

Fourth UN Consultative Meeting of Regional and International NGOs on the Family



Family Unit
DSPD / DESA, UN Secretariat
New York, 11 February 2002

Introduction

1. The fourth United Nations Consultative Meeting of Regional and International NGOs on the Family was held on 11 February 2002 in New York. The Meeting was held in conjunction with the 40th session of the Commission for Social Development, held from 11-21 February 2002. The NGO Consultative Meeting was organized by the Family Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The aim of the Meeting was to exchange views on joint cooperation with respect to the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

2. The Meeting was attended by major NGOs dealing with the family [New York NGO Committee on the Family, Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, International Federation for Family Development, Focus on the Family (Canada) Association, Parents Forum, Foundation PRODEFA, Baha'i International Community, and Family Support Federation of Argentina]. The list of participants is contained in Annex 1. The Agenda is contained in Annex 2.

3. The Meeting was opened by the Chief of the Family Unit, Mr. Amr Ghaleb, who welcomed the participants. In his opening statement, he stated that the joint cooperative efforts would enhance the objectives of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The objectives of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family are: (a) Increase awareness of family issues among Governments as well as in the private sector; (b) Strengthen 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; and (f) Improve the collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families.

4. He noted that as the lead entity for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, the Family Unit has promoted the message that families are the economic and social engines of society and has highlighted the positive effects that families have on their respective societies through various reports, communications and meetings. The Family Unit has promoted the development of common ground and common understanding in constituencies viewing family issues from different perspectives. Mr. Ghaleb underlined a three-pronged strategy for the Group: assistance in the establishment of national committees; joint collaboration and emphasis on identifying priorities and a focus on concrete activities.

5. Mr. Ghaleb reaffirmed that activities for the Tenth Anniversary are to be carried out in three phases: (a) preparatory phase (2002-2003) to set up and mobilize organizational structures, identify priority issues, and focus on measures and activities to prepare for the observance; (b) the observance phase (2004), when activities will take place and initiatives planned by Governments will be undertaken to observe the Anniversary; and (c) the follow-up phase, during which evaluation of progress made and obstacles encountered will be undertaken at all levels.

Observations

6. The Participants reported on and discussed their various activities and programmes in the field of the family. They exchanged information on activities in light of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The overviews presented by the participants underlined the importance of the objectives of the International Year of the Family such as: (a) Increase

awareness of family issues at all levels; develop a better understanding of the functions and problems of families; (b) Strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families; and (c) Stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families.

7. The participants referred to major family concerns and issues, which are of interest to their own organizations such as education, parenting public health, family policies, capacity building, family impact consideration, family relationships, etc. It was underlined that non-governmental organizations continue to play an important role to improve the situation of families.

8. The Vienna NGO Committee has established a home page on the internet. It has also set up networks in various fields, which convey the idea of partnership. These networks would be used to update people. The Foundation PRODEFA will urge its partners to promote the anniversary. It would also do a study on families done by a professor from Spain. Baha'i International community emphasized the importance of its work with parents, in particular educating parents to strengthen the family. PARENTS FORUM mentioned its work in the area of emotional literacy. Its handbook in this field could be used by other organizations. The representative reported that there will be a conference on parents role in girls education, 24-27 June in Burkina Faso. The International Federation of Training and Development Organization mentioned its interest in work on the impact of technology on the family, especially its work with police organizations to address the issues related to traffic accidents. It has high interest in global road safety and awareness campaign to address traffic accidents. Family Association (Canada) stated its interest in awareness amongst Governments on family issues. It is also concerned about family disintegration and the strengthening of marital bonds. The North American Region International Federation for Parent Education said it will work to increase awareness of the Tenth Anniversary. Its newsletter will carry information on the Tenth Anniversary.

9. The participants welcomed the fact that consultations between the Family Unit and non-governmental organizations are continuing with regard to the ongoing United Nations programme on the Family and the development of NGO programmes for the Tenth Anniversary. The Family Unit suggested that the participants send to their respective Headquarters a letter on the Tenth Anniversary and provide the Family Unit with their positive responses. NGOs could assist in the establishment of NCC's. The Family Unit will provide NGOs with a list of the Governments that have sponsored IYF resolutions.

10. It was reaffirmed that the follow-up to the International Year of the Family must be sustained by effective actions at all levels by Governments, non-governmental organizations, other organizations of civil society, the private sector and individuals.

Conclusions

11. It was affirmed that this Regional and International NGO Consultations was useful and that the Group should continue to meet and address a much-needed topic: modalities of cooperation. It was agreed that: (a) the Group must have a better awareness of individual and collective objectives of each of the member organizations; (b) the Group must focus collectively on national capacity building in the area of families; and (c) the Group must have a better understanding of the UN intergovernmental processes.

12. The Group agreed to:

- (a) Encourage Governments and NGOs to set up mechanisms to stimulate, plan and coordinate activities by the appropriate governmental and non-governmental bodies and agencies. Also, NGOs could encourage their organization to undertake, as part of their activities for 2004, a comprehensive review of policies concerning families, and of services for families;
- (b) NGOs and the Family Unit could encourage broad and extensive discussions at meetings of relevant inter-governmental bodies and NGO structures and bodies on the Tenth Anniversary;
- (c) NGOs could give wide support to the Tenth Anniversary, and specifically to those aspects of the Year that are of particular relevance to their particular programmes. Identification of those aspects is vital;
- (d) Organization of seminars on IYF topics to increase in-depth knowledge and information about family policy development and mega-trends assessments at the national, regional and global levels is important; and
- (e) Mr. Crowley will work on an outline on “what has civil society done for families since 1994” and distribute it through the Family Unit by 15 April 2002.
- (f) Priority issues are family-policy development, parental roles and family-support systems, HIV/AIDS and its impact on families; the family as a system; a holistic approach to families, fatherhood, the girl-child; poverty and its effect on families; etc.

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AGENDA

1. Welcome Statement by the Family Unit
2. Approval of the Draft Agenda
3. Exchange of information on Tenth Anniversary activities
by Participants
4. Discussion on joint collaboration for the Tenth Anniversary
of the International Year of the Family
5. Closing