



Oral Statement

53rd Session of the Commission for Social Development

Thanks very much, Madame Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The past months have been a very important time for our Federation, as we have been able to increase once more the number of our Family Enrichment courses across the five continents. We are, once again, delighted and amazed by the incredible dedication of our volunteers. The increase in child-rearing know-how and committed love is reflected in the renewed optimism felt by people attending the courses, as the international community becomes increasingly aware of the importance of having solid and sustainable families.

And we have also been very active in the preparations and celebrations for the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, working closely with the United Nations DESA Focal Point to organize different events and being part of other initiatives, as the Declaration of the Civil Society or the website family-2014-dot-org, now replaced and enriched under the domain family-perspective-dot-org. As the Secretary General has said in his report about this observance, “the Federation actively promoted the objectives of the anniversary, mobilizing support for its declaration and organizing a number of awareness-raising events throughout the year. It also carried out several communications projects to promote a family perspective among governments and international organizations, including a website listing events organized worldwide in observance of the twentieth anniversary and issuing research papers focusing on topics relating to the themes of the anniversary.”

For this fifty-third Session of the Commission for Social Development, we want to focus on the contents of the Sustainable Development Goals, as the final deadline for its definition is approaching. We have decided to focus four of the proposed Goals to reaffirm or suggest the need for families to be mentioned in some of their Targets, keeping in mind the priority theme for the Commission on Social Development - “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world”.

We know that interest in well-being issues has tended to focus during the past years on the welfare of children rather than on the well-being of families. But growing policy interest in children’s welfare has led to efforts to improve the ways that well-being is measured more

holistically, within the family as a unit. There is also a growing recognition of intergenerational dialogue and solidarity. They mostly relate to reciprocal care, support and exchange of material and non-material resources between family members, typically younger and older generations. But what are the tools to measure the effectiveness of government policies in promoting the totality of family well-being? That should be the key question to answer for that goal.

Despite social changes and economic crisis, evidence shows that family bonds remain strong and family members assist one another through financial support and care. In both developed and developing countries, older people, especially the younger-old, are more likely to provide financial support to younger family members than they are to receive it, even though there may be a perception that younger generations are faced with the burden of taking care of the older ones.

However, demographic and social changes in the last three decades have resulted in families that are sometimes more diverse and complex in their structure. More couples are becoming parents while cohabiting without getting married, though the risk of parental separation among this group is higher. Also, divorce rates among married parents have remained relatively constant and the number of stepfamilies has grown.

As a consequence, children now have a higher probability of experiencing parental separation, having a lone parent or being part of a stepfamily. The impact this experience has on them should be a key issue for policymakers since although the government wants to support stable relationships between parents, where they break down there is a responsibility to lessen negative effects for children as much as possible.

That is why it families have to be helped now more than ever before and, at the same time, they can be real promoters of development and well-being for all.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson.

New York, 6 February 2015.