Parenting education and child well-being

The new United Nations resolution on family-oriented policies

1 December 2019

The draft resolution was introduced by the Group of 77 and China, joined by Belarus, Uzbekistan and Turkey. [1]

The representative of the State of Palestine, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, highlighted the spirit of cooperation and collaboration shown by all member states, which enabled the agreement on important issues addressed in the resolution.

After the resolution was approved by consensus, the representative of Finland, on behalf of the European Union, attached great importance to family related issues, noting the actions taken by the European Commission on these issues since 1980’s, addressing parental leave, reconciliation of family and work life and improving the living conditions of families in vulnerable situations. Also, the United States stressed the irreplaceable primacy of parents and family they create which is the foundational institution of society.

All member states appreciated the role of the State of Qatar as a long-standing facilitator of the document and their leadership in accomplishing consensus. [2]

We reproduce in this paper the approved text [3], with some notes on the previous Report of the Secretary General supporting it [4].

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly approved the draft resolution titled ‘Follow-up to the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond’.

The proposal was approved without a vote on November 19th, 2019.

By its terms, the Assembly encourages Governments to invest in a variety of inclusive, family-oriented policies and programmes, as important tools for, inter alia, fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequality, promoting work-family balance and gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity, to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Information compiled by the International Organizations Department of the International Federation for Family Development.
General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions […] concerning the proclamation of, preparations for and observance of the International Year of the Family and its tenth and twentieth anniversaries,

Recognizing that the preparations for and observance of the International Year of the Family in 2014 provided a useful opportunity to continue to raise awareness of the objectives of the International Year for increasing cooperation on family issues at all levels and for undertaking concerted action to strengthen family-oriented policies and programmes as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development,

Recognizing also that the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes, especially those relating to family-oriented policies in the areas of poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational issues, with attention given to the rights and responsibilities of all family members, can contribute to ending poverty, ending hunger, ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being for all at all ages, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, ensuring better education outcomes for children, including early childhood development and education, enabling access to employment opportunities and decent work for parents and caregivers, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and eliminating all forms of violence, in particular against women and girls, and supporting the overall quality of life of families, including families in vulnerable situations, so that family members can realize their full potential, as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development,

The agreed language of family-oriented policies is meant to unify the various references to legislation with family perspective in their design, implementation, evaluation and follow-up. Since 2013 the term has been evolving and passing through some variations such as family friendly policies, family responsive legislation.

Some of these terms are still used in the UN-System and refer to similar or exactly the same type of policies. For example, UNICEF has launched an initiative called “Family Friendly Policies: It is about time”, while the Commission of the Status of Women has called upon the family responsive legislation in many documents. [5]

Acknowledging that the family-related provisions of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and their follow-up processes continue to provide policy guidance on ways to strengthen family-oriented components of policies and programmes as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development,

Recognizing the continuing efforts of Governments, the United Nations system, regional organizations and civil society, including academic institutions, to fulfil the objectives of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year at the national, regional and international levels,

Acknowledging that the International Year and its follow-up processes have served as catalysts for initiatives at the national and international levels, including family-oriented policies and programmes to reduce poverty and hunger and promote the well-being of all at all ages, and can boost development efforts, contribute to better outcomes for children and help break the intergenerational transfer of poverty in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Acknowledging also that strengthening intergenerational relations, through such measures as promoting intergenerational living arrangements and encouraging extended family members to live in close proximity to each other, has been found to promote the autonomy, security and well-being of children and older persons and that initiatives to promote involved and positive parenting and to support the role of grandparents have been found to be beneficial in advancing social integration and solidarity between generations, as well as in promoting and protecting the human rights of all family members,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General;

After the introduction (1-4) the report elaborates on family trends as of: poverty and social protection (5-9), work family balance and unpaid work (10-14) and families and inclusive societies (15-22). The Report highlights family policies and programmes (23-24) tackling sensitive areas as: institutional frameworks (25-30), poverty, hunger and social exclusion reduction (31-45), work-family balance and empowerment of women and girls (46-57), social exclusion (58-61), parenting education (62-67), research and awareness raising (68-71).

It also compiles the contributions from the United Nations system such as: United Nations Children’s Fund (72-76), United Nations Population Fund (77-79), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (80-82), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (83-86), brings into consideration the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities (87-92) and the Civil Society activities (93-106).

Among the conclusions (107-114), attention is brought to family-oriented policies and programmes designed to address specific Sustainable Development Goal targets often have positive spill over effects on the achievement of other Goals and their targets. For example, poverty reduction strategies focusing on families contribute to reaching health and education targets, given that families have more resources to invest in children’s health and education. In fact, the cross-cutting nature of family policies helps to achieve many development goals simultaneously.
2. Encourages Governments to continue their efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes and to develop strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities to address national priorities relating to family issues and to step up their efforts, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to implement those objectives, in particular in the areas of fighting poverty and hunger and ensuring the well-being of all at all ages;

3. Invites Member States to invest in a variety of inclusive, family-oriented policies and programmes, which take into account the different needs and expectations of families, as important tools for, inter alia, fighting poverty, social exclusion and inequality, promoting work-family balance and gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity, to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

4. Encourages Member States to continue to enact inclusive and responsive family-oriented policies for poverty reduction in line with the main objectives of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year, to confront family poverty and social exclusion, recognizing the multidimensional aspects of poverty, focusing on inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for all, health and well-being for all at all ages, full and productive employment, decent work, social security, livelihoods and social cohesion, including through gender- and age-sensitive social protection systems and measures, such as child allowances for parents and pension benefits for older persons, and to ensure that the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of all family members are respected;

5. Also encourages Member States to promote work-family balance as conducive to the well-being of children, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, inter alia, through improving working conditions for workers with family responsibilities, expanding flexible working arrangements, including through the use of new information and communications technologies, and providing and/or expanding leave arrangements, such as maternity leave and paternity leave, and adequate social security benefits for both women and men, taking appropriate steps to ensure that they are not discriminated against when availing themselves of such benefits and promoting men’s awareness and use of such opportunities, for their children’s developmental benefit and as a means of enabling women to increase their participation in the labour market;

6. Further encourages Member States to take appropriate steps to provide affordable, accessible and good-quality childcare and care facilities for children and other dependants and measures promoting the equal sharing of household responsibilities between women and men, recognizing, reducing and redistributing women’s and girls’ disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and fully engaging men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change and as strategic partners and allies in this regard;

This year’s resolution calls upon the design of employment policies that favour women’s access to labour markets should be accompanied by measures equalizing the unequal share of time spent by men on unpaid work. In particular, to lower the burden of women’s unpaid work by promoting men’s role as caregivers and their participation in household duties (114).

7. Encourages Member States to invest in family-oriented policies and programmes that enhance strong intergenerational interactions, such as intergenerational living arrangements, parenting education, including for family caregivers, and support for grandparents, including grandparents who are primary caregivers, in an effort to promote inclusive urbanization, active ageing, intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion;

8. Also encourages Member States to consider providing universal and gender-sensitive social protection systems, which are key to ensuring poverty reduction, including, as appropriate, targeted cash transfers for families in vulnerable situations, as can be the case of families headed by a single parent, in particular those headed by women, and which are most effective in reducing poverty when accompanied by other measures, such as providing access to basic services, high-quality education and health-care services;

9. Further encourages Member States to provide legal identity, including birth registration, in accordance with international law, including relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and/or relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and death registration, as a means of, inter alia, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development;

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and it is noted by adopting some language from it. In many countries, the first step into developing family-oriented policies is by providing legal identity and including birth and death registration to design, implement and evaluate better policies targeted to all members of the family.

10. Encourages Member States to invest in parenting education as a tool to enhance children’s well-being and prevent all forms of violence against children, including through promoting non-violent forms of discipline;

Since last year, parenting education was included in the resolution and it has resonated in many countries as a preventive measure of skill building to improve child well being. It can be delivered in family and community settings and tend to be more effective when challenges faced by families are addressed at the same time. Some examples of policy implementation can be found in Belarus, Burkina Faso, Jamaica,
11. Also encourages Member States to improve the collection and use of data, disaggregated by age, sex and other relevant criteria, for the formulation and evaluation of family-oriented policies and programmes to effectively respond to the challenges faced by families and harness their contribution to development;

This provision on the resolution is ground breaking when it comes to assessing the impact of family-oriented policies. Studies that focus on cross-cutting issues, such as contributions to evidence to support monitoring and meeting the family-relevant Sustainable Development Goals or more direct evaluations of various family-orientated policies and programmes. Examples as of Azerbaijan or Portugal should be taken in consideration while targeting the family as a conduit for social change. (68-71).

12. Encourages Governments to support the United Nations trust fund on family activities;

The Trust Fund on Family Activities is crucial for research, awareness raising, academic networking and advisory activities. Such activities have contributed to realizing the objectives of the mandate of the Division for Inclusive Social Development relating to the promotion of understanding and awareness of family issues by governments, civil society and the private sector. However, there has been no financial contribution to the Fund in recent years and it will become necessary while facing the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

13. Encourages Member States to strengthen cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including United Nations entities, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector, in the development and implementation of relevant family-oriented policies and programmes;

14. Encourages further collaboration between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations entities, agencies, funds and programmes, as well as other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in the family field, as well as the enhancement of research efforts and awareness-raising activities relating to the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes;

15. Requests the focal point on the family of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to enhance collaboration with the regional commissions, funds and programmes, recommends that the roles of focal points within the United Nations system be reaffirmed, and invites Member States to increase technical cooperation efforts, consider enhancing the role of the regional commissions on family issues and continue to provide resources for those efforts, facilitate the coordination of national and international non-governmental organizations on family issues and enhance cooperation with all relevant stakeholders to promote family issues and develop partnerships in this regard;

16. Calls upon Member States and agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, in consultation with civil society and other relevant stakeholders, to continue to provide information on their activities, including on good practices at the national, regional and international levels, including the relevant United Nations forums, in support of the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes, to be included in the report of the Secretary-General;

17. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes by Member States and by agencies and bodies of the United Nations system and on the appropriate ways and means to observe the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2024;

This is a great opportunity to prepare the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and spur support from all Member States, UN-System and Civil Society. It has been proven that partnerships are always beneficial to address better the challenges and better strategies to support families worldwide.

18. Decides to consider the topic “Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes” at its seventy-fifth session under the sub-item entitled “Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family” of the item entitled “Social development”.

[1] The Group of 77 is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations, and the original number of members has increased to 134 countries since it was established in 1964. More information available at: http://www.g77.org/
[3] The draft resolution adopted by consensus by the General Assembly on November 19, 2019 can be found at: undocs.org/A/C.3/74/L.13/Rev.1

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