



2014 - TWENTIETH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF THE FAMILY

The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD),  
The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD)  
and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union  
in cooperation with the  
Focal Point on the Family (UNDESA)

**European Expert Group Meeting**  
**“Confronting family poverty and social exclusion;  
ensuring work-family balance;  
advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity  
in Europe”**

*Statement by Mrs. Noor Al-Malki*

European Expert Group Meeting  
Brussels  
6 – 8 June 2012

Convened as part of the preparations for the  
Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014

Excellencies,  
Distinguished experts,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

I am delighted to be part of this Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Confronting Poverty, ensuring family work balance, advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity”. I would like to thank the Experts for accepting to share their views and expertise on this topic. I also take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all participants and guests presents.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) and the Focal point on the Family in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) for their cooperation and valuable contribution to this important event.

The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD) is sponsoring this event as a contribution to the preparations of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) and because one of its main objectives is to revitalize public awareness about family issues, provide evidence based information and support the development of sensitive family policies and programs.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the family as the basic unit of society and thus it deserves the State’s protection and support.

As such, changes to the family also affect communities and society, leading us to confront both our collective vision of the family as well as societal problems relating to family difficulties.

Since the observance of the International Year of the family, great attention has been given to the contribution of the family to economic and social progress, to the development of a more comprehensive approach and to an integrated family policy that effectively and visibly complements existing sectoral policies in order to meet the needs of families.

Supporting the family, providing social protection and furthering social integration through the strengthening of intergenerational solidarity are important objectives of social policy and social development and will certainly be further developed and discussed during the three upcoming days.

All across the world, family size and structure have changed markedly and continue to evolve in response to powerful social, economic and technological developments, including urbanization and a continuing shift from extended to nuclear families.

In developed countries, changing economic conditions and new patterns of consumption have increased the number of families where both parents work, leaving less time for chil-

dren and family life. High divorce rates and family breakdown have created a culture of insecurity. Other social forces have served to decrease support from extended families, the workplace and society at large.

In the developing world, such trends are compounded by overarching problems of poverty, social and economic inequalities and the rise of global pandemics, in particular HIV/AIDS.

These trends challenge the ability of the family to fulfill basic functions of production, reproduction and socialization as well as needs of its members regarding health, nutrition, shelter, physical and emotional care and personal development. They also undercut social cohesion and are laying roots for inequity, injustice and future instability.

While Family policy remains the primary responsibility of governments, it is essential that the United Nations, Civil Society, parliaments, media, religious and community based organizations contribute to developing and implementing Family Policies.

Although some progress had been made and actions have been taken in favor of the family, there is a need for a real political will to promote new strategies aimed at strengthening the family and preserving its socializing and harmonizing role.

At the National level, new legislation benefiting families, strengthening parent child relations, dealing with conjugal and family dispute, helping parents balance work and family responsibilities, protecting mothers and promoting measures related to the health and well being of the family have been enacted.

Many programmes or services have also been established to allocate adequate benefits to families. However, many of the efforts undertaken, particularly in developing countries, were inadequate since the social and economic factors that were needed to guarantee the cohesion of the family were absent and therefore contributed to the disintegration of the family structure.

Family policy should be the general framework that contains measures to respond to social and economic challenges. In this regard, an integrated approach to family policy requires the adoption of policies that reinforce healthy family relationships, protect and increase family resources and strengthen the resilience of families as well as better coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders, including the State, Civil society Organizations and the private sector.

As economic and rapid social changes progress, the strength of families and family networks can be instrumental in determining how well individuals and communities adapt to the change they are facing and its consequences.

How to address family issues and adopt family oriented policies is a central concern of the current and probably next decade. In this regard, this experts group meeting could be an



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opportunity to discuss many aspects of Family Policy ,including understanding Family Policies, comparing Family Policies, changing family trends, the work and the family, the care and support of children, family and societal solidarity and how we mainstream inter-generational solidarity.

One of the main objectives of this meeting is to share practices and experiences on family sensitive policies and family support systems such as flexible working hours, part time employment, work sharing, child care, parental leave, social security, disability benefits and assistance to families to care for dependants and family welfare.

The experts will provide guidance and recommendations to national governments in developing policies, programs that could accelerate and better integrate a family perspective into the development policies and strategies.

To ensure international attention for an issue of vital importance for all peoples around the world, we need to intensify efforts to identify problems affecting families by doing assessments and reviews, enhancing national capacities and, finally, improving collaboration between all the partners at national and international levels.

Thank you.