

International Day of Families 15 May 2008

"Fathers and Families: Responsibilities and Challenges"

Information Note

The International Day of Families is 15 May every year. Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 47/237 of 20 September 1993, this annual observance reflects the importance the international community attaches to families around the world. The theme for 2008 is "Fathers and Families: Responsibilities and Challenges". Please see the Background Note for more information on this theme.

The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to the family as the basic unit of society as well as to promote appropriate action to recognize and promote the importance of families. The Day can become an opportunity for all countries to demonstrate support to families.

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

The Programme on the Family of the Division for Social Policy and Development, within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is the focal point for family matters in the United Nations system. In this function, it offers the following suggestions for the observance of the Day.

Observing the Day at the National Level

Governments may wish to use 15 May as an occasion to hold special family events, initiate family-oriented projects, enter into force family legislation or begin discussion on family policies in the country through special conferences, cultural festivals, special announcements or other similar events.

The support and active involvement of the media can be made part 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 also very important for the success of the Day's observance. For the International Day of Families, it is vital that non-governmental organizations mobilize their 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 should be 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:

- Official proclamations of the Day by mayors and other local authorities.
- Proclamations of "Family Week".
- Arranging special exhibitions of publications, photographs, children's drawings, posters and other materials on families.
- 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 can highlight families, such as parent/teacher gatherings or student activities.
- Special family fares or free family tickets on public transportation and other incentives to give additional emphasis to the Day and to facilitate the involvement of families.
- Free entrance for families to museums, exhibitions, concerts and other cultural attractions.
- Production of documentary films or promotional vignettes on families to be shown on national and local television stations.
- Launching family-related publications.
- Organization of essay competitions on the family.
- Press conferences by research institutions and others concerned with family issues can raise public awareness of priority concerns.
- 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.

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