International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014
UNECE Regional Conference - Enabling choices: population priorities for the 21st century
1-2 July 2013, Palais des Nations, Geneva
Oral Statement

Thank you, Mr. President. Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
The International Federation for Family Development is a non-governmental, independent, and non-profit federation that has promoted initiatives in favour of the family in sixty-five countries of the five continents for more than forty years now, benefiting more than fifty thousand parents every year through our Family Enrichment Programs.

From our experience, we have repeatedly proposed to set empowering families as part of the development goals, to ensure that the time, effort and money families invest in their children find social, economic, political and legal incentive by the society benefitting from them.

As the Secretary General mentioned at the International Conference on ‘People’s Empowerment and Development’ [5 August 2012], the “long-standing efforts (of United Nations) to protect human rights, promote job creation and obtain improved access to water, sanitation, energy, education and health care all have empowerment at their core — the goal of ensuring that people have the opportunities they need to live better lives in dignity and security. But we are also exploring new frontiers of empowerment. With the establishment of UN-Women, the effort to empower the world’s women and achieve gender equality received an important boost. We are also focusing greater attention on empowering the next generation through our work on youth. By looking at empowerment and development together, you are focusing welcome attention on issues that matter most in the lives of families and their communities — opportunities for decent work, the chance to enjoy basic services and participate fully in the political life of their countries.”

Mr. President,

We feel that adding families to the agenda would be another step forward, because families are the initial and basic environments in which gender equality and promotion of youth can and should be learned and practiced. As the last session of the Commission for Social Development has stated, “equality between women and men and respect for all of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family well-being and to society at large, (and) children, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.” [A/66/62–E/2011/4]

While considering the ‘diversity of family forms and the provision of socioeconomic support to the family’, we are promoting different studies around the five continents, following what the Secretary General has mentioned in one of his Reports: “Although there is no explicit family framework at the international level, many Governments recognize families as agents of development and actively pursue family-oriented social policies at the national level.” In fact, over the years specific family-friendly policies have gained ground. Among them, non-contributory social transfer programmes, including conditional cash transfers, targeting mostly poor families, have become a core element of poverty reduction strategies in many developing countries. Such interventions have been credited with a reduction in the intergenerational transmission of poverty and better educational and health outcomes for children. These positive outcomes led to the growing popularity of similar programmes and demonstrated the value of focusing on family-centred policies to achieve development goals.” [A/66/62–E/2011/4]

Mr. President,

From our experience, it is only within that context that the right approach to ‘Sexual and reproductive health over the life course’ can be reached. Parents have not only the right, but also the duty to give to their children, not only the reasons for the sexual education a human person deserves, but also to show it with their behaviour and personal choices. That way we will be certainly “allow every individual to make free choices and achieve the full of their capacities,” which is the best way to define empowerment in our opinion.

“The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, coming (in 2014) on the eve of the target year of the Millennium Development Goals, gives us an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development” [A/66/62–E/2011/4] and we are trying to take advantage of it in different ways, such as organizing raise awareness events and expert group meeting in Europe, America and Africa. We expect to collect enough evidence to make some significant contributions to the Cairo+20 Conference, too.

Thank you, Mr. President.