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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: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by Fundación Contemporánea, 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

Strengthening the family as a strategy for eradication of poverty and sustainable development

INTRODUCTION:

The Fundacion Contemporanea presents this statement for the 55th period of sessions of the Social Development Commission. The Fundacion Contemporanea is an institution that for 24 years has been working in the development of leadership in Argentina, centered in educational and social skills. One of the areas that this foundation works specifically on is the study and analysis of public policies that affect the family as an institution. The Fundacion Contemporanea was recognised in 2014 as a special consultant entity.

FAMILIES, AGENTS OF DEVELOPMENT

A human being is complex having multiple needs and desires living in a network of long-term relationships. These relationships accompany and condition human's through life. Therefore, human needs are understood as a system: they are interrelated and interactive. There is no hierarchy of needs, rather, simultaneity, complementarity and trade-offs are features of the process of needs satisfaction (Max Neef). That's why, we can talk about "integral citizens", as it's considered that the human being must harmoniously have access to civic, social, economic and cultural rights, and all them conform an articulated and indivisible group.

When the family is considered an agent of development, it is presupposed that the family is still the best natural area to favour a harmonised access to the needs in the different moments of life (infancy, youth, adulthood and old age).

The focus on family offers a wide solution towards the development issue with a human perspective; although it's normally focused from a perspective influenced by different political sectors or social groups. That's why public policies oriented to family reach maximum effectiveness when they aboard the family as a unit and conceive their dynamic as a whole, instead of putting the focus on the needs of individual members.

Each human being has a vital cycle that inevitably is with a family. Each moment of life, each achievement and each failure is inevitably shared with the family. It's in the home and in their most intimate dynamics where the effects of unemployment, violence, school desertion and delinquency affect. It is also in the home where the effects of getting a respectable job, access to high quality public goods and public services, access to vacations, access to clothes and food occur. The family is important as there's unavoidable feedback between the family and what each member of the family contributes.

This occurs because humans are relational and this is often neglected at times losing a constitute dimension of the human being. Beside all the particular achievements that contribute to the welfare state of each one, it's necessary to protect and valorise the social bonds given with harmony inside the family circle, but also in the neighborhood and in the whole community. In other words, we should not lose from our sight the protection of social networks that generate

contention. Social networks have been defined as those sociable structures where material and symbolical goods circulate between more or less distant people. This is the bond that allows the mother to leave her son with the neighbor when she has to take her daughter to the policlinic and what allows the father that is a businessman to ask for a job for his son to another colleague. “Social networks operate as one of the most basic survival resources for families that live in precarious conditions. It’s one of the most important mechanisms of social mobility and use of opportunities.” (PNUD, 1998, p.142)

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

Just as it’s necessary to protect families and collaborate towards their strengthening through different public policies, it’s equally necessary to elaborate better diagnosis in regards to the degree of shortages they suffer.

We consider that the evaluation of such shortages and degree of human scarcities within a family, should be approached by a multidimensional approach, considering all human capabilities.

This evaluation should not only attempt to measure multiple shortages, but the level of inequality that exists in that particular society with regards to the analysed shortage. Social inequalities prove to be gaps of autonomy, understood as the availability of different degrees of freedom to undertake life projects genuinely treasured by people.

The multidimensional approach produces different scenarios and human realities. As such, public policies become personalised policies that adjust themselves to the multiple experiences of shortage that either a person or family can suffer. For the time being, there will be both poor families in vulnerable conditions. Poverty and vulnerability are related, but are not the same. Poverty reflects current assets and capabilities, whilst vulnerability is a more dynamic concept related to factors that determine the potential and future status of poverty. Vulnerability considers the current capacities of the individuals as well as the outside factors we face, and the probability that this combination will generate a change in status.

There is a current interest to board multidimensional challenges situated above the threshold of economic poverty, targeting the inclusion of topics such as quality of labour, social protection throughout the entire life cycle, social care systems, the use of time of men and women, quality of education, among others. There are still many human beings that are walking the path of development. They are people that, having not a sufficient level of income, do not possess a set of assets necessary to progress and improve their lives in accordance to the demands of their surroundings. These groups constitute, according to our assumptions, vulnerable groups. They not only have been left “behind”, but are also exposed to economic ups and downs, with the continuous hazard of falling into economic poverty, since they will likely fit into what we call multidimensional poverty.

This approach towards public policy, which begins from the recognition of the human race in general and the personal experiences of shortage, supposes a multi-sectorial effort to constantly monitor such realities and understand that the road towards development is a long one. A road which requires, in accordance to each stage of life and moment of development, that the individual finds public policies that sustain and clear the path for them.