

6 December 2004

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jean Ping,
President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Occasion of the International Year of the Family**

I wish to welcome all of you this morning to this plenary meeting of the General Assembly to observe the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

In the 10 years since the observance of the International Year of the Family, great attention has been given to family policies in many countries. The issue of family policy remains firmly the responsibility of national Governments and local authorities. Indeed, the General Assembly also decided that the major activities for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family should be concentrated at the local, national and regional levels.

Governments continue to recognize the family as the primary means for people to live together and to provide mutual nurturing and support. At the same time, family situations continue to change and diversify, and social disparities exist, especially in terms of structures, functions, living arrangements and living conditions. Consequently, many countries have found it necessary to review their own policies in an effort to keep abreast of changing family circumstances, needs and expectations.

There is growing awareness that a more comprehensive approach should be taken to harmonize actions on behalf of the family. The family dimension should be taken into account in all aspects of policy, and efforts made to ensure that sectoral policies complement those that deal directly with the family and its specific needs. It is therefore important for Governments to develop a more integrated family policy - taking into account education, employment, and healthcare issues for instance - that effectively and visibly complements existing sectoral policies and attempts to meet the needs of individuals while recognizing that they are also members of families. An integrated family policy should also overcome the difficulties of coordinating different social administrations and departments.

Moreover, while the responsibility for developing family policy and considering the impact of other policies on families remains with national Governments, they will likely wish to work closely with civil society, the private sector and all other concerned actors in developing and implementing family policy frameworks. Local authorities should take part in drafting and evaluating the family policy, in implementing the policy measures and in adapting them to regional and local requirements.

In preparation for the observance of the tenth anniversary, many Governments have taken measures that have long-term implications for family policies and programmes. It is therefore

fitting to review some of the activities that have been taking place at the national level over the past ten years since the declaration of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

During the past 10 years, encouraged by resolutions and recommendations of the General Assembly, a number of countries have reviewed their constitutions and legal systems regarding issues relating to families, children, adolescents and youth, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Many countries have also enacted or considered new laws that directly benefit families. The laws and bills show that there is special interest in strengthening parent-child relations, dealing with conjugal and family disputes, helping people balance work and family responsibilities, protecting mothers and promoting measures related to the health and well-being of family members.

Both central and local Governments have established policies, programs or services that target families as beneficiaries, either directly or indirectly. A main objective is to allocate adequate financial benefits to families, in particular to those living in scarce conditions, in order to help them meet more readily the expenses associated with caring for family members.

Several countries have organized national conferences to observe the tenth anniversary. Others have organized seminars and panel discussions, often in partnership with NGOs. I particularly welcome the Doha Declaration of 30 November 2004, which reaffirmed international commitments, including UN resolutions and declarations to the family, and called upon all governments, international organizations and member of civil society to take effective measures to support the family in times of peace and war.

Governments everywhere have fulfilled their commitment to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. And while family policies remain firmly the responsibility of national Governments, the United Nations provides essential international attention, recognition, assistance and support to national Governments. One of the main objectives of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family is to revitalize public awareness for family issues and to renew support for family policies and programs. In being here today, we are ensuring international attention for an issue of vital importance for all peoples of the world.

Thank you.