

3 December 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Observance of the twentieth Anniversary of the International
Year of the family**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to address you all today as we gather to observe the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

Over the last two decades, the international community has recognized the importance of families in development efforts and shared global concern over their wellbeing.

This concern has been expressed in human rights instruments, in outcomes of major conferences and summits and in resolutions of the General Assembly itself.

The International Year of the Family, proclaimed and celebrated by the General Assembly, helped raise awareness of family issues among Member States. The Year promoted knowledge of socio-economic and demographic trends affecting families. It also stimulated efforts to respond to challenges facing families through effective public policies.

Following up on the achievements of the International Year, subsequent General Assembly resolutions recommended specific actions to make sure the family is both a participant and a beneficiary of development efforts.

The resolutions recognized that families are often challenged to provide economic and emotional support to their members. Maintaining strong intergenerational connections in an increasingly mobile and competitive world is another difficulty faced by many families, as is the struggle to balance work and household commitments.

In this context, families need effective support through public policies and programmes. This is the responsibility of national governments in partnership with civil society, the private sector and families themselves.

Preparations for the 20th anniversary of the International Year have recognized these challenges and focused on three major themes: confronting family poverty and social exclusion, ensuring work-family balance and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

The General Assembly has recommended action in all three areas and recognized that:

anti-poverty policies and programmes targeting family units, such as conditional and unconditional cash transfers or child allowances contribute to overall poverty reduction
decent jobs and work-family balance policies are essential not only for economic well-being and children's development, but for gender equality as well.
policies promoting intergenerational support and exchanges are essential for bringing generations together.

We must do more to encourage social and economic policies that meet the needs of families, especially those that are most vulnerable. We must also ensure opportunities for family members and help them meet their social responsibilities for the young and the old alike.

Esteemed Colleagues,

As you may know, gender equality and women's empowerment is a key priority for this year's General Assembly session and will be the subject of a high-level thematic debate I will convene on 6th March next year.

In this regard, greater effort must be geared toward enlisting all family members in the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment. Such values have their roots in the home, when girls and boys are treated equally and provided the same educational opportunities. Raising boys to respect their mothers and sisters leads to societies where women are treated respectfully, not just in practice, but under the law, as well.

Recently, the HeforShe campaign was launched, which recognizes the importance of involving men in the fight for gender equality. This important campaign further solidifies the integral role of boys and men for achieving gender equality.

Distinguished Delegates,

A myriad of development goals, including those that address poverty and hunger, inequality, education and health require greater focus on families. Policies that focus on families can greatly contribute to the achievement of internationally-agreed development goals and should be advanced further.

As the world looks ahead to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, let us not forget about the vital role of families in our societies of today, as well as tomorrow.

Thank you for your kind attention.