

Protection and Assistance

IFFD and the International Year of the Family

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As we move forward with the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, we renew and strengthen our efforts within the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) in connection with this observance.

From the outset, our strong belief in the unique importance of the International Year has guided our efforts. Reflecting on the relatively subdued commemoration of its tenth anniversary in 2004, we decided to increase our commitment to subsequent milestones, especially the twentieth and now the thirtieth anniversary.

It's important to reiterate the foundational premise articulated in the United Nations resolution that gave rise to the International Year: the recognition of the need to provide "the greatest possible protection and assistance to the family" [1]. This principle serves as the cornerstone of our collective efforts and highlights the essence of our work.

The first principle underlined in the International Year of the Family proclamation in 1989 was that "the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to families so that they may fully assume their responsibilities within the community, pursuant to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and other legal instruments.

This principle has served as the cornerstone of our work at IFFD throughout the preparations and celebration of the 30th anniversary this year. We organized our World Congress and 27 additional events worldwide, alongside the promotion of a Civil Society Declaration. Moving forward, it will remain central to our efforts as we embark on new structural and professional developments.

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The mandate to extend attention — protection and assistance— to families goes beyond mere 'family-friendly' gestures.

Instead, it embodies a commitment to genuine justice and equity. In fact, I've often expressed reservations about the term 'family-friendly' as it risks trivializing the profound social implications of family-focused policies. Understanding the pivotal role of the family in social development compels us to view their well-being not as a matter of personal preference but as a matter of justice and equity.

Promotion of human rights and freedom

As we now look forward to the upcoming Second World Social Summit [2], convened in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration, the appeal to social justice takes on paramount importance. The connection between attention to families and the promotion of human rights and freedom is undeniable.

Tragically, many individuals continue to suffer violations of their fundamental rights due to the disregard for the sanctity of the family unit, as highlighted in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [3]. Reflecting on the global panorama, it becomes evident that the right to found a family remains precarious for many, especially marginalized groups such as women and youth.

Thus, it is understood that the resolution calling for the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary represents a welcome opportunity to maintain momentum in raising awareness of the objectives of the International Year.

A key point in our stance is the recognition of the interaction between the objectives of the Copenhagen Declaration and those of the International Year, particularly in eradicating poverty, expanding productive employment and reducing unemployment, and promoting social integration" [4]. These dimensions underscore the multifaceted nature of that attention to family well-being, which deserves concerted action.

In summary, our commitment to advancing the well-being of families globally is based on a holistic approach that addresses their diverse needs and challenges. As we navigate the complexities of contemporary society, we remain steadfast in our pursuit of justice, equity, and empowerment for families worldwide.

Present challenges for families

As is well known, in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary, the General Assembly outlined four significant megatrends, spanning the intersection of family dynamics with emerging technologies, patterns of urbanization and migration, demographic shifts, and the pressing issue of climate change [5].

Consequently, recognizing the need to address these megatrends comprehensively, especially amid the challenges posed by the pandemic, we initiated online focus groups dedicated to each of these megatrends with the collaboration of experts and practitioners from all over the world. The aim has been to create informative content that enriches not only our educational programs but also equips families with practical knowledge and recommendations.

The recent IFFD World Congress held in the Philippines, specifically in Cebu, has attracted over 1,300 delegates, underscoring the global resonance of our work. During this gathering, we personally reaffirmed the profound scope of families' search for guidance and innovative solutions in these various areas. Conversations during the Congress highlighted a notable gap in understanding the connection between family dynamics and climate change, for example. This underscores the importance of educational initiatives to bridge this knowledge gap.

Additionally, we have actively worked on convening a series of United Nations Expert Group Meetings of regional and global significance. Thus, we have collaborated and actively participated in a meeting of experts on the Arab region in Cairo, in a

meeting of Latin American experts in Mexico, in another on North America in Orlando, in another on Europe in Torun. We have also just had the last one observed so far, with experts from 12 Asian countries in Kuala Lumpur.

In summary, at IFFD we have organized up to now 28 events around this 30th-anniversary observance. Furthermore, we extend an invitation to collaborate with us on the upcoming events scheduled for the remainder of the year or some new ones.

These initiatives may include both the aforementioned expert meetings and other events to raise awareness of the fundamental role of families in social progress.

Drawing on past experiences, we emphasize the critical importance of prioritizing quality over quantity in such endeavors. A notable example of this principle occurred last year when we deliberated organizing an event in Paris aimed at influencing the social discourse preceding this year's celebration. After careful consideration, we chose to convene a select group of influential figures such as journalists, politicians, and social leaders. This resulted in a substantial three-hour dialogue similar to the present one, shedding light on key issues and gaining valuable insights.

The Civil Society Declaration

But we didn't stop there. Since 2019, we have invited all non-governmental organizations of civil society wishing to join us in drafting a new Civil Society Declaration, which has been produced over these years and is now a reality, with many organizations from around the world joining.

Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the instrumental contributions of various organizations towards the formulation of the Civil Society Declaration. Prominent collaborators have included Generations United from the US, the Hungarian Association of Large Families, the International Family Institute of Doha, the European Home-Based Parent and Caregiver Organization, the Swedish HARO organization, and the European Confederation of Large Families.

In essence, our primary objective has been to articulate the familial expectations of political entities at different levels, particularly within the framework of the four identified megatrends. Through these concerted efforts, we strive to advocate for policies that resonate with the needs and aspirations of families worldwide.

Therefore, I will outline the eleven points that encapsulate our recommendations. While a comprehensive elaboration of these points is beyond the scope of this discourse due to the expansive nature of the Declaration, I will provide a succinct summary.

1. Encourage and assist open communication between parents and children, fostering resilience and good use of technology, including awareness about online risks.
2. Address the intergenerational digital gap among all family members to design and implement policies and programs for solidarity, recognizing interdependence, ensuring equal educational access, building mentorship schemes among generations, and promoting positive interactions and intra-family relations.
3. Promote the use of new technologies in flexible work arrangements such as teleworking, through public and private services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, enabling families to fulfill their care responsibilities.
4. Develop strategies to face the impact of climate change on families by assessing challenges regarding food security, housing, energy, and health through family strengthening, networks, and parenting programs.
5. Recognize the benefits of the right to family reunification and establish safe remittances for migrants and their families, addressing context-specific needs and requirements for mothers, fathers, and caregivers.
6. Plan and implement family-responsive urban spaces that are inclusive, safe, resilient, healthy, affordable, and sustainable for families to thrive.

7. Promote initiatives on early childhood development by allowing parents and primary caregivers to spend more time bonding with their children, providing better access to health and child development services, affordable childcare, parental leaves, and other effective ways to cultivate children's potential and improve their wellbeing.
8. Develop, invest in, and implement programs for family strengthening and parenting education, emphasizing positive parenting to prevent corporal punishment and domestic violence.
9. Support the role of the family during the social inclusion process of young people transitioning into the labor market, preventing the intergenerational cycle of poverty through practical initiatives such as housing programs, professional experience, basic skills training, social protection coverage, access to financial resources, and adequate working conditions.
10. Recognize, protect, and value the socio-economic contribution of unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring the transfer of cultural and ethical values between generations.
11. Foster healthy and active aging, promote intergenerational solidarity, meet the needs of the elderly in vulnerable situations, and raise awareness of the role of grandparents in the family and their value for society as a whole.

In conclusion, these eleven points encapsulate the urgent needs facing our societies today, underscoring the imperative for concerted action to address these challenges. We have a well-founded hope that the commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family will serve as a catalyst for progress in these efforts, heralding a future marked by greater social cohesion and family well-being.

This is why we've made a strong commitment to focus increasingly on training young people in advocating for families through courses and other sustainable activities. Our goal is to ensure a more scientifically and professionally equipped future generation capable of addressing the numerous challenges facing European and global families, without getting bogged down in unnecessary controversies.

Recently, we gave the annual IFFD Award to a Korean civil society institution, the Blue Tree Foundation, which is highly dedicated to youth work. I'd like to conclude by sharing a definition mentioned by their president during their acceptance speech: "sustainability must contain the vivid memory of yesterday, the critical reflection on today, and the achievable dream for tomorrow."

It's this blend of past experiences, present insights, and future optimism that will propel us forward with imagination, renewed vigor, and unwavering confidence.

And we invite you to join us on this journey!

[1] A/RES/44/82 (1989). Available [here](#).

[2] A/78/L.39 (2024) Available [here](#).

[3] Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Available [here](#).

[4] Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (1995). Available [here](#).

[5] A/78/61 (2022). Available [here](#).

[6] Civil Society Declaration for the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Available [here](#).