

## DECLARATION ON FAMILY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We are young people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, and social backgrounds from all regions of the world. We affirm that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society. The family is prior to the State and is entitled to protection by society and the State. In celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, we recognize the essential role that the family plays in the economic development of all societies.

In the family, each person must be respected and valued from conception to natural death regardless of his or her age, status, or ability. The family takes on essential tasks in the care of its members, particularly the weakest and most vulnerable, including children, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities. Father and mother, equal in dignity, are co-responsible for the welfare of their children.

Strong healthy families are needed to support optimal and holistic child and youth development, which in turn contributes to economic development. It is within the family that children first learn that they and all human beings have intrinsic value and dignity. In families where the mother and father foster healthy and committed relationships with each other and with their children, children appreciate the importance of building these relationships with others. Children with this foundation of self-respect and respect for others are more likely to become adults who support themselves through decent, collaborative, and productive work. Additionally, by having the economic, social, emotional, spiritual, and moral support of both the father and the mother, children from strong healthy families have better educational outcomes and economic and career opportunities. Thus, individuals from stable family units are better enabled to contribute to the economic development of society.

The family facilitates the transfer of culture from the older generation to the younger generation, passing on values and the importance of hard work, discipline, and solidarity. The strong examples set by parents, grandparents, and extended family members foster the work ethic and moral character of individuals entering into the work force, which positively impacts the quality of the work force and reduces youth unemployment. Thus the important role of healthy family structures in the economic growth of society must be recognized and promoted.

In recognizing that the family plays a key role in economic development, we emphasize the need for social and economic policies that strengthen the family and safeguard the rights and responsibilities of its members. To protect the family, we must ensure that the fundamental needs of all persons are met and that conditions are present for each family member to flourish in accordance with his or her human dignity.

We call upon individuals and the public and private sectors at the local, national, and international levels, particularly in their efforts to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the future Sustainable Development Goals, to take into account the role of the family as the backbone of development, to respect work-family balance, and to strengthen family policies to protect and nurture the family.