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Oral Statement – 54th Session of the Commission for Social Development (2016)

Mr. Chairman, 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 in 66 countries. Also, more than 1,800 delegates from 43 countries attended our 19th International Congress in Mexico City last October, to emphasize that families have a crucial role in social development and to confirm our commitment to help families worldwide and to contribute to universal peace and respect of human rights.

Mr. Chairman, we are convinced that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can remove barriers to the active participation of families in society, especially decisions on investments in health, housing, poverty, and education. It can also recognize the social and economic contributions that families make to society through the time, effort and money families invest in their members—children, youth, the aging, and those who are unable to care for themselves. But we also see that these contributions are often taken for granted. There are still too few incentives or supports to families for the benefits they provide to society and too little discussion of political instruments to empower families, even though we know helping families means in return helping all those who are part of families at the same time—women, children, youth, and the ageing.

In any case, we consider ‘mainstreaming’ is not the right concept, because families are already mainstreamed, they are part of every society in many ways, all societal issues relate to family and family needs, either directly or indirectly. You can mainstream a new perspective or a new approach, but not the natural and fundamental group unit of society. Consequently, reach the SDGs in a more effective way, we are arguing that we will have to do a better job in leaving no family behind.

In that spirit, we suggest to focus the following specific aspects:

1. **Child Poverty.** A promising approach to child poverty should be a two-generation one. Instead of focusing in children and parents individually, a family approach should be considered to simultaneously provide high-quality programs for children and their parents.
2. **Population Ageing.** Active ageing allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care as long as they need it.
3. **Healthy Lives.** Research shows that a family-centered approach to health care can improve the quality of care and help curb rising costs, from prevention to chronic care.
4. **Quality Education.** When policies and programs are family-focused, they often are an efficient investment of public resources for promoting youth school success and an effective means for achieving lifelong learning.
5. **Unpaid Domestic Work and Care.** Household production constitutes an important aspect of economic activity and ignoring it may lead to incorrect inferences about levels and changes in well-being.
6. **Domestic Violence.** Gender equality and gender stereotypes, like many other values and norms, are learned in the family, and it is there where violence should be first prevented.
7. **And finally, Youth Unemployment.** Our societies are unable of integrating young people, leading to situations which cause young people to stop looking for a job or to work in unsuitable conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.