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## **Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The current digital revolution has accelerated the evolution of communication systems, while fostering the development of new production and relationship schemes. Traditional technological scenarios face new challenges, and cities find a new basis for urban and territorial competitiveness. At the same time, it is the citizen who should have the power to establish these new scenarios, and that is why we need to study the way in which people interact with these new hyper-technified cities. The information and communication technologies that manage and transform the cities and territories of the 21st century must be able to be analyzed and ordered in an intelligent way, studying their impact on the new social behaviors that shape urban spaces and redefine the way to relate among people, their cities and their territories.

Much has been said, written, reflected on and disseminated nowadays regarding the relationship that the city has with new technologies. There are even labels that try to define this relationship using a term that already implies something more than what it had originally reserved for itself: 'Smart'. This word, which initially only admitted the meaning of intelligence or ability, is already used at the beginning of this new millennium as a pronoun linked to everything that uses new information and communication technologies, as well as information technology, even in the form of management of data in a massive way (Big-Data). Due to the growing impact of these systems in urban environments, the Smart City concept appears. Thus, when trying to deepen on what elements constitute a Smart City, the definitions are wide and varied, and rarely include the citizen and families in an inclusive and holistic manner, but as a mere 'empowered user' thanks to the new technologies available.

Historically, cities have been an immense laboratory for trial and error, failure and success for urban and social development, and for this reason policymakers would have to use this new social laboratory to learn, formulate and test sustainable development policies and strategies for all.

On the other hand, nowadays the global tends to make the local disappear, with cloned proposals that spread throughout the planet, understanding that none of these events occurs isolated from political, social, economic or technological reality. The question that currently arises in cities from the increasing weight and interaction that is generated from new technologies for citizenship will be: civilization or barbarism? We will have to discover how these new relationships are generated from new technologies and a new barbarism, defined by citizens who break with traditional systems to create new ways of relating, with their each others, their families and with their city. What instruments will be used to materialize these links, how will they become visible and, ultimately, how will the polis be transformed in which this new society manifests itself, which is no longer organized by hegemonic powers or by tangible infrastructures, but by a new organization between individuals who are related not so much by power, historical or territorial ties, but by new areas of interest, sometimes real, other virtual. Though above all things, we must prevent that this new era that begins does not generate social exclusion for those with more difficult access to these new technologies.

The impact of technologies has always been made more visible in the city either directly or indirectly, through citizens and their actions, or at least it has been until the end of the 20th century, since the technologies applied in urban environments always had a relatively immediate physical impact. Therefore, we must not forget that technology is part of the culture and is not part of our body, but projects our mental capacities, enabling the transformation of the material world that surrounds us. It has always been a complement and a projection of the human intellect and, therefore, has always been at the service of it.

Regardless of the name given to these new initiatives for the design of the city (smart, digital, sustainable...) it is imperative that the planning of urban and territorial environments can no longer be separated from the technologies that help to give them shape. But it must remember that cities belong to the people who inhabit them, who will end up validating any process of urban regeneration, whether based on technologies, systems or, simply, on common sense.

It can be said that this new digital revolution is already evident and therefore requires special attention, above all because of its implications for citizens and their families. Several authors (E. Soja; J. Brugman) pose it as an urban revolution similar to the industrial revolution, and this new one is the derivative of the new technologies that the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st brings; a new e-topia where traditional urban patterns can no longer coexist with cyberspace. Likewise, at present, the development of tele-technologies and information technology not only have an impact on the material urban space, but also on the immaterial, on the virtual spaces and on time, since the Internet allows relations beyond of temporality and local spaces, transforming the dimension of time in the city.

As a result of the increased migrations originated by the Industrial Revolution, the new generic and global city appears as an inevitable necessity, and we cannot deny the demographic growth that the population continues to experience, especially in developing countries. In spite of an apparent depersonalization and loss of identity of the city due to its enormous and incessant growth, new cities are also being generated, or new developments within existing ones, that pursue a solution to the problem.

New technologies can help new service sectors emerge, as well as old production centers are resized. While it has been moving from location in central urban areas to a more diffuse distribution in the territory, both the organization of production and consumption are no longer focused but constitute networks. The concept of centrality is abandoned as equivalent to production, asking for other services to the city, and its advantages are no longer measured only in terms of physical proximity, depending on the characteristics and peculiarities of each place in relation and competition with others at planetary scale. It appears to be area benefited by communication and telecommunication networks, which favors both the dispersion of activities and urban centrality.

This postindustrial, generic and global city also experienced the greatest development in terms of infrastructures, welcoming new technologies, overlaying the preexisting urban traces. Means of transportation, under or above ground, infrastructures that could be buried (drains), aerial (power lines), or travel invisibly (radio waves, television and cell phones) but also visible, because they require antennas, communication towers, command centers or data processing centers. Likewise, all these new infrastructures require new codes and forms of communication (urban signage, traffic lights) or exchange and parking centers.

Currently, the new information and communication technologies transform the post-industrial city into something new, where it is yet to be seen what its real impact will be on the city and its citizens. Despite this growing weight of technologies and the possible trivialization of urban spaces, an optimistic view is proposed for its resolution, since the tension between the global and the local will end up moving towards one or the other side depending on how it is managed, and this is what will end up characterizing its urban reality. The search for sustainable cities will require the construction of socially and culturally diverse urban spaces, as well as functionally complex ones where we can explore strategies and attitudes capable of escaping not only from banality, but from its most dangerous by-product, which is none other than social exclusion and the depersonalization of the individual.

#### A new project on inclusive cities

The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), in partnership with the Regional Council of the Veneto Region, the Municipality of Marseille and the European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network (ELISAN) is promoting a new project on inclusive cities, with a family perspective to benefit each and every one of the members of the family. Within a family, all the social realities inhabited by cities and territories are welcomed, and so, a family approach will contribute to promote values of belonging and result in a greater attachment to the environment where it is inhabited.

In the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 11 ('Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'), and the New Urban Agenda, the 'Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Families' project is directed to cities and Regions that wish to actively contribute to goal SDG 11 to be inclusive of sustainable families by being responsive to their needs.

The commitment of their members will consist on presenting once a year a report about the results of their work on the following points:

1. Housing Cities design should include all family situations and social groups, flexible urban and environmentally sustainable planning, and social services to meet every need.
2. New technologies: The need of connecting people through new technologies should be also included to ensure social inclusion, to bridge the digital gap via training of seniors, professional careers and socially disadvantaged families.
3. Education Inclusive and quality education for all and promotion of lifelong learning (SDG 4) should lead to the improvement of accessible and affordable childcare facilities in locations close to the residence or workplace of parents, parenting education, participation of older persons in educational activities for the youth, intergenerational meeting places for cultural and leisure activities, youth integration practices as well as second chance schools and chances to reintegrate in society.
4. Healthcare Organization of campaigns to promote healthy habits and lifestyles, especially those targeted to prevent mental disorders and to meet the needs of senior citizens, setting the necessary structure to stimulate innovation and human relations in hospitals as well as medical attention of visitors and tourists.
5. Safety Creation of a welcoming environment in the streets based on solidarity, mutual support and social interaction, through instruments like promoting volunteers, a neighborhood police, the use of cameras and public lightning, information and training on how to behave in case of natural disasters, terrorist attacks, etc.
6. Clean air Creation of as many green areas as possible, tax benefits for garden buildings, progressive reduction of pollution produced by public transportation and increase of charging points for electric cars and support for circular economy.
7. Transportation Design of a plan to make public transportation more rational and accessible, dissuade citizens to use private cars, and to take advantage of teleworking.
8. Affordability Plan to facilitate access to housing for the most disadvantaged citizens, including promotion of smart cohousing solutions for different target groups with common use of services, efficient energy saving and flexible buildings, and intergenerational arrangements to provide care for the elder and cheaper housing for the younger.
9. Leisure and tourism: Foster of active engagement in the volunteering sector to conserve and restore the cultural and touristic of the city, as well as tools to facilitate

access to cultural activities for all through special prices and ad hoc exhibitions and locations for museums, theatres, etc.

10. Vulnerable families: Establish specific programs to recognize the value of unpaid work and care, and address the needs of families in vulnerable situations, including single parent families, large families, migrant families, etc.

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