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Preparations for and observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family*

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [77/191](#). As part of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the report focuses on analysis of demographic trends and their impact on families and family-oriented policies. With regard to fertility decisions and maternal mortality reduction, the Secretary-General recommends provision of quality education, ensuring access to reproductive health services and family planning and investment in health-care facilities in remote areas. In terms of work-family balance, the Secretary-General suggests investing in flexible working arrangements, parental leave and high quality and affordable childcare. With regard to ageing, recommendations are offered on social security and pensions, family-based care systems for older persons and institutional health-care provision, especially long-term care. Moreover, the importance of investment in intergenerational facilities, such as intergenerational shared sites and multigenerational living arrangements, is emphasized. The Secretary-General furthermore describes the current state of preparations for the observance of the thirtieth the anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels.

* The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 77/191, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-ninth session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the resolution, including a description of the state of preparations for the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at all levels.
2. The General Assembly invited relevant stakeholders to support research and awareness-raising activities at the national, regional and international levels on the impact of technological, urbanization, migration, demographic and climate change trends on families. The Assembly also called upon Member States, United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders to promote the preparations for the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the national, regional and international levels through practical initiatives, including family-oriented policies and programmes responding to the needs of all families.
3. The report of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session (A/77/61-E/2022/4) was focused on new technologies and families, while the report for the seventy-eighth session (A/78/61-E/2023/7) dealt with migration and urbanization and their impact on families. The present report continues the analysis of megatrends, focusing on demographic change and families. In accordance with resolution 77/191, it also includes a description of the state of preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

II. Demographic trends and families¹

4. Demographic trends are shaped by fertility, mortality and migration patterns, which in turn are affected by changing societal values, technological advances and

¹ The data in the present report are drawn from the following sources: *World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World* (United Nations publication, 2023); *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2022); *State of the World Population Report 2023: 8 Billion Lives, Infinite Possibilities – The Case of Rights and Choices* (United Nations publication, 2023); *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition – Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet* (United Nations publication, 2023); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “Is the end of child marriage within reach? Latest trends and future prospects: 2023 update”, May 2023; *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, 2023); Zitha Mokomane, “The impact of demographic trends on families”, background paper prepared for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Inclusive Social Development, in preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, May 2023; papers and reports for the expert group meetings organized in preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, on “Demographic changes and family well-being in Africa”, 23–25 January 2023, Pretoria (available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/events/expert-group-meeting-on-demographic-changes-and-family-wellbeing-in-africa>), on “Population ageing and family well-being in Europe”, 29–30 May 2023, Torun, Poland (available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/events/egm-population-ageing-family-wellbeing-in-europe>), on “Megatrends and families: focus on demographic changes in Latin America”, 26–27 October 2023, Mexico City (available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/events/egm-families-demographic-changes>) and on “Megatrends and families: focus on demographic change, migration and urbanization in North America”, 11 November 2023, Orlando, United States of America (available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/events/2023egm-families-demographic-change-migration-urbanization>); presentations prepared for the International Day of Families observance (available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/events/2023-international-day-of-families-on-families-and-demographic-change>); and expert papers and recommendations prepared for the symposium on “Changing demographics can result in strengthening families”, 26 July 2023, Washington, D.C. (available at www.gu.org/resources/changing-demographics-can-result-in-strengthening-families/).

other factors, including family decisions. Understanding the impact of demographic trends on families is crucial for the development of effective socioeconomic policies benefiting individual and family well-being.

5. Fertility variations across regions can have a significant impact on population growth. Although average fertility is declining and had reached 2.3 births per woman over a lifetime as of 2021, in some regions fertility remains high. The average fertility level in sub-Saharan Africa is 4.6 births per woman and is projected to fall to close to 3 births per woman in 2050.²

6. The impacts of high fertility on the social and economic well-being of families are many and varied. In regions with high fertility, families often experience intergenerational transfer of poverty and struggle with their children's nutritional and educational needs. On the other hand, larger families can serve as a safety net for old-age support in contexts where there is no or limited social security for older persons as they provide a larger pool of resources to support ageing relatives.

7. High fertility regions also experience high adolescent fertility and globally about 10 per cent of the overall number of births in 2021 were to adolescent mothers under the age of 20 years.³ The overwhelming majority of these births occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean. High adolescent fertility rates have potential adverse consequences for the health and well-being of both the young mothers and their children. They negatively affect young women's education and employment prospects and jeopardize the prospects of well-being of their young families. Adolescent fertility is associated with unfulfilled needs for family planning methods, which is highest among young women and adolescents. Globally, 61 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 19 had access to modern family planning methods in 2020, compared with 66 per cent for women aged 20 to 24 and 75 per cent of women above the age of 30.⁴

8. Another factor underlying adolescent fertility rates is child marriage, defined as any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. Although there has been a global decline in child marriage, especially in South Asia, where today one in five young women aged 20 to 24 were married as children compared with nearly one in four a decade ago, the progress has been uneven. West and Central Africa have made little progress over the past 25 years, in part as a result of conflicts and poverty. Progress has also lagged in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the practice is entrenched among those living in poverty. Early marriage disproportionately affects women and girls globally, as the prevalence of the practice among boys is one sixth of that among girls.⁵

9. Some families seek early marriage of daughters to earn income and reduce their economic burden because they will receive a bride price or dowry. Some may do it because they are convinced that it will secure their daughter's future or protect her from destitution. The practice is also upheld by gendered social norms and stereotypes, including the socioeconomic risk of pregnancy outside marriage. The perceptions of so-called family honour and customary or religious laws also justify the practice. Moreover, multiple crises, among them conflict and climate change, as well as the ongoing impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, contribute to the continuation of the practice. For instance, climate change may lead to lower agricultural productivity and food shortages, while climate-related disasters, such as droughts or floods, disrupt the lives of families and may push them into poverty.

² See *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *World Family Planning 2022: Meeting the Changing Needs for Family Planning – Contraceptive Use by Age and Method* (United Nations publication, 2022).

⁵ UNICEF, "Is the end of child marriage within reach?".

Marrying off a young daughter can be used as a coping mechanism to reduce the family's economic burden in difficult times.

10. The harmful effects of child marriage include higher risks of pregnancy-related complications and maternal mortality and morbidity. Beyond the negative health consequences, there are social and economic disadvantages for the young brides and mothers, such as that young girls are prevented from fully developing their potential through education and labour market participation.

11. Overall, despite global advances, reductions in child marriage are not occurring fast enough to meet the target of eliminating the harmful practice by 2030. At the current rate, it would take 300 years to eliminate child marriage. Moreover, child marriage is more common in areas with rapid population growth.⁶

12. High fertility is also one of the factors contributing to maternal mortality. Although the worldwide maternal mortality ratio fell from 342 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 211 per 100,000 in 2017, the level remains unacceptably high, with about 287,000 women having died during and following pregnancy and childbirth in 2020. From a family perspective, a high maternal mortality ratio is noteworthy given the negative long-term effects of mothers' deaths on families, especially on the children who are left behind.⁷

13. Maternal mortality has been shown to have short- and long-term consequences on children and families through increased risks of child labour, poor learning outcomes, lower educational attainment, early marriage, early childbearing and disrupted living arrangements for the children left behind. Newborns and children suffer from poor nutrition, affecting their survival and growth. Older children are more likely to drop out of school to care for younger siblings and contribute to household and farm labour, which is often beyond their capacity.

14. Maternal mortality can also exacerbate gender inequality within families as a result of defined gender roles that render men and fathers unable or unwilling to assume household, childrearing and childcare responsibilities. For instance, when a family takes in orphans, women disproportionately assume the increased caregiving responsibilities. A related effect of this is the reduction in women's ability to access financial and material resources, including paid labour, as well as disruption to productive labour force participation.

15. The global fertility rate is likely to further decline from the current level of 2.3 to 2.1 births per woman by 2050. Currently, two thirds of the global population live in a country or area where the fertility rate is below 2.1 births per woman.⁸ The lower fertility rate can be attributed to several factors normally associated with social progress and effective social policy, such as the expansion of primary and secondary education and the increased availability of family planning services. Greater emphasis on gender equality, increased importance of self-realization and greater freedom of choice and opportunities in some countries contribute to women's decisions to have fewer children or no children. Moreover, some studies show that the availability of old age pensions lowers fertility rates as well. For instance, countries in sub-Saharan Africa with well-developed social pension systems tend to have lower fertility rates than the rest of the subregion.⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mokomane, "The impact of demographic trends on families".

⁸ See *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*.

⁹ Mokomane, "The impact of demographic trends on families".

16. Lower fertility is also linked to other more constraining factors, such as difficulty in reconciling work and family responsibilities, in particular the lack of adequate childcare options and the financial burden of childrearing.

17. According to surveys, in many countries with low fertility rates, women are having fewer children than they would like to have. This is due to many challenges, such as those mentioned above, including the high costs of childcare and difficulties in reconciling work and family life, but also to demands for higher education and the unequal division of household responsibilities and care responsibilities for ageing parents. Addressing these concerns through family-oriented policies and programmes is a priority for many Governments.

18. In most Western countries, the overall goal of family policies is to prevent social exclusion and child poverty and to provide families with the support they need to have the number of children they desire, rather than to increase fertility. This is attempted by providing equal opportunities through a mix of policies involving expenditures mostly on education and childcare. A mix of cash allowances, tax breaks and services, combined with investment in childcare provision, has been proved to be effective to some extent in increasing fertility rates.

19. To deal with low fertility, an ageing population and a shrinking labour force, some countries, including the Nordic countries, have a relatively open immigration policy accepting skilled immigrants and facilitating their integration into society. Traditionally, immigrant countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand have implemented a points-based immigration system prioritizing skilled immigrants. For instance, Statistics Canada projects that by 2041, around 50 per cent of the Canadian population will be immigrants and their Canadian-born children and that immigration will continue to be the main driver of population growth.

20. Decreasing fertility is also closely linked to the decline in marriage and union formation and the increase in divorce. In Western countries, from the mid-1960s onward birth rates declined, the age of first marriages rose and new ways of living arrangements such as premarital and non-marital cohabitation spread, especially among the younger generations. Moreover, with increased levels of education and employment among women, accompanied by a higher incidence of secularization and a weakening of traditional and religious values, different types of unions, such as cohabitation, become prevalent as a prelude or alternative to marriage.

21. In Southern Africa and Latin America, economic constraints are often blamed for delaying or inhibiting marriage. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, the traditionally “noble” custom of bride wealth would involve marriage payments from the family of a prospective husband to that of the bride and was traditionally seen as an exchange demonstrating a commitment to future reciprocal relationships between the families. Recently, however, the custom has become increasingly commercialized and, because of economic constraints, it has turned into an obstacle to entering into marriage and one of the major factors underlying the increased prevalence of cohabitation in the region.

22. In contrast to Western countries, where some legal protections are provided to cohabiting couples, cohabitation in many developing countries does not have any sociocultural or legal protections. Consequently, cohabitants and their family members often face numerous challenges that affect family functioning and stability, and which often lead to deficits of psychosocial and physical well-being, especially among any children involved.

23. A relevant trend associated with prevailing nuptiality patterns is the increased proportion of one-parent households, mostly headed by women, which accounts for 7.5 per cent of all households. Based on trends such as adolescent fertility, delayed

and no marriage, male migration and social norms or laws that make it difficult for women to re-marry or enter a new union, lone mothers comprise over 80 per cent of one-parent households globally.¹⁰

24. Although female-headed households have positive outcomes such as the woman's self-confidence, self-efficacy and social maturity, they are among the most vulnerable groups of society and confront many challenges relating to work-family conflict, such as overload of domestic responsibilities and fewer job opportunities. This is compounded by intrafamily problems such as intrafamily tensions and poverty reproduction. There are also social problems in some contexts, such as stigma, insecurity, isolation and exclusion. Combined, these challenges often lead to a lower quality of life, poorer subjective well-being and lower family life satisfaction in many female-headed households.

25. In smaller families, formal educational systems increase in importance and families are more likely to devote more resources to each child. Some research indicates that a growing global emphasis on investment in a small number of children rather than having larger families is likely to result in a growing crisis of care in the future. Concerns have been also raised about changing norms around filial duty, childlessness, divorce and separation as contributing factors to weaker family bonds and declining intergenerational solidarity.¹¹

26. Decreased fertility has also been linked with compromised family social capital, which is understood as social relationships that allow individuals access to resources possessed by their associates and the amount and quality of those resources upon which people depend for social, economic and emotional support. Family social capital provides material and other enabling resources such as emotional support that strengthen the capacity of individual family members to function and attain their current and future goals and objectives. Such capital has been shown to have a positive impact on physical and mental health. For instance, sibling relationships are an important source of companionship and emotional support in the older years when other social connections, such as those made in the workplace, diminish.

27. Declining mortality and fertility rates have resulted in rapid ageing of populations, with average longevity predicted to reach around 77.2 years of age by 2050. The current proportion of older persons is projected to increase from 10 per cent in 2022 to 16 per cent in 2050. Population ageing is well advanced in Europe and North America, while the population in Eastern and South-East Asia is ageing rapidly. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has experienced a very rapid ageing process, with the proportion of older persons in the region steadily increasing since the mid-1960s from 5.2 per cent of the population aged 60 years and over in 1950, and with the region following a similar trend to that seen in Asia since the 1970s. Looking ahead, the proportion of persons aged 60 years and over in Latin America and the Caribbean is projected to surpass that of the older population in Asia and Oceania by 2060 and approach the corresponding numbers for North America and Europe. By 2100, older persons in Latin America and the Caribbean will account for 38.2 per cent of the population in the region.¹²

28. Ageing is a positive trend, indicating that people are healthier and hence living longer than before. However, as people live longer, they become more at risk of non-communicable diseases which, along with diminished physical capacity and increased frailty, hamper their performance of daily activities and lead to a range of care needs beyond their health and basic needs for daily living, including social care,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*.

companionship, love and respect. This is particularly the case in contexts where there are limited or no social security or social welfare programmes or facilities to cater to the care, socioeconomic and psychosocial needs of older persons. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, only 27.1 per cent of older people are covered by at least one social protection benefit, mostly an old age pension. The support and care provided within multigenerational families that had been taken for granted in the past are often no longer there as a result of changes in society associated with growing urbanization, rural to urban migration and decreasing fertility.¹³

29. Fertility declines also mean that older persons will have fewer children to reside with and their families are smaller. The emotional and physical support and companionship network for both older persons and younger family members may thus be weakened. Small families are less able to cope with the increasing demands of older family members. In many developing regions, the extended family comprising generations of close relatives has been a provider of social security and care during times of increased vulnerability, such as job loss or illness. Similar trends have also been observed in Western countries, such as in the United States of America, during the 2008 financial crisis when many families relied on close relatives to pay for housing expenses and care of children.

30. Living arrangements define how older persons receive care, based on their spousal, sociodemographic and territorial situation. For example, cohabitation of older persons with children occurs in countries where demographic ageing is still incipient and fertility rates are high, especially in rural areas. Importantly, older persons may prefer growing old at home or “ageing in place” over institutionalized care, which is mostly reserved for those in need of specialized medical services.

31. Global estimates indicate that older persons live in households ranging in size from 2 to 12 persons, on average. Co-residence of older persons with their children and often grandchildren, based on reciprocity, is still common in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Africa, nearly all countries have at least half the population of older persons living with extended family members. In more developed regions, intergenerational co-residence has declined dramatically, with older persons mostly living in single-person households or households consisting of a couple only or a couple and their unmarried children. The average size of such households ranged from 1.9 persons in some European countries to 2.1 in the United States.¹⁴

32. Population ageing poses major challenges in some regions. For instance, in the European Union people aged 55 and older constitute over one third of the population, but the care infrastructure in Europe is insufficient to address their growing needs. Among women aged 65 or over, 33 per cent need long-term care, compared with 19 per cent of men in the same age group.¹⁵ This demand for long-term care not only affects the sustainability of health-care and social service systems and the well-being of older persons, but also the welfare of their families and of individual family members acting as informal caregivers. Consequently, the European Union is grappling with the challenge of adapting to the social and economic changes brought about by an ageing population and providing adequate care for those who need it.

33. The European care strategy, introduced in 2022, is aimed at ensuring high-quality, affordable and accessible care services throughout the European Union in order to enhance the well-being of both care recipients and their caregivers, both professional and informal. Accompanying the strategy are two recommendations for member States, focusing on the revision of the European Council targets on early

¹³ Mokomane, “The impact of demographic trends on families”.

¹⁴ *World Social Report 2023*, p. 120.

¹⁵ European Commission, *2021 Long-Term Care Report: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities in an Ageing Society*, vol. 1 (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021).

childhood education and care (the Barcelona targets) and access to affordable, high-quality, long-term care. The strategy affirms the right to care and the autonomy of persons in need of care to decide how they receive it and it is underlined in the strategy that the design, implementation and evaluation of care systems at all levels must go hand in hand with the needs of stakeholders, that is, persons in need of care, informal carers, workers' representatives and formal care providers. Governments are reminded in the strategy of their responsibility to better support informal carers with income and services by implementing and upgrading the provisions of the European Union directive on work-life balance.

34. In Latin America and the Caribbean, some progress in care provision has been made over the past five years. For instance, the promulgation of laws and decrees that provide legal support for the creation of national care policies and programmes (Uruguay); efforts aimed at achieving a cultural change fostering the recognition, revaluation and redistribution of care work (Argentina); actions aimed at changing the current social organization of care (Plurinational State of Bolivia); training for caregivers in home and community settings (Costa Rica); and legal protection for domestic and care workers (Chile).

35. Beyond investment in formal and informal care arrangements, intergenerational programmes that intentionally bring generations together to enrich participants' lives and help to tackle social and community issues deserve more attention. Such programmes bring people of different generations together for ongoing, mutually beneficial planned activities, aimed at achieving specific goals and promoting greater understanding and respect among generations. According to Generations United, reciprocity, sustainability, intentionality, training, support and viewing younger and older people as assets are hallmarks of successful programmes.¹⁶

36. Among intergenerational practices, intergenerational housing and sites should be noted. Intergenerational housing is a multifaceted solution to challenging demographic trends, the social isolation and loneliness affecting older and younger people and the lack of affordable housing. Intergenerational shared sites connect younger generations with older adults in the same physical location, with periodic activities and programmes bringing them together.

37. Multigenerational living arrangements tend to enhance intergenerational relationships, which are important for child socialization, family cohesion, the subjective well-being of younger and older family members and positive health outcomes for older family members. Intergenerational housing arrangements and sites facilitate kinship across generations, foster mutual support, reduce isolation and promote intergenerational bonding.

38. The growing popularity of multigenerational living arrangements in the West shows that family solidarity may not be weakening. As social support diminishes, and as housing prices rise, the importance of family support is expanding.¹⁷ For instance, a growing number of young people rely on financial support from their family owing to growing educational requirements and weakening job markets. Some research indicates that intergenerational solidarity within families is increasing as a result of financial stressors on young people such as volatile economic conditions and youth unemployment.¹⁸

¹⁶ Generations United, "Making the case for intergenerational programs", 2021.

¹⁷ Social support, defined as either psychological or material resources, is regarded as a protective resource that helps individuals cope with stress. See Shiyue Cao and others, "Age difference in roles of perceived social support and psychological capital on mental health during COVID-19", *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 13, No. 801241 (February 2022).

¹⁸ Generations United, "Making the case for intergenerational programs".

39. Embracing intergenerational relationships and actively engaging in acts of care and support build a more compassionate and inclusive society where all generations can thrive together. Intergenerational mentoring programmes, where older adults share their knowledge and skills with younger generations, can bridge the generational gap and create meaningful connections. Younger generations can play a significant role in bridging the digital divide by providing technological support and training to older adults. From teaching innovative technologies to sharing hobbies, interests and talents, intergenerational learning enriches the lives of all generations.

40. As an illustration, Canada HomeShare brings together older adults and students in a co-housing initiative to reduce social isolation among its older residents and provide affordable housing for its younger residents. Piloted in Toronto and expanding around the country, the programme is aimed at providing safe and affordable housing to students. At the same time, students offer assistance around the home and additional monthly income for older adults so they can continue to live independently in their communities. Each of the sites also provides social work and social services to help older adults thrive while ageing in place.¹⁹

III. Status of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2024

A. National level²⁰

41. In response to a note verbale sent by the Secretariat in 2022, Member States shared information concerning their policies and programmes to manage the challenges of current demographic trends. The responses were focused on family-oriented policies that facilitate care for children and older persons, active ageing and gender equality, as described below.

42. In Azerbaijan, training courses are offered on the topics of gender and reproductive health, early marriage and gender equality, as well as on valuing girls in the family and empowering women and girls in society. Awareness-raising activities have also been conducted on family planning, including campaigns against sex-selective abortions.

43. In Belarus, taking into account the demographic projections and in line with international recommendations, a national strategy entitled “active ageing 2030” is aimed at creating a society for all ages and ensuring a higher quality of life for older persons. The Government supports maternity leave for mothers with children up to the age of three while the family capital programme supports families with three or more children.

44. In Hungary, a variety of policies facilitating work-family balance have been promoted. In an effort to increase fertility, the family tax benefit has been expanded and a tax allowance for first-wed couples has been offered since 2015. In addition, the nursery system has been strengthened and an in-vitro fertility programme has been supported. The Government noted demographic achievements over the past decade which indicate that since 2010, Hungary has seen the highest increase in fertility rates in Europe, reaching a peak rate of 1.59, a 25-year high, in 2021. Moreover, between 2010 and 2012, the number of marriages doubled and more people chose to have large

¹⁹ See www.canadahomeshare.com/#:~:text=Canada%20HomeShare%E2%84%A2%20is%20an,create%20mutually%20beneficial%20living%20solutions.

²⁰ Based on responses to a note verbale sent to Member States and United Nations entities containing information on family policies and programmes relating to demographic change. See www.un.org/development/desa/family/2022/10/13/good-practices-in-family-policy-making/.

families. Divorce rates are at a six-decade low.²¹ The Government credits its support for families with those tangible results. In terms of support for older persons, a preferential old-age pension scheme was introduced recognizing women's family and labour market participation. The scheme also gave opportunities to grandmothers to provide care for their grandchildren. Non-retired grandparents are also eligible for childcare benefits if both parents (or the single parent) are employed. The Senior Council, an advisory body of the Government, represents the interest of older persons and takes into account their proposals in the development of government decisions. Its members are experts in academia, social policy, local authorities, religious communities and leaders of non-governmental organizations in the field of ageing.

45. In Mongolia, measures have been taken to increase pensions and provide so-called age endowment benefits and free public transportation for older persons and persons with disabilities. A social welfare fund provides discounts for specialized health-care services. To create long-term care for older persons, an action plan for the period 2022–2024 was developed and a new model of care for the elderly will be piloted in the near future.

46. Poland has elaborated its demographic strategy up to 2040 with an overall goal of increasing fertility. Specific interventions were introduced under the objectives of strengthening the family (ensuring financial security for families and support for their housing needs), removing barriers for parents who want to have children (family-friendly labour market and childcare facilities, health-care infrastructure and services for families) and improving the quality of governance and policy implementation at the central and local government levels.

47. In Singapore, the capacity and range of services for older persons has been expanded, including home and day-care services for vulnerable seniors and an eldercare centre providing active ageing support and an information and referral service. The Government also launched a caregiver support action plan to further support the caregivers of older persons in the areas of respite services, workplace support, care navigation, financial support and caregiver empowerment and training. Home caregiving grants were enhanced and intergenerational living arrangements were supported. Intergenerational bonds are being strengthened through character and citizenship education in schools and participation in community service.

48. In Türkiye, a document for the country's 2030 ageing vision is under development, with an approach based on rights and social inclusion, to support active and healthy ageing, participation in social life and the strengthening of the rights of older persons. The document suggests that ageing should be addressed both at the level of population ageing in general and from the life-course perspective, considering the changing needs and capacities of individuals as they get older. Care services for older persons, provided by the Ministry of Family and Social Services, follow the integrated care services model, where institutional care and home support complement each other. Day-care centres for older persons who prefer daytime services include psychosocial and health support and cultural activities for those who live on their own or with their families. Such support is foreseen to reduce the need for long-term residential care services in the future. Moreover, temporary and guest care services are provided to support family members who care for their family members with disabilities.

²¹ Submission of the Government of Hungary regarding its activities in support of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, available at www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2022/10/Family-Submission-by-Hungary-2022-30th-anniversary-of-the-International-Year.pdf.

B. Regional level

49. Preparatory meetings, including expert group meetings and awareness-raising events, have been conducted at the regional level, focusing mostly on demographic trends and their impact on families, together with good practices and policy recommendations. The meetings were organized in cooperation with civil society and regional and local stakeholders.

50. The regional expert group meeting on the theme “Demographic changes and family well-being in Africa”, organized in January 2023 in Pretoria by the Department of Sociology in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Doha International Family Institute and the International Federation for Family Development, concluded, inter alia, that as the African population is projected to experience significant demographic changes, with an increase in the ageing population, targeted policies and programmes were needed to consider the unique cultural, economic and social context of each country. To address the gaps in care, Governments in Africa should support the comprehensive development of long-term care systems. While the tradition of relying on extended family to care for older adults should be respected, Governments and community organizations needed to consider ways to ease the burden of care with new policies and programmes. Moreover, investment in human capital was essential so as to take advantage of the population dividend and mobilize the youth bulge.

51. The regional expert group meeting on the theme “Population ageing and family well-being in Europe” was organized in May 2023 in Torun, Poland, by the International Federation for Family Development, in cooperation with the Kujawsko-Pomorskie region of Poland and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A number of recommendations were offered on families, ageing, work-family balance, health, education, equality and migration. For instance, the experts recommended supporting and acknowledging the contributions of migrant domestic workers in family work, including care for older persons.

52. The Global Intergenerational Conference, held in July 2023 in Washington, D.C., organized by Generations United, focused on intergenerational programmes, policies and solutions spanning a wide range of perspectives and experiences. It featured the Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network, a national technical assistance centre in the United States for those who serve grandfamilies and kinship families. The centre offers a new way for government agencies and non-profit organizations in states, tribes and territories to collaborate and work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve support and services to such families. It was emphasized at the Conference that kinship caregiving benefits children, as opposed to entering a child welfare system that may include orphanages or foster care. In honour of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, a plenary session was focused on the so-called grandparent advantage, described as the ability to recycle human knowledge, understanding, culture and experience to benefit future generations. In an event prior to the Conference, an expert symposium on the theme “Changing demographics can result in strengthening families” was organized by Generations United in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The event was focused on changing demographics, specifically within the context of the changing roles of older adults in families and civil society support for multigenerational families, highlighting best practice examples from Singapore, Uganda and the United States. The experts noted that as global demographics increasingly reflected “beanpole” families, where multiple generations but with fewer members were living at the same time, policies designed

to support families necessitated a review of policy concerning the family, ageing and children through an all-ages lens.

53. Moreover, experts at the symposium emphasized that in urban spaces, social policies that incentivized the formation and utility of multigenerational spaces strengthened intergenerational cohesion and maximized the evident benefits that older persons brought to many families and households, including providing financial assistance, instilling values of empathy and cooperation and offering care and support for all generations. In addition to economic and social benefits, multigenerational households carried a significantly lower carbon footprint than their monogenerational counterparts. Engaging diverse intergenerational lived-experience experts in collaborative policy design would ensure efficiency in implementation and impact.²²

54. The expert group meeting on the theme “Home/family and climate change” was organized in September 2023 in Nottingham, United Kingdom, by Nottingham Trent University and the Home Renaissance Foundation, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The meeting was focused on the understanding and building of knowledge about the power of home to transform societies in the face of the climate emergency. Topics under discussion included the remote economy and home-based work, the changing landscape of work-life balance and the societal and environmental impact of working from home, and energy efficient home designs. The report of the meeting will be presented at the observance of the International Day of Families in 2024, which is to be focused on families and climate change.²³

55. The regional expert group meeting on “Megatrends and families: focus on demographic changes in Latin America”, was held in October 2023 in Mexico City. It was organized by the Institute for Family Policy Analysis in Mexico and the International Federation for Family Development, in cooperation with the Doha International Family Institute and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the participation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting was focused on fertility, mortality and family dynamics, youth transitions and labour inclusion, and recognition of unpaid work and shared responsibility at home, as well as migration, and offered recommendations for the region and beyond. It was preceded by the Third National Meeting of Family Sustainable Cities, held in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, which gathered representatives of municipalities in Mexico that were signatories of the Venice Declaration on Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Development.²⁴ The mayors and practitioners shared good practices from their respective regions.

56. The expert group meeting for North America on “Megatrends and families: focus on demographic change, migration and urbanization in North America”, organized in November 2023 in Orlando, United States, by the National Council on Family Relations, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Federation for Family Development, discussed interlinkages between demographic change, urbanization and migration, intergenerational relations and policy implications for the region. Some experts noted that, recently, climate change had emerged as a factor shaping fertility intentions, as many adults of childbearing age were rethinking the impact of climate change and the related risks

²² Generations United, “Changing demographics can result in strengthening families”, 25 July 2023; and Generations United, “Supplemental materials”, 25 July 2023.

²³ Home Renaissance Foundation, “Home and climate change, 5th Experts Meeting”, 28 August 2023.

²⁴ See <https://familyperspective.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/venicedeclaration.pdf>.

on a new generation of children who would be disproportionately affected by the climate crisis.²⁵

C. International level

57. In 2023, the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the international level were focused on advocacy, awareness-raising and research activities, analysing mainly the impacts of demographic changes on families.

58. Two side events, organized in New York on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, in February 2023, were focused on family issues. At the event on the theme “The role of family science in sustainable development”, organized by the International Federation for Family Development in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, emphasis was placed on how family scientists were helping to overcome inequalities, accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²⁶ Another side event, organized by the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations in partnership with the Doha International Family Institute, the International Federation for Family Development, the World Family Organization and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the theme “Towards full and productive employment and decent work for all families: the role of non-governmental organizations” featured good practices from civil society.

59. The International Day of Families observance in 2023, on “Families and demographic change”, held in May in New York, highlighted the findings of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the *World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World*, noting that older persons should be able to continue working for as long as they can and want to, but not be compelled to do so. Flexible, phased or partial retirement policies that are more equitable than a uniform increase in mandatory retirement age were needed. It was observed that changes in living arrangements and ageing of populations had increased the demand for long-term care globally and that the COVID-19 crisis had exposed weaknesses in care. Rethinking approaches to long-term care would benefit today’s older people and those who cared for them, as well as future generations of older persons. Making the case for intergenerational programmes, the event was also focused on the importance of intergenerational equity and solidarity, and it was emphasized that intergenerational cohesion benefited all generations. A good practice of the American Association of Retired Persons Foundation Experience Corps, a community-based volunteer programme that empowered people over 50 to serve as tutors to help students become better readers, was featured. The programme had proved to be a triple win, helping students to succeed, older adults to thrive and communities to grow stronger. It offered training, peer networks and ongoing evaluation.

60. As part of research and advocacy, a background paper on the impact of demographic trends on families was launched during the observance of the International Day of Families. The paper analyses the impact of demographic changes on families in different regions. It offers detailed recommendations on topics ranging from lowering maternal mortality rates to adolescent pregnancy and the risks of widowhood. Prioritizing the development and effective implementation of social security and social pension systems to cater to the care and support of older people as traditional family support and its pool of unpaid family caregivers gradually decreases

²⁵ Margo Hilbrecht, “Interlinkages between demographic change, urbanization and migration in Canada: policy implications”, 11 November 2023.

²⁶ See <https://familyperspective.org/2023/01/26/iffd-briefing-9-february-2023/>.

with the decline in fertility is recommended. It is emphasized in the paper that there is a need for multisectoral responses aimed at improving the well-being and protection of the rights of non-traditional family structures that are emerging as a result of prevailing nuptiality patterns. These responses should be implemented without undermining the right and choice of family members to live in these family structures or unions.²⁷

61. The Vienna non-governmental organization Committee on the Family organized an international forum to observe the International Day of Families, with presentations on the theme “Climate change migration: impact on families”, where the latest research by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on human trafficking and migrant smuggling with a focus on children was presented. The Committee also included migration as a theme in its online quarterly bulletin, “Families International” to highlight the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2024.²⁸

62. A briefing convened by the Permanent Mission of Qatar and the Doha International Family Institute at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 17 October 2023 featured current preparations for the international conference to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family on the theme “Family and contemporary megatrends: shaping technological, migration, urbanization, demographic and climate change policies to protect and empower families”. The conference will be hosted by Qatar and organized by the Doha International Family Institute with support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. It will serve as a global platform for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, experts, academics, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders to exchange insights and address major megatrends and will take place from 29 to 31 October 2024 in Doha.

63. At the observance of World Cities Day held in October 2023 in New York, a platform of good practices of the Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Families project linked to the Venice Declaration was launched. The platform features good urban practices that improve the well-being of families around the world. The event was organized by the International Federation for Family Development in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).²⁹

64. Future activities in preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family will focus on the analysis of climate change and its impact on families, as well as on the interlinkages among megatrends. A high-level panel for the commemoration of the anniversary will take place at the sixty-second session of the Commission for Social Development. The observance of the International Day of Families will also celebrate the anniversary and will address the topic of “Families and climate change”. Moreover, international and regional expert group meetings will take place throughout 2024 and other commemorative events are planned at all levels.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

65. Demographic trends, in particular fertility and mortality patterns, have a significant impact on families and family well-being. High levels of overall fertility, and adolescent fertility in particular, have adverse consequences for the health, well-being and educational attainment of women, especially young women and their

²⁷ Mokomane, “The impact of demographic trends on families”.

²⁸ See www.viennafamilycommittee.org.

²⁹ See www.citiesforfamilies.org.

children. Urgent action is needed to remedy this situation, acknowledging that in high-fertility countries, empowerment through education and family planning is known to yield enormous dividends in the form of economic growth and human capital development.³⁰

66. Child marriage, which is mostly prevalent in regions with high fertility, has numerous negative consequences for the development and well-being of children, especially girls. To address the situation, legal, social, economic and educational measures are needed, including enforcing a legal minimum of age for marriage at 18; public-awareness campaigns communicating the negative consequences of child marriage; and promoting access to education for girls and economic empowerment of girls and their families. Conditional cash transfers and vocational training help families financially so they can support their children without resorting to child marriage. It is also essential to work with local communities to change social norms and attitudes towards child marriage. Ensuring access to reproductive and maternal health-care services, including family planning and prenatal care, is indispensable as well, as is birth registration, which ensures accurate documentation of a child's age.

67. Although mortality has declined around the world thanks to improvements in health care and sanitation and overall social development, there are still wide gaps in life expectancy at birth between certain groups of countries. This can be addressed by the development and effective implementation of social health insurance systems, as well as universal health-care and long-term care systems. Moreover, although there is a need to reduce the levels of all types of mortality, maternal mortality is a primary indicator of development and greatly affects family well-being. To reduce maternal mortality, better access to sexual and reproductive health care, as well as investment in health-care facilities in remote areas, are key.

68. Progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to health, education and gender equality, are likely to bring about the further transition to lower fertility. This would suggest that families are increasingly able to achieve a desired family size. However, in some countries, surveys indicate that women desire more children than they actually have. This fertility gap, attributable mostly to women's labour market participation, needs to be addressed.

69. As noted in the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, safeguarding access to quality sexual and reproductive health for all and instituting family-friendly policies are the best ways to ensure that people can achieve their individual reproductive goals and optimize their contribution to society.³¹ Among such measures, ensuring work-family balance through parental leave provision, flexible working arrangements and investments in childcare services have helped families to achieve their desired family size.

70. Significant medical and economic advancements have resulted in increasing life expectancy and declining birth rates globally. This demographic shift poses unique challenges related to both family structures and health-care systems. As families are shrinking, the need for long-term care services and support for older family members is growing, placing additional demands on family caregivers, especially women.

71. The importance of family care provision cannot be overstated. Families act as primary caregivers and contribute to maintaining good health by offering care during illness, promoting healthy behaviours and providing social and emotional support. Caregiver support, including resources, respite care, counselling services and educational programmes, can alleviate the challenges faced by kinship caregivers.

³⁰ *State of the World Population Report 2023*, foreword.

³¹ *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, p. 51.

The need for support for caregiving responsibilities of family members across generations needs to be recognized.

72. With decreasing fertility rates resulting in smaller families, the current and projected declines in fertility point to the fact that long-term care will increasingly become a major issue requiring an adequate policy response. There is a need to prioritize the development and effective implementation of social security and social pension systems catering to the care and support of older persons as traditional family support and its pool of unpaid family caregivers gradually decrease.

73. The absence of accessible and equitable long-term care takes a heavy toll on older persons, their families and whole societies, with women bearing the brunt of deficiencies as they account for the majority of both care recipients and paid and unpaid caregivers. To remedy this situation, a more equitable, person-centred approach for the provision of care involving governments, businesses, civil society, communities and households is recommended, addressing both paid, formal forms of care and unpaid, informal ones.³²

74. As societies evolve, changes in family structures and dynamics require that family policies should also evolve to support kinship across generations. Demographic transformations should be acknowledged and addressed by policies based on intergenerational solidarity to ensure that all generations benefit and are not pitted against one another. As intergenerational interactions tend to foster mutual respect, understanding and appreciation, intergenerational programmes deserve more attention.

75. The benefits of intergenerational relationships are bi-directional with benefits for all generations. Going beyond financial support, older family members step into the role of a mentor, complementing family relationships or providing support where family links are weak. Social protection benefits such as old age pensions have been found to benefit the well-being of entire families and tend to mitigate some of the factors contributing to intergenerational transfer of poverty.

76. Responsive policies and programmes that strengthen and support families help to reduce challenges brought about by demographic shifts. Investing in family-oriented policies and programmes translates into improvements in the social and economic capital of individuals and communities. Only a coordinated response will help to achieve stronger relationships and intergenerational solidarity within families and societies.

77. **Member States are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Ensure access to quality education, reproductive health services and family planning for all, in particular young and adolescent women;**

(b) **Take measures to eliminate child marriage through legal, social, economic and education measures, including public-awareness campaigns on the negative consequences of the practice and working with local communities to change social norms and attitudes;**

(c) **Reduce maternal mortality through better access to sexual and reproductive health care and investments in health-care facilities in remote areas;**

(d) **Invest in work-family balance policies, including flexible working arrangements, parental leave and quality and affordable childcare arrangements;**

³² *World Social Report 2023*, p. 113.

- (e) **Develop or strengthen social security and pension systems for older persons;**
- (f) **Invest in family-based care systems for older persons, as well as institutional health-care provision, especially long-term care;**
- (g) **Invest in informal and formal caregiver support, including resources, respite care, counselling and educational programmes;**
- (h) **Take a multigenerational, life-course perspective in public policy, recognizing the contributions of all generations and strengthening intergenerational solidarity;**
- (i) **Invest in and promote intergenerational shared sites and multigenerational living arrangements to facilitate kinship across generations;**
- (j) **Expand evidence-based research on demographic trends and their impact on families in order to develop adequate policies to ensure that families can have the number of children they desire;**
- (k) **Strengthen a gender perspective and empowerment of women and girls in overall family policymaking, in particular as relevant to adolescent fertility and child marriage;**
- (l) **As part of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family preparations and beyond, continue to support research, awareness-raising activities and policy actions at the national, regional and international levels on the impact of technological, urbanization, migration, demographic and climate change trends on families.³³**

³³ For detailed recommendations, see Mokomane, “The impact of demographic trends on families”. See also the additional recommendations from the regional expert group meetings in preparation for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, available at <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/news/iyf2024>.