

## Statement of Civil Society in Support of the Group of Friends of the Family

May 16, 2016

Delivered by Annie Franklin, Spokesperson for the UN Family Rights Caucus at the occasion of the **“Uniting Nations for a Family Friendly World “** event.

I have the privilege of delivering this statement of support for the Group of the Friends of the Family on behalf of hundreds of civil society organizations from around the world that are part of the Civil Society for the Family Platform and the UN Family Rights Caucus.

We welcome the formation of the Group of the Friends of the Family at the United Nations and the holding of this event.

We are confident the family will indeed “unite nations” in a common cause that is vital for societies and the international community as a whole, as the title of our event today suggests, particularly to overcome poverty and protect the human rights of every human being without exception, including through the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda.

We affirm the importance of the family as natural and fundamental group unit of society, the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all persons, particularly children and youth, and its irreplaceable role as social and economic agent. We look forward to further efforts of the Group to highlight this and the need to ensure that international policies focus on the family and leverage its role as an agent of development.

At this point, we want to draw attention to the beautiful image of the family at the center of the mural in the UN Security Council Chamber, which envisions the family as the centerpiece of the United Nations project. Indeed, as Norwegian artist Per Lasson Krohg beautifully depicted, the family—father, mother, child—is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and the phoenix that regenerates societies from within. The family is the keystone of a prosperous, harmonious, and sustainable future.

We affirm that the fundamental right of men and women to marry and found a family lies at the core of the obligations of UN member states toward the family.

We sadly recognize that often men and women are unable to exercise their fundamental right to freely marry and found a family, and that families are torn apart because of lack of possibilities and opportunities. This frustrates the dreams and hopes of women, men, and children, and harms society at large.

We also affirm the fundamental human right of each child to know and be cared for by his or her mother and father, as well as other core obligations flowing from this fundamental right, including the obligations of states with regard to enacting family reunification policies, the rights of the child to a cultural and religious identity, and the prior right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children.

We recognize the profound transformations taking place in many societies, where marriage and family formation are declining, families increasingly find it difficult to stay intact, and how the right of children to know and be cared for by their parents is compromised daily by these situations and other new challenges to protecting the family.

We are especially alarmed by the hundreds of thousands of refugee children whose families have been torn apart by conflict and call upon all nations to speedily assist in their reunification with their family.

In this context, we especially welcome the recent attention devoted to the family in United Nations resolutions by the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council. We are confident the Group of Friends of the Family will cement these normative gains for the family going forward in order to rise to meet the many challenges of protecting the family in our world today.

We look forward to increased support from the UN membership and the UN system for the Group of Friends of the Family.

We are confident the Group will help the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies dedicate the attention the family merits in the efforts of member states towards achieving the 2030 Development Agenda and fulfilling their obligations towards the family.

The Group of Friends of the Family is only just beginning.

We are confident that its importance will grow in the years ahead as the challenges of protecting the family become ever more clear. We stand by to assist Member States and the UN system in identifying challenges to the family and ways to successfully address them.

Thank you.