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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: promoting empowerment of people in achieving
poverty eradication, social integration and full employment
and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by Alliance Defense Fund, 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.



Statement

Alliance Defense Fund is a not-for-profit international legal alliance of more than 2,200 lawyers dedicated to the protection of fundamental human rights. It has been involved in more than 500 cases before national and international forums, including the supreme courts of Argentina, Honduras, India, Mexico, Peru and the United States of America, in addition to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. It has also provided expert testimony before several European parliaments, the European Parliament and the United States Congress. It has accreditation with the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union (the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Parliament).

In celebration of the International Year of the Family, we call upon Member States at the fifty-second session of the Commission for Social Development to reaffirm our immutable human rights, with a particular focus on the vital role of the family. As the deadline for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals looms, it is imperative that the United Nations highlight the family as the fundamental group unit of society, in accordance with article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The authentic empowerment of the person and the sustainable eradication of poverty are achievable only by focusing on the tremendous value of the family to society.

It is within the family that children first experience solidarity. Through family relationships, children learn crucial lessons in peace, justice and respect for others. Fathers and mothers offer distinct and complementary models for children, providing them with unique stability and security. Strong families are the bedrock of strong and healthy children who build strong communities. Given the vitally important role of the family in the care and education of children, it follows that States must afford families the widest possible protection and assistance, as noted in article 10 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The family is the essential building block for poverty eradication and flourishing societies.

Education is an essential solution to the problem of poverty. Families have a major influence on their children's achievements in school and throughout life. Growing scientific evidence affirms that a child's family relationships are essential to improving his or her level of education. Recent studies confirm that, the more involved parents are in their child's education, the more likely it is that the child will succeed academically. In fact, the best indication of a student's success is not income or social status, but the extent to which the student's family is involved. Children with involved parents, regardless of their income or background, are more likely to attend school regularly, have better social skills, achieve high grades and go on to post-secondary education.

Families depend on the protections and freedoms that Governments provide. Governments, in turn, depend on families to raise healthy and engaged children who will develop into concerned citizens and contribute positively to society. The ultimate ability of children to make positive contributions greatly depends on the opportunities afforded to them, however. Poverty can be a crippling obstacle to the ability of a family to provide for children. That is why we commend the United Nations for its focus on poverty eradication and look forward to a world without

extreme poverty. The greater the economic resources available to a family, the greater freedom it has to explore educational opportunities for its children. This in turn leads to more educated youth who are better equipped to capitalize on available economic opportunities and contribute to the flourishing of society.

Conclusion

The success and happiness of children depend on their ability to grow and thrive in stable homes where education, hard work, responsibility and personal initiative are cultivated. It is within the family that children develop self-confidence and learn how to interact and coexist in society. Parents are their child's first and most important teachers and they possess the unique opportunity to provide a solid environment filled with educational and economic opportunities. These opportunities contribute not only to the empowerment of the individual person, but also to the advancement of society as a whole.

Note: Statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Vida y Familia de Guadalajara, Mujer para la Mujer and Asociación Gilberto.