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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Panel discussion on the implementation of States' obligations under relevant provisions of international human rights law on the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of its members

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 54/17, contains a summary of the panel discussion on the implementation of States' obligations under relevant provisions of international human rights law on the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of its members, and challenges and best practices in that regard. The discussion was held on 25 September 2024.



I. Introduction

1. On 25 September 2024, the Human Rights Council, pursuant to its resolution 54/17, convened a panel discussion on the implementation of States' obligations under relevant provisions of international human rights law on the role of the family in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of its members, to discuss challenges and best practices in that regard.
2. The panel discussion was opened by the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif; the Minister of Social Solidarity of Egypt, Maya Morsy; and the Minister of Social Development and Family of Qatar, Mariam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad. The panelists were Haina Lu, member of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Umberto Cattaneo, Public Finance Economist in the Universal Social Protection Department of the International Labour Organization (ILO); Roqayah Ajaj, entrepreneur and disability rights advocate from Saudi Arabia; and Sami Jaber, International Policy Officer at the 5Rights Foundation.

II. Summary of the proceedings

A. Opening statements

3. In her opening statement, the Deputy High Commissioner stated that families were our first introduction to love, care, support and empowerment. Families enabled us to grow to our fullest potential, make choices and realize our rights. Recalling the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the Deputy High Commissioner invited the participants of the Council to celebrate all families in their diversity, recognizing that diverse forms of family units have existed across countries and cultures. She stated that, according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), one in three households in the world was made up of a couple with children, one in three was a multigenerational extended family, and the rest consisted of a single parent with children, or a couple with no children or were single-person households.
4. The Deputy High Commissioner emphasized that international human rights law had long recognized that the family was the natural and fundamental unit of society and that the valuable functions the family performed for its members and the community were undeniable. She stressed that all families should be spaces where family members enjoyed their human rights and where all individuals were free from discrimination and violence. In all families, the rights to equality and the best interest of the child should be guaranteed. She explained that this meant that all people of full age had a right to start a family of their own free will, to freely choose their spouse or to marry, to choose when to have a child and to have their relationships legally recognized, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. She emphasized that people should not be separated from their families against their will due to poverty, disability, migration status or other factors.
5. The Deputy High Commissioner stated that every member of the family, including women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals, should enjoy their human rights without discrimination. This meant, she stated, that women's right to equality was fully respected. She explained that women must have equal rights in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, child-rearing, property and inheritance in the family. She said, however, that, according to the World Bank, 85 countries across all regions continued to have discriminatory legal provisions against women related to marriage and divorce and persistent gender gaps in property and inheritance laws.
6. The Deputy High Commissioner stated that it was important for dignity and autonomy to be respected within the family. For example, children should have their voices heard consistent with their evolving capacities. She underlined that persons with disabilities should be supported in having control over their lives and be fully included in society, older persons'

agency and dignity needed to be upheld within the family, and women should have an equal say in decision-making in the family.

7. The Deputy High Commissioner further stressed that, above all, safety was important. She stated that a family space must be a safe space, which was free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation and that States had an obligation to make this a reality. She stressed that States needed to prevent violence, abuse and exploitation in family contexts and ensure adequate protection measures for victims and survivors. She stated that States needed to eliminate laws that tolerated discrimination or violence within the family and support family members in living decent lives, including by providing social protection, quality public services and decent work. She emphasized that it was important for States to facilitate the reunification of families of migrant asylum-seekers and refugees and prevent the separation of family members against their will.

8. The Deputy High Commissioner underlined that families were key actors in sustainable development and that that recognition was anchored in the international consensus around the potential of families with respect to the realization of all rights. She highlighted that that was especially critical today, in times of conflict, climate challenges, technological transformation, migration and demographic changes. She called upon States to find the ways and means to support and strengthen the resilience of families and their members in all their richness and diversity.

9. In her opening statement, the Minister of Social Solidarity of Egypt, Maya Morsy, said that the Constitution of Egypt, Egypt Vision 2030 and the Parliament-endorsed government programme were drafted with human and family development in mind. She highlighted legislative reforms, which included laws on persons with disabilities, on older persons and children, and on national machinery on women and children. She said that legislative amendments were in place on personal status laws and labour laws, and that alternative care laws were currently being drafted. She also said that the political will was evident in the adoption by the President of Egypt of programmes such as the decent life and family development programmes, in the upgrading of local housing infrastructure and in a national initiative focusing on human development.

10. Ms. Morsy said that Egypt had approximately 25 million families, and that the country had methodologies to target those in the most vulnerable situations, such as its conditional cash transfer programme (Takaful and Karama), which benefited 5.2 million families. She also described the directives that were in place to register families, workers in irregular situations in the construction sector and rural women leaders for cash support and health insurance. She said that those examples fell within the country's vision to enhance social safety nets and ensure protection for the most vulnerable.

11. Ms. Morsy stressed that economic empowerment was a cornerstone of family development. She said that the Ministry of Social Solidarity and its entities had reached 1.3 million families, and that more than 70 per cent of the members of those families were women. She also said that Egypt was currently reshaping the social protection and cash transfer programme to include economic empowerment in its structure, in relation, for example, to digitized savings and lending models. She also mentioned as examples the country's national early childhood development and positive parenting programmes and the premarital initiative to equip youth with the knowledge necessary to build a healthy family entity. Under the latter programme, more than 1.2 million young men and women had been trained, and a digital platform had been launched that had reached nearly 5 million citizens.

12. Ms. Morsy concluded her opening statement by stating that the recognition of the cultural specificities of countries was paramount in the formulation and implementation of global family development policies. She stated that a one-size-fits-all approach could be counterproductive, as it might lead to unintended consequences or resistance. She said that by acknowledging and respecting specificities, States could foster policies that promoted the well-being of families and ensure that global initiatives aligned with local realities.

13. The Minister of Social Development and Family of Qatar, Mariam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad, said that families were facing many difficulties and that it was important to work towards a future of peace and justice. She recalled the commitment made in the joint pledge by Qatar and a group of countries in the context of the Human Rights 75 initiative. In that

document, the countries pledged their unconditional commitment to supporting and protecting the family and to taking appropriate measures to the maximum extent of their available resources, including implementing obligations under international human rights law with regard to the support, protection and empowerment of the family.

14. Ms. Al Misnad further highlighted, in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, that the family was the cornerstone of prosperous societies. She said that through its National Vision 2030, Qatar sought to build a solid foundation with the family at its heart. She stated that the family was not only a unit, but also the source of moral values. For that reason, laws on persons with disabilities and children had been adopted in Qatar.

15. Ms. Al Misnad said that Qatar had sought to empower families economically with a programme to provide financial education and increase productivity. She further stated that in Qatar disability was not seen from a medical point of view, but rather from a humanitarian, economic and family-based perspective, and that that had improved the lives of persons with disabilities. She described, as an example, a digital application that had provided access to sign language throughout all digital platforms.

16. Ms Al Misnad described the first year of marriage project, which sought to provide advice to couples. She said that Qatar had placed the family at the heart of its development efforts. Using the example of the help that Qatar had given to families in Gaza, she said that Qatar sought to protect families that were victims of war and had provided healthcare and education to them. She concluded by expressing her hope that the panel discussion would pave the way for a fairer world with no exclusion of groups and people in vulnerable situations, particularly in war and conflict.

B. Overview of presentations

17. In her video statement, Haina Lu, member of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, recalled that international human rights law recognized the fundamental role of the family in protecting human rights. She also recalled the obligation of States to ensure that the rights of all family members were respected within the family. She stated that the right to family life included the right to marry and found a family, as well as the right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with respect to privacy, the family, the home or correspondence.

18. Ms. Lu stated that families, in their diverse forms, were fundamental to all communities. She further stated that while women had long played an important role in the family, the context of the family had often been a source of discrimination against and stereotyping of women and girls. She pointed out that this situation adversely impacted their human rights, including the rights to education, health, employment, and sexual and reproductive autonomy and choice. She noted that within the family, women and girls might be subjected to discrimination, such as unequal allocation of family resources, discriminatory forms of marriage and domestic violence. She recalled that States had an important role in ensuring that the family was a source of rights, protection and equality among its members, especially for women and girls.

19. Ms. Lu said that in 2015 the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls had published a report addressing issues relating to women in cultural and family life, in which it supported diverse forms and compositions of families. She stated that, in that report, the Working Group had also advocated for the elimination of discrimination within the family, including economic and legal discrimination, and had further called for a ban of child, early and forced marriage, temporary marriage and polygamy.

20. Ms. Lu noted that in another report, issued in 2017, the Working Group had highlighted the central role of women as agents of cultural change and had stressed that women's right to equality, autonomy and self-determination was crucial. She underscored that, in the report, the Working Group had recognized that it was essential to challenge and eliminate legal and social norms that subjected women to male dominance. The Working Group had observed that, beyond eliminating direct discrimination against women and girls,

successful practices required that States take proactive steps to promote substantive equality through legislation and long-term initiatives aimed at countering stereotypes.

21. Ms. Lu said that such proactive action was in line with States' obligations to adopt legislative, administrative and other measures to apply women's right to equality in all forms of family law. She said that examples of good practices by States, as identified by the Working Group, included the adoption of laws raising the age to 18 for both girls and boys to marry; active support to families to allow girls to access education on an equal basis with boys; legal reforms to ensure equality in inheritance laws and policies, including the recognition of women as heads of family on an equal basis with men; measures to include legal access to sexual health and reproductive rights, products, services and information, including through safe and legal abortion; codification of marital rape as a crime; and legal training and capacity-building to better assist survivors of domestic violence.

22. Ms. Lu concluded by stating that women and girls made priceless contributions to their families and could thrive with the support of their families. She pointed out, however, that their human potential and fundamental dignity was often restricted and minimized by family structures and expectations based on stereotypes and patriarchy. She stated that States had the opportunity to elevate humanity by empowering women and girls in their choices in family life so that the family could truly serve as the foundation for human rights for everyone.

23. In his intervention, Umberto Cattaneo, Public Finance Economist in the Universal Social Protection Department of ILO, pointed out that social protection systems enabled families to successfully navigate life-cycle risks and transformations, including climate change, health crises and conflicts. He said that they did so by guaranteeing access to healthcare and income security, enabling families to adapt to change in a way that protected their rights and dignity. He said that ILO had produced a large body of evidence showing that social protection was a powerful tool in the fight against poverty and hunger. He pointed out that, in 2023, only 52 per cent of the population in the world was covered by at least one social protection benefit, which, even so, represented progress since 2015, when it was only 43 per cent.

24. Mr. Cattaneo said that families experienced varying access to social protection, depending on their country of residence. He said that in high-income countries, they enjoyed closer to universal coverage. In 2023, effective social protection coverage was as low as 71 per cent in upper middle-income countries and 32 per cent in lower- to middle-income countries. In low-income countries, social protection remained at only 9.7 per cent.

25. Mr. Cattaneo said that ILO had estimated the financing gap with respect to ensuring a social protection floor to all, including access to at least a basic level of income security and access to essential healthcare. For low- and middle-income countries, this gap equalled 3.3 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) annually (2 per cent for essential healthcare and 1.3 per cent for the five key social protection cash benefits). He noted, however, that the financing gap was most pronounced in low-income countries, with Africa facing the largest.

26. Mr. Cattaneo stated that regular domestic financing was the main strategy to close the financing gap. He clarified that the building of health and social protection systems, including floors, implied long-term commitments. At the national level, he explained that this meant ensuring a broad tax base, with adequate taxation levels and social protection contributions paid by workers and employers. He noted that such measures, in turn, would support the formalization of the workforce.

27. He underscored the importance of fair taxation to close the financing gap and to ensure the human right to social security and healthcare to all families, while ensuring that low-income households did not suffer a welfare loss when such taxes were levied. He said that in order to make progress in that direction, the Brazilian Presidency of the Group of 20 had proposed a global 2 per cent wealth tax. He pointed out that that approach could promote global cooperation and allow all countries, including developing countries, to raise government revenues through wealth taxes. Mr. Cattaneo also noted that Governments lost a large amount of tax revenue due to tax evasion and tax avoidance, and that it was therefore imperative to scale up efforts to measure and fight illicit financial flows.

28. Mr. Cattaneo noted that the reallocation of some public expenditure to social protection and health was important in order to expand domestic financing capacities. He noted, for example, that progressive and careful reprioritization of fossil fuel subsidies could generate substantial fiscal space for social protection in middle-income countries. He noted further that the effective management of sovereign debt could unlock additional resources for social protection and healthcare. He stressed that, while low-income countries must prioritize the mobilization of their own resources to finance the social protection and health systems, international solidarity was crucial to support their effort, given the significant financing gap of 52.3 per cent of their GDP.

29. Mr. Cattaneo concluded by stating that social protection and healthcare were human rights, and their fulfilment required a comprehensive vision for their financing. He stated that ILO was working together with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to support the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in defining guiding principles to close the financing gap and ensure realization of universal social protection and universal health coverage.

30. In her intervention, Roqayah Ajaj, entrepreneur and disability rights advocate from Saudi Arabia, said that because of her visual impairment, teachers had assumed she could not learn and considered that it would be best for her not to attend school. However, her sister had defended her, insisting that exclusion was not the answer and that instead what Ms. Ajaj needed in order to thrive was reasonable accommodations. Ms. Ajaj said that her sister's belief had given her confidence and her family's high hopes had inspired her to keep going. With that support, she had graduated from high school.

31. Ms. Ajaj continued by saying that the support of her family and the opportunities provided by her Government had enabled her to complete her higher education in an inclusive environment. She said that when local universities could not accept her, the Saudi scholarship programme had allowed her to study abroad, to learn English and to eventually complete her PhD programme. She noted furthermore that in the Saudi Vision 2030, the Government had announced a renewed commitment to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and that the plan emphasized equal opportunities and accessibility for all. She hoped that faithful implementation of the policy would mean that people like her would not be left behind.

32. Ms. Ajaj noted that while her family's support had ensured her access to her full human rights, it had been difficult for them to stay positive as they witnessed obstacles that she faced as a person who was blind trying to live a normal life. She stated that the Saudi Government recognized those obstacles and had announced a new anti-discrimination law to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. She expressed her hope that the law would ensure equal access to all areas of life, including education, employment, healthcare and public services.

33. She further noted that there had been a movement to recognize the importance of awareness campaigns and training programmes in promoting understanding, acceptance and accessibility for all. She emphasized that owing to that movement, society had accepted the responsibility for disability inclusion, instead of leaving the family alone to fight for it.

34. Ms. Ajaj concluded by saying that other States could support families like hers by adopting similar policies that protected the rights of persons with disabilities and ensured access and equal opportunities for all. She said that such efforts could include offering families the support they needed to support their loved ones and connecting them with others with similar experiences. She stressed that when families were supported they were better equipped to nurture the potential of their loved ones with disabilities.

35. In his video statement, Sami Jamer, International Policy Officer at the 5Rights Foundation, recalled that families had long been recognized as a fundamental unit to support children's development in the digital age. He said that that role was more critical than ever, as families struggled to navigate the challenges of a digital landscape that often put their children at risk. He said that his organization had worked with parents' networks globally and had collaborated with international and regional organizations to develop and strengthen implementation of general comment No. 25 (2021) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Assembly resolution 78/187 on the rights of the child in the digital environment and the Global Digital Compact, among others.

36. Mr. Jamer stressed that while families played a vital role in guiding and protecting children, the scale and complexity of online harms made it impossible for them to succeed in this task on their own. He noted that children were exposed to harmful content online, such as content on self-harm, extreme body ideals and violent pornography. Mr. Jamer said that in their engagement with his organization, children mentioned that they felt addicted and panicked, and that they had no control over such harmful contents. Mr. Jamer noted that the use of digital technology was increasing, and more and more children felt as though they could not disconnect, impacting their sleep and their sense of self.

37. Mr. Jamer said that those issues were the result of deliberate system design choices that prioritized commercial interests above children's rights. He underlined that the relentless pursuit of children's attention by technology companies, combined with the disregard of technology companies for the consequences of such tactics, turned children into collateral damage and left parents with a problem they could not solve. He continued by saying that technology companies often tried to shift the blame away from themselves toward children and parents. He noted that that could lead to family conflicts and more restrictive control measures that limited children's autonomy, creating a damaging cycle in which children felt more isolated and misunderstood.

38. Mr. Jamer stressed that structural change was needed, as the very design of digital systems enabled and encouraged abuse. He emphasized that placing responsibilities on parents shifted the blame and allowed technology companies to remain unaccountable for harmful design. Furthermore, placing the responsibilities on parents created a false sense of security, as the tools available to them did not actually prevent most harm stemming from online platforms. He stated that States and technology companies could alleviate the pressures on families and children by taking the responsibility to build digital environments that were safe by design and where children's rights were implemented by design and default. He stated that this would allow children to focus on growing up and parents on guiding and empowering them, rather than having to police them.

39. Mr. Jamer recalled that children had clearly established rights which existed online under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and general comment No. 25 (2021) of the Committee of the Rights of the Child. He said that the general comment firmly set the focus on holding States and technology companies accountable for creating a digital environment that upheld children's rights. He pointed out that the general comment further clarified the obligations of States and companies to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for children by design and default, independent monitoring, oversight and accountability, and child-friendly remedy and redress, as well as the use of child rights impact assessments.

40. Mr. Jamer said that the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights stipulated that States must protect against human rights abuses by business enterprises. Similarly, he pointed out that in its general comment No. 16 (2013), the Committee on the Rights of the Child recognized that a State would be in breach of its obligations under the Convention where it failed to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights in relation to business activities and operations that impacted children. He further stated that this was echoed in General Assembly resolution 78/187, in which States were urged to stress the role and responsibility of online service providers in protecting children from online harm and encouraged to urge businesses that had an impact on the enjoyment of children's rights in relation to the digital environment to ensure that human rights were respected. States were also called upon to consider adopting legislation, regulations or policies to ensure that businesses addressed their responsibilities to respect children's rights.

41. Mr. Jamer concluded that it was essential to keep children's best interests as the primary consideration and to integrate privacy and safety by design in product development and use. He reiterated that that would shift the burden of proof and responsibility to businesses by requiring them to give primary consideration to children and their best interests. He clarified, furthermore, that in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, States must take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, punish and redress abuse through effective policy, legislation, regulation and adjudication. He emphasized that families were the first and most enduring protectors of children; however they could not fulfil that function effectively without systemic support. He called for States

and technology companies to assume accountability and to make the digital world fit for children by design.

C. Statements by representatives of States and observers

42. Many speakers reiterated that families, in all their diverse forms, were supportive units that provided love and played an integral role in the enjoyment of the human rights of their members and in promoting social stability and sustainable development. Many speakers stressed that the family was the natural and fundamental unit within societies. They observed that families made a critical contribution to poverty alleviation, a healthy life and well-being for all at all ages, and the overall quality of life of their members. Several States said that the family played an important role in transferring ethics and values to future generations. They stated that families were the building blocks of societies and of social and cultural value. Some speakers said that urbanization, demographic changes, climate change and wars might have negative impacts on family structures and family members.

43. Several speakers stated that the family should not be invoked to oppress or control any of its members, whether based on age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or another grounds. Some speakers emphasized that certain forms of families had been excluded, such as single-parent families, child-headed families, families of divorced individuals, same-sex couples and families, and intergenerational families.

44. Several speakers noted that within families, human rights abuses might occur, such as economic abuse, domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, including marital rape, and female genital mutilation. It was stated that much of the violence that women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities faced worldwide was from members of their own families. It was noted that women and girls might be killed within family settings and that more than 133 women were killed daily by an intimate partner or family members.

45. It was stated that children, in particular, might find themselves in situations of vulnerability within the family context. It was recognized that situations of abuse existed that might lead to the need for alternative care, but it was emphasized that, to the extent possible, priority should be given to supporting the child's parents and extended family to enable them to provide adequate care, and to preventing unnecessary separation or reintegrating children into their families. If such reintegration was not possible, personalized and high-quality alternative care solutions were needed with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.

46. Some speakers said that families might hold and perpetuate power imbalances and biases that mirrored harmful gender stereotypes. They noted, for example, that the disproportionate responsibility of women and girls for unpaid care and domestic work should be redistributed, and that women should have equal opportunity to participate in work and employment. They said that everyone, including women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals, should be free from violence, abuse and coercion within the family, and that families should not be spaces of harm.

47. Some speakers emphasized that single parents, mainly single mothers, faced the negative impact of a disproportionate share of unpaid care responsibilities. Mothers experienced time poverty, the need to sacrifice their own needs to prioritize the needs of their children, and were particularly vulnerable to income poverty and social exclusion.

48. Speakers emphasized the rights of the child and stressed that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and subsequent instruments established children's agency in their right to meaningfully participate in the decisions affecting them. They pointed out that the Convention further established not only that the family was protected from undue State interference, but also that children had the right to receive direct protection from the State in cases where parents failed to provide adequate protection. They said that children were independent rights holders within the family. It was stated that it was important that all children had access to quality education to equip them with the skills to protect themselves and to understand the rights of others.

49. Some pointed out that there was a crucial role that the family played in the realization of the right to education. They noted that the family's involvement had a decisive impact on the academic outcomes of children. They stated furthermore that for the full realization of the right to education, children had to learn morals and values that depended on the context of the community and the family to which the children belonged. It was noted that children belonging to cultural minorities, in particular, might encounter instances in which the values of families and institutions were in contradiction, which was why parents needed to have the liberty to choose the education for their children.

50. Some delegates emphasized the need for access to family planning and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health. They also emphasized the importance of ending practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. They stated that policies and legislation for the promotion of gender equality for all women and girls should be strengthened, and that all forms of gender-based violence in public and private spheres should be eliminated.

51. Several States shared examples of policies that enabled individuals to choose if, when and how they wanted to have a family, and what that family might look like. Those examples included parental leave, access to affordable childcare and policies in the areas of education and health. The examples included a national resolution on ethics within the family, policies on the role of religious, educational and cultural institutions, and proposals for key reforms related to child marriage and equal access to education. Other examples concerned social security, medical care, access to decent work, appropriate housing for families and promotion of adequate living standards.

52. States further stressed that family-related issues should be better reflected in the agendas of all relevant bodies and entities within the United Nations system, and called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to mainstream the promotion of family-oriented policies as a cross-cutting issue and to pay due attention to the role of the family as an important agent in sustainable development.

53. Some expressed concern that the role of the family had been downplayed in international forums. Several States emphasized the importance of religious and cultural values in empowering the family. The opinion was expressed that there should be a deeper understanding of the family in the work of the Human Rights Council. The concern was raised that legal definitions on possible forms of a family might affect rights holders, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals. Restrictive definitions of the family might fail to recognize existing families based on who chose to have a family and how they did so. Further concerns were expressed regarding the challenges for the United Nations in addressing the issues that families faced, such as demographic shifts and technological transformations, which could undermine the enjoyment of human rights.

54. Speakers stated that States should provide an environment that enabled all families to protect and promote the human rights of their members. They suggested that it was necessary to develop family-oriented social, economic and cultural policies at both the domestic and the international levels. Speakers said that States should work together with communities and civil society organizations to promote gender equality for all, so that families could be places of love, support and understanding. They noted that States should take measures to ensure the widest possible support and protection of the family and to avoid institutionalization of care and arbitrary interference in family life. They also noted that States should strive to recognize the diverse situations and needs of families.

55. Several speakers called for an international decade of action for the family to close gaps and mainstream a family perspective across the United Nations system and to empower families to better support the human rights of their members.

56. Speakers asked about measures that States could take to ensure that there was a safe and supporting environment for all of the diverse forms of families; to shift societal expectations and gender roles in family structures so that both parents were equally encouraged and supported in taking on caregiving; to improve the family-centred approach in the international agenda; and to support States in their efforts to face the systemic risk of inequality in and among countries in the context of migration, climate change, international terrorism, crime and geopolitical tensions.

D. Responses of panellists and concluding remarks

57. Two panellists made concluding remarks. Mr. Cattaneo stated that to ensure that all family members enjoyed human rights, it was necessary to scale up efforts to measure what was happening within families. He pointed out, for example, that national surveys often did not capture such intrahousehold allocations. He said that two thirds of unpaid care work was done by women. He underscored that unpaid care responsibilities were hindering women's capacity to engage in the labour market and to have equal opportunities and treatment with men therein. He stressed the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and the need to give appropriate rewards and representation to those who were working in the care economy.

58. Mr. Cattaneo further stated that in order to level the playing field in the share of care work for women and men, it was necessary to invest in social protection in the form of cash benefits, maternity and paternity benefits, and care services. He stated that childcare and long-term care and support services were very important investments and that the necessary resources needed to be mobilized for such investments. He emphasized that the global discussion on scaling up those investments needed to be reframed.

59. He concluded by noting that the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development was to be held in July 2025. He stated that ILO would work to place social protection and healthcare high on the agenda at the Conference and called upon States to join in that effort.

60. Ms. Ajaj underlined that the responsibility fell on States to create an environment where all people, regardless of their abilities, could succeed and thrive. She stated that States could adopt and enforce policies that protected the rights of persons with disabilities and ensured access to education, employment, healthcare and public services. She concluded by stating that by taking such actions, States could empower both persons with disabilities and their families, and that it would allow for all people to succeed in their lives.
