

Youth Caucus for Life and Family

Official Statement Submitted to the UN High level Meeting on Youth

Recognizing that the family is “the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State” (Universal Declaration (1948), Article 16 (3));

Recognizing that the child, “for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding” (Children’s Summit, 18);

Recognizing that children and youth who reside in stable intact families with a married mother and father generally exhibit greater wellbeing in every measurable indicator including physically, socially, emotionally and academically;

Recognizing that family disintegration is increasing and contributes to poverty, crime, substance abuse and other high risk behaviors in children and youth;

We call upon Member States and the United Nations system to assess the impact on the family in all development policies and programmes and focus on supporting, strengthening and protecting the family, while respecting family autonomy and privacy.

Parenting

Recognizing that the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all States should “respect the responsibilities, rights and duties” of parents “in their efforts to provide appropriate direction and guidance” to the child (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 5);

Recognizing also that in some governments there is unnecessary interference with the rights of caring parents to provide guidance for the child, under the guise of promoting “child rights,” intervening in the name of social programs, sex education, medical treatment, privatized abortions, birth control, and “reproductive health care”;

We call upon member States and the UN system to increase respect and support for parents and other legal caregivers as having “the primary role and responsibility for the wellbeing of children” and youth, and to recognize and support the “prior right” of parents “to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (Universal Declaration, Article 26 (3));

Religious and Cultural Values

Recognizing that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion” and to “manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18) and that children [and youth] should

have the opportunity to “enjoy [their] own culture, to profess and practice [their] own religion” (CRC, Article 30);

Recognizing also that the “introduction of children to the culture, values and norms of their society begins in the family” (World Summit for Children Plan of Action, paragraph 18) and that parents have the liberty to “ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions” (ICESCR, Article 13-3, and ICCPR, Article 18-4);

We call upon member States and the UN to respect the religious and cultural values of parents and children in their homes, schools, and communities and to allow parents to oversee and guide the religious and cultural development of their children.

Human Sexuality and HIV/AIDS Prevention

Recognizing that youth should be “encourag[ed]” to engage in “responsible sexual behaviour, including abstinence and fidelity” (HIV/AIDS, 52; ICPD 8.31, 8.35, 13.14 (c));

Recognizing also that sexually active youth are at greater risk for AIDS and other life-threatening sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, depression and mental illness, suicide, unstable marriages and future divorce, and lower academic achievement; and greatly concerned by the increase of “comprehensive sexuality education” programs that encourage youth to explore their “right” to sexual pleasure, and that condone and encourage children and youth to engage in promiscuous sexual behavior outside of the bonds of marriage while diminishing the availability and funding of comprehensive abstinence and relationship education;

We call upon member States and the UN to encourage youth to abstain from sexual relations before marriage as a means to promote “responsible and healthy reproductive and sexual behavior” through funding the sexual abstinence and healthy relationship education programs already in existence and to promote the development of similarly focused programs, and to cease the promotion of any sexuality education or sex education programs that encourage youth to be sexually active before marriage.

Pornography/Trafficking

Recognizing that children are innocent and vulnerable and have a right to be protected from “all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” (CRC Article 34);

Recognizing that emerging trends, particularly (1) dissemination of child pornography and solicitation of children for sex via the internet; (2) increases in trafficking of children for sexual purposes; and (3) attempts to legalize child pornography and sexual contact between adults and children, threaten the innocence and well-being of children and violate their rights to protection;

We call upon Member States and the UN system to safeguard the wellbeing of children and youth by taking all appropriate measures to halt the exploitation of children brought about by child pornography, sex trafficking, prostitution, and other forms of exploitation of

children and to resist and condemn attempts to legalize child pornography and sexual contact between adults and children.

Orphans and Street Children

Recognizing that orphans and street children number in the tens of millions and is increasing due to poverty, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and natural and man-made disasters;

Recognizing that in all cases, the “best interest of the child” standard should be the guiding principle in decisions regarding orphan interventions, and since children fare best when raised in a family in an atmosphere of love and understanding, orphan policies and programs should seek wherever possible, to place children into stable families.

Recognizing that governments should “pay special attention to the needs of ... orphans,” and that “all efforts should be made to assist the building of family-like ties...” (ICPD (1994), 5.13);

We call upon member states and the UN system to (1) work toward providing a “family environment” for children without parents; (2) encourage programmes that focus on stemming the tide of family breakdown which leaves children in vulnerable situations; and (3) support family autonomy in decision making.