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NGO role in protecting the Family

Location

- NGO's Operate in different locations
- National: own country
- Regional: Institutions such as European Union, African Union, Council of Europe

European Court of Human Rights

- International : United Nations, New York and Geneva. World Health Assembly
- Other associated meetings

Different roles

- UN Lobbying primarily educational
- First and foremost be there; Attend, attend, attend
- Side meetings
- Delegate Briefings
- Visiting Missions
- Analysis of reports, resolutions and other documents
- Proposing alternative language preparing hand-outs
- Tracking negotiations

Links

- NGO's must keep abreast of current research in family issues and partner with specialists in various related fields to form a link between academics and legislators
- They must also be aware of current directions in Human Rights thinking and assist in making delegates aware of proposals that are anti family and anti life

Initiatives

- Initiatives can be reactive or pro-active
- Reactive

Much of what we do is reactive in establishing, opposing and halting particular agendas. This could be described as holding the line

- Pro-active

Development of initiatives that will further the cause of family in society

The Doha Declaration is an example of one of the most important pro-active initiatives

The declaration banning all human cloning is another

Understanding terminology

- The use of language can be a major issue and in particular the use of terminology
- Controlling the lexicon can be crucial when it comes to defining terms
- Examples are the use of terms such as Gender, reproductive health services or reproductive rights. There have been various attempts to redefine gender as being other than male and female and the terms reproductive health services and reproductive rights are used by pro-abortion governments and groups as a code word for abortion provision under the guise of trying to improve women's health or reduce maternal mortality.
- Many people are still unaware of this and some find it hard to believe. Maternal mortality is actually lowest in first world countries that do not have abortion

Family Definitions

- In 1994 the International Year of the Family a new definition was proposed for the family.

“Any combination of two or more persons who are bound together by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibility for, inter alia, the care and maintenance of group members, the addition of new members through procreation or adoption, the socialisation of children, and the social control of members.”

this definition allows a very broad latitude

Other proposed Definitions

- Current pressure from within the UN system from Special Rapporteurs and even from the High Commissioner for Human Rights to accept a new radical agenda Known as the Yogyakarta principles
- Everyone has the right to found a family, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Families exist in diverse forms. No family may be subjected to discrimination on the basis of the sexual orientation or gender identity of any of its members.
- Gender identity is described as follows

Gender identity is understood to refer to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

Broadening the definition of the family in this way must be resisted as it can only cause further damage

Key Question

- Key question: are we effective.
- Truthfully we have had different levels of success . We have managed to halt the anti life and family agendas so far but we have not succeeded in eliminating them
- In my opinion this is not a short term proposition it is a generational one
- I believe that it also requires a comprehensive approach involving academics researchers, lawyers and NGO's and I am convinced that meetings like this are critical to development of future strategies
- Meetings like this help to build awareness, relationships and networks and can assist in producing a body of evidence to counter the propaganda produced by our opponents

Power

- This brings us to the issue of POWER
- There are at least three levels of Power involved in the process

- The first level of power as far as the UN is concerned revolves around our ability to influence the outcome of a negotiated text while others are lobbying for an alternative agenda.
- I would call this lobbying on a level playing field
- We have had immeasurable success at this level

Power: Controlling the agenda

Very often it is not a level playing field?

Who Controls the agenda is a critical issue

I said earlier that we have not succeeded in eliminating the anti-life and family agenda. One of the reasons for this is the ability of the opposition to have their agenda included in the reports and consequently in the negotiated texts

How: by ensuring they have representatives in the secretariat, on the treaty implementation Committees and as special rapporteurs.

Then they ensure that it is their own nominees who are appointed to vacancies

Power at level 3

- There is a further level of power that can be brought to bear and it can be applied surreptitiously for reasons that are not immediately apparent to lobbyists
- This can consist of underlying social cultural, economic or political issues outside the negotiations but nevertheless dictate the outcome
- A prime example of what I am referring to is a threat by a first world country to a third world one that it will either withdraw or block crucial development aid unless that country votes in a particular direction

Future strategies

- The most important victory achieved was the approval of the DOHA Declaration in 2004 the tenth anniversary of the year of the family
- 2014 is the twentieth anniversary and we need to plan for that now
- We need to make progress on all of the issues I have highlighted but we particularly need new initiatives
- One such initiative I have personally worked on sought to collect together all of the previously agreed UN language relating to the child before birth in a similar manner to that used in the Doha Declaration
- Key strategy meetings are essential to formulate a way forward.