



## AMMA'S MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES.



INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF FAMILIES  
15 MAY 2021

Today is 15 May, the International Day of Families, observed across the globe to spread awareness about the importance of families. The Day also highlights the imperative for the international community (comprising governments and global institutions), together with the academia, scientific community, the business sector, media and citizens groups, to make a contribution to the development of families across the globe as a basic foundation of society.

Families are not just important units or the smallest systems of society. They are everything and encompass our life itself.

Families are groups that perform vital roles for society—both internally (for the family itself) and externally (for society as a whole). Families provide for one another's physical, emotional, and social well-being. Parents care for and socialize children. Later in life, adult children often care for elderly parents. The family also gives to each one the deep subjective experience and meaning of belonging to a "family". At the same time, families have many purposes and roles in maintaining a balanced society with all its

institutions, structures and mechanisms we see around us. The family has always been the cornerstone of society across the globe. Families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundations of our blossoming into humaneness. While the exact constitution of the family may have changed in recent years, the fundamentals of emotional closeness and support are still present, and will always be. Parents always want to give their children the best start in life they can. The foundation created in a family has been shown in numerous studies to dramatically impact a child's success. The more stable the family environment for a child, the more likely they will be healthier – both mentally and physically.

The family unit began with the first humans. While families today may look different than they did thousands of years ago, they are as equally important now as they were then. The United Nations believed families important enough to recognize them through a day of observance and, in 1994, chose May 15 as International Day of Families.

Communities all over the world face obstacles that jeopardize the stability of the family. The UN began to recognize this in the 1980s as the Secretary-General promoted awareness among decision-makers and the public. The UN therefore established this day of observance and, each year, selected a different family-focused theme to address world-wide challenges around education, poverty, health, and work/family balance, just to name a few.

## **The theme of the 2021 International Day of Families**

The 2021 observance of the International Day of Families highlights the impacts of new technologies on the well-being of families. This theme is a follow up on the recognition that a socially just transition towards sustainable development is very much dependent on the significant role of digital technologies in human wellbeing today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The current macro and large-scale trends, as seen in the shift to new technologies, demographic shifts, rapid urbanization, and migration from rural to urban, and between countries, as well as the forces of climate change, have been drastically shaping our world.

The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of digital technologies for work, education and communication. The pandemic has accelerated technological changes that had already been under way both in society and at work, including the expanded use of digital platforms and related technological innovations like

cloud computing and the use of big data and algorithms. Therefore, the theme of the 2021 International Day of the Family is most apt. Our task is thus to ensure that in order to cope with the changing times, families are geared to face the new challenges with equipment, skills and knowhow. It also means providing broadband to swaths of populations across the world that are denied of it. More than in any other time, we see that the COVID -19 has aggravated differences and inequalities and widened the Digital Divide. Humanity cannot move at one pace, in peace and harmony, with such gross deprivations prevailing because that would only intensify and deepen extreme poverty, cause discrimination and exclusion in process of claiming our collective public good.

In preparation for the Thirtieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2024 (IYF+30) the United Nations aims to raise awareness of megatrends noted above and responsive family-oriented policies to tackle their effects.

## **Family trends**

Families around the world are changing, many becoming smaller, as the number of single-parent households grows. Currently, 65% of all families are made up of either couple living with children of any age, or couples living with both children and extended family members, such as grandparents. The diminishing number of extended families and the increasing number of single-parent families put into sharp focus the issue of social protection.

## **The UN and the International Day**

Since the 1980s, the United Nations has been focusing greater attention on issues related to the family and its vital contribution to the development of societies. Families need to be strengthened to play this critical through the provision of policies and programs that not only address but meet their problems and needs. Hence the UN initiated a process of developing global awareness among governments, inter-governmental agencies and non-governmental organization and grass roots movements on the importance of the family in the life of a nation. Various UN General Assembly resolutions have highlighted issues related to families at the national, regional and global levels. Hence, the day provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues related to families and increase our knowledge of the changing social economic and demographic processes affecting families.

On 25 September 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. They are a set of 17 goals

aiming to eliminate poverty, discrimination, abuse and preventable deaths, address environmental destruction, and usher in an era of development for all people, everywhere. Families and family-oriented policies and programs are vital for the achievement of many of these goals and reaching our targets by 2030. Sound family bonds, unity and cohesion, together with basic needs being met, promote healthy and happy families.

Together with the United Nations, we must urge our governments to:

- (a) continue their efforts towards the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes as conducive to the realization of the 2030 Agenda;
- (b) Invest in family-oriented policies targeting poverty to prevent the intergenerational transfer of poverty;
- (c) Invest in social protection policies and programs, promote gendersensitive social services and measures and recognize the role of families as social protection providers;
- (d) Invest in a variety of work-family balance policies focused, on expanding childcare services and parental leaves, including paternity leaves;
- (e) Ensure that family-oriented strategies promote gender equality and the equal sharing of household responsibilities between men and women and recognize the burden of unpaid work;
- (f) Enhance efforts to ensure equal pay for equal work;
- (g) Safeguard legal identity and birth registration for all newborns to ensure their full participation in society and access to benefits, including social protection;
- (h) Promote investments in accessible and affordable infrastructure, including housing and transportation, to benefit families and prevent family homelessness;
- (i) Address the causes of family homelessness, including poverty, domestic violence and the lack of affordable housing, and expand efforts to provide adequate and affordable housing with support services for families.