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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: “Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication”

Statement submitted by Coordinadora Europea de Familias Numeosas – European Large Families Confederation (ELFAC), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.
Statement

LARGE FAMILIES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & JUSTICE

The particular needs of Large Families (with 3 and more dependent children) should be taken into consideration in the greater discussion of Sustainable Development and in particular in the eradication of poverty (SDG1), but also SDG.n.3, n.4, n.5, n. 7, n. 10, n.11, n. 12, n.13 and n.16.

The number of children in a given household should not be a matter of inequity, discrimination, or differential access to resources.

The impact of social crises and injustice is disproportionately felt by vulnerable groups, particularly of lower socio-economic standing. When considering the goals of sustainable development, we must also take into account the social contributions of large families and prioritize their safeguarding.

With the overarching goal of eradicating poverty and ensuring health and wellbeing for all, access to education, equal opportunities, access to water and energy, decent wage and working conditions or housing, large families feel a disproportionate economic burden in upholding households which require more resources (12% of European households, according Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union). But their importance should not be overlooked, as the children of today are our social capital and the workforce of future generations.

The contributions of social policy have been sparse, nations of the European Union are in dire need of cohesive policy (for example, a recent report by OECD recommends Spain to invest more in children and families, as Spanish Large Families Federation has been claiming for years). The same could be said of most countries in the world, where the specific needs of large family households are not adequately taken into account in their public policies and in the various social spheres.

Large families face higher risk of child poverty wherein a double or single income is spread across a larger household; therefore, children of larger families are more constrained economically than those with fewer siblings. A study on “Children in Large families: Disadvantaged or Just Different” for the Luxembourg Income Study proposes this sentiment, that policy which encourages or even facilitates participation in the labor market does not adequately provide support for children and also does not take into account the amount of children in a given household, thereby disadvantaging them. Because children are amongst the least advantaged members of society, having no real ability to provide for themselves and depending fully on others, policy which directly benefits the needs and equity of children is crucial, providing direct compensation for the cost of children.

Understanding the positive societal contributions of large families is important in contextualizing the necessity of their protection. A study titled “Energy Consumption Practices and Social Inequality: The Case of Low-Income Households” from ‘Past and Present Energy Societies: How Energy Connects Politics, Technologies and Cultures’ shows that one or two person households have, on average, higher levels of consumption and energy expenditure per person, an increasingly important matter as household size decreases. As aforementioned, financially weaker (i.e., large families) households are more vulnerable to climate change than households with fewer components despite their typically lesser contributions to climate change. These positive contributions to a low-carbon society should be made an example of towards Sustainable Development Goal n. 11.

Therefore, we propose,
1. To recognize the particularities of large families, considering the number of dependents in each household to prioritize the equity of children in policy making. This way, the inequalities amongst families will be reduced and less dependent on the size of a household, considering Sustainable Development Goal n. 10.

2. To enhance the contributions of large families for sustainable living practices by considering the energy consumption of large households per person and allowing affordable and clean energy, and to take care of large families which prioritize kinship, social capital and communal living, circular economy and sharing, thus promoting the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals n. 7, n. 11 and n. 12.

3. To support the access to health care and education to all members of the family, with a special attention to women and girls, according Goals n.3, n.4 and n.5.

4. To facilitate the participation of large families in the labor market by subsidizing or compensating the financial burden of 3+ children which is not supported by single or dual income, in regard to Sustainable Development Goal n. 8.

5. To help alleviate child poverty by assisting large families with expenses to improve the quality of life of their respective dependent children and opportunities for an improved financial and social future, with respect to Sustainable Development Goal n. 16.