



## **The Family in the United Nations**

### **Statement by the World Congress of Families**

[www.worldcongress.org](http://www.worldcongress.org)

The family, as the only group unit recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as having rights, “is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”<sup>1</sup>

The family thus exists prior to the State, which is obligated to protect the family as the keystone of human rights and the irreplaceable foundation of civilization.

Accordingly, international commitments repeatedly address the nature and role of the family, beginning with its formation based on “the right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family”<sup>2</sup> in which “husband and wife should be equal partners.”<sup>3</sup>

The family thereby provides “the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children,” who, “for the full and harmonious development of... [their] personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.”<sup>4</sup>

Governments should “develop policies and laws that better support the family,”<sup>5</sup> and are urged to analyze policies and programs to assess “their impact on family well-being and conditions.”<sup>6</sup>

In a broader sense, “Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other actors of civil society” are encouraged to “design, implement and promote family friendly policies and services.”<sup>7</sup>

So essential is the family that it is “entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support”<sup>8</sup> and must be accorded “the widest possible protection and assistance.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 16(3).

<sup>2</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 23.2.

<sup>3</sup> Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Principle 9; World Summit for Social Development, 80; United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), 31.

<sup>4</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble; and see World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 5.2(a).

<sup>6</sup> World Summit for Social Development, 27(a).

<sup>7</sup> Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, IV.B, chapeau, and 82(d).

<sup>8</sup> World Summit for Social Development, 80; Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Principle 9; Beijing Platform for Action, 29; A World Fit for Children, 15.

<sup>9</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 10.1.