

Protection of the Family and Its Members

Joint Oral Statement under Item 3 – Panel Discussion on the Protection of the Family and Its Members, submitted for the 27th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, Company of the Daughters of Charity of Vincent de Paul, Edmund Rice International, International Association of Charities, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Institute of Mary Our Help of the Salesians Sisters of Don Bosco IIMA, New Humanity, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs and International Movement of Catholic Students), VIDES International (International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, Development), and World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations.

Caritas Internationalis and other 10 NGOs welcome the organization of this Panel discussion on the Protection of the Family and its Members, particularly in view of the central role of this institution as *“the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all its members and particularly children”*¹.

It is true that today’s families are burdened by many social and cultural challenges. However, despite these serious challenges, the family has been and remains a source of strength and security for its own members.

The importance of the family for the life and wellbeing of society entails a particular responsibility for national governments and international institutions. Many States, however, have failed to fulfil their responsibilities to adequately protect families, particularly in the case of those families that face serious difficulties.

The co-signing organisations believe, therefore, that States must enact and implement “family-friendly” policies that recognize and promote the capacity of strong family bonds, the birthright of all humanity, to serve as a source of social capital and stability to the wider fabric of the universal human family.

However, equal importance should be given to the family unit itself and to all its members. The dignity and rights of each and every member of the family, from the child in the womb to the oldest or most frail relatives, should be affirmed, upheld, and guaranteed. Such protection of individual family members reaps wider social benefits in the community-at-large, which finds an innate and vital expression in the family.

The family comes first in the hearts of the world’s people and continually exhibits much greater vigour than the many forces in today’s society that try to threaten or even eliminate it. The co-signing organisations stand firm in their support of such vigour, and plan to constantly advocate for better protection and support of the family and all its members as the fundamental unit of society.

¹ Resolution A/HRC/26/11 adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council on June 25, 2014.