank you.