



Information Note

"Families - Agents and Beneficiaries of Development and Social "Progress"

Background

The International Day of Families' sixth year anniversary is being observed on 15 May 2000. Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 47/237 of 20 September 1993, the annual observance of the International Day of Families reflects the importance that the international community attaches to families as basic units of societies as well as its concern regarding their situation around the world.

The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families as basic units of society, as well as, to promote appropriate action. The Day can become a powerful mobilizing factor on behalf of families in all countries which avail themselves of this opportunity and demonstrate support of family issues appropriate to each society. The observance of the International Day of Families also offers a valuable opportunity for families to demonstrate their solidarity in the quest for better standards of life. The international themes for 1996-2000, were suggested by the Fourth Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on the International Year of the Family.

Governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, religious groups and individuals can promote a better understanding of the functions and problems, strengths and needs of families by organizing observances of the International Day of Families. The Day also provides an opportunity to increase knowledge of the economic, cultural, social and demographic processes affecting families.

The Family Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development, within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, is the focal point for Family matters in the United Nations system. As such, it is offering the following suggestions for the observance of the Day.

Observing the Day at the National Level

In preparing for the Day, Governments may wish to use 15 May as an occasion to initiate family-oriented projects, entry into force of family legislation or starting discussion on family policies in the country (special conferences, cultural festivals, special announcements and other similar events).

The support and active involvement of the media in its programme is central to the success of the Day. Because the Day is a very time-limited event, it lends itself well to an intensive and focused media campaign. The official logo for the International Year of the Family has become a permanent fixture of the International Day of Families, and represents a useful instrument for such action.

The active engagement of the non-governmental organizations is instrumental in the success of the Day's observance. For this International Day of Families and successive Days, it is vital that non-governmental organizations once again fully mobilize their invaluable substantive expertise, organizational potential, grass-root outreach as well as human and material resources. Governments should seek the active partnership of non-governmental organizations and provide necessary support for the activities of the voluntary sector. Partnerships among public, private and volunteer organizations that serve families is encouraged.

Suggestions for Observing the Day at the Local Level

Drawing on past experiences, the following are some examples of the kinds of programmes which could be undertaken for the Day's observance:

- Family and community forums and workshops, to explore issues and offer options for strengthening families. Forums can also provide information on family support services, such as counseling, financial assistance, advisory and information services.
- Special events in educational settings such as parent/teacher gatherings or student activities to highlight relevant issues and questions related to families.
- Special family fares or free family tickets on public transportation, free entrance for families to museums, exhibitions, concerts and other cultural attractions, and other incentives to give additional emphasis to the Day and to facilitate the involvement of families.
- Official proclamations of the Day by mayors and other local authorities.
- Proclamations of "Family Week".
- Production of documentary films or promotional vignettes on families to be shown on national and local television stations.
- Arranging special exhibitions of publications, photographs, children's drawings, posters and other materials on families.
- Organization of essay competitions on the family.
- Launching family-related publications.
- Coverage of the Day's events by the news media, including television, radio and newspapers. The latter could also carry feature articles and special supplements on the Day, as well as a series on family issues.
- Press conferences by research institutions and others concerned with family issues can raise public awareness of priority concerns.