

WFWP and UPF event on Family Values in UN offices, Switzerland

Mark Brann
July 1, 2014



Family Values and Their Link to Economic Wellbeing and Social Outcomes (June 30, -- July 1, 2014)

The United Nations has four headquarters -- in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. Not all of the exciting action takes place in New York. On June 16, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted a Resolution on Protection of the Family. Those that drafted the document recognized that "the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children" and feel certain that the family "is the fundamental group of society."

Nevertheless, passing the resolution caused vociferous protests from groups associated with the UN that represent lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transsexuals. These groups angrily objected to the word "family" and deplored the fact that some phrase such as "all types of families" was not used instead.

For the national representatives that passed the bill, it was a bold move. An attempt to pass a similar resolution failed a year ago. That 2014 is the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Year of the Family gave extra impetus to the supporters to pass it this

year. In 1974, it was not necessary to include language that did not offend homosexuals, so the singular "family" could be used freely, but in 2014 a deep struggle occurred during the session at which the resolution was being considered.

Representatives of nations that opposed the singular word "family" tried to have it changed but the majority thwarted their attempt. When the resolution successfully passed, those that supported it stood, applauded and cheered.

WFWP and UPF Support the Family

The following week, in the aftermath of the resolution's passing and the backlash that followed, the Women's Federation for World Peace International and the Universal Peace Federation held a conference on Family Values and their Link to Economic Well-Being and Social Outcomes. As Mark Brann, secretary-general of UPF Europe stated, our members as well as the members of the other organizations participating in the event, worry about "the rise of alternative forms of marriage and family and the breakdown of families," because the family is an institution that "we hold dear."

Threats to the Family

It seems fitting that one presenter, Dr. Walter Baar, director of the Institute for the Trends Research, from Austria, gave a fact-based presentation about interrelated demographic trends related to family breakdown, which is briefly summarized here.

The global population is rising. Meanwhile, birth rates are falling in nations, rich and poor. This is also true of religious nations, such as Iran and Indonesia. How can population rise while birth rates fall? We have the highest number ever of women in their fertile years. Many more women are each having fewer babies.

Though the population continues growing globally, the rate of growth is slowing. In some nations, the declining birthrate has been a contributing factor to a decline in national population. The declining population leads to fewer skilled workers, prompting governments to push women to reenter the workforce again as soon as possible, thereby further dampening the birth rate. The decline in population is slowed in aging societies. Better food and medicine have allowed people to live longer.

The globalization of the world economy combined with industrialization (as opposed to agriculture) means the distance between home and workplace has increased. People move to find work and most move to cities. By 2040, 80 percent of the world's population will live in cities of more than 10 million inhabitants (megacities). Urban dwellers have few children. Moving has exacerbated the disintegration of the extended family. With no older folk in the home to take responsibility for some tasks, external institutions, such as kindergartens and nursing homes, fill the gap.

The growing independence of women is also one of the most challenging factors in the national family policy conundrum: The better educated she is, the later she marries and the fewer children she has. Growing economic independence of both men and women leads to increased privacy among family members. New individualism, a shift in the concept of marriage as an economic partnership to a partnership based on emotional satisfaction and companionship has occurred. Emotional satisfaction and companionship are positives, but we need to consider what they mean to a society. A rise in personal satisfaction has had an inverse effect on community spirit.

Fewer marriages and more divorces occur worldwide. Eighty-seven percent of countries have watched their marriage rate falling since the 1980s. Concurrently, divorce rates rise. As broken families proliferate, the family seems less precious than in the past. In part because the family appears less valuable, policies unsupportive of the family have been enacted.

The question is: How do we define "family"? A family is not just two people living together. Nor is it one adult living with children. Discrimination has occurred against genuine families of one man, one woman and a child or children. Who has discriminated against families? Governments provide so much support for single mothers or fathers that it does not make economic sense to marry. Politicians create dependencies and want votes for the benefits. The deep problem underlying that it is that those subsidies come from the taxpayers.

Religious Political Activism

It seems clear from the caliber of speakers, such as Dr. Baar, that participated in the June 30–July 1 conference that the consistent effort at collaboration by our European members has resulted in alliances with organizations and individuals that are veterans of the fight to uphold the value of the family. They have done significant conscientious work, a brief introduction of a few of the other speakers should make that clear.

Maria Hildingsson is the secretary-general of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE), an organization redolent of the Moral Majority, its Protestant predecessor. Jerry Falwell (1933–2007) a co-founder and president of the U.S.-based Moral Majority wrote that he began the organization because he feared God's judgment on his sinful nation. "Many have exclaimed," he wrote, that "If God does not judge America soon, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

FAFCE, described as partner in the conference, is similarly proud of its faith and unapologetic in its political activism. Its web site states, "FAFCE is the only European family organization that explicitly refers to the social teaching of the Catholic Church." In preparation for the 2014 elections for the European Union Parliament, FAFCE created a Vote for Family 2014 Manifesto, which calls for EU family-friendly policies in twelve areas. FAFCE then made available to voters to "assist them in their choice" the list of those EU Parliament candidates that had signed their manifesto. In a like manner, Moral Majority used to mail "score cards" to voters that graded candidates for political office by how they had voted on moral issues. FAFCE is working to help elect politicians of good moral fiber.

Standing Up For the Silent Majority

Mr. Drazen Vukotic from Croatia is the vice-president of In the Name of the Family. Youthful members of the group went throughout Croatia collecting signatures that would allow them to present a referendum to Sabor, Croatia's unicameral parliament, asking, "Do you support introduction of a provision into the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia to the effect that marriage is a living union of a woman and a man?" Mr. Vukotic announced at the conference, "Despite more than fifty reports to the police because of violent attacks on our volunteers, we are proud that more than 750,000 citizens signed a request for a referendum." While their government follows most governments in Europe in liberalizing, the average citizens value the family.

When the nation finally voted on the constitutional amendment, it passed with 66 percent support. Zoran Milanovic, prime minister of Croatia, was not pleased with the change in the nation's constitution, which now defines marriage as "a lifetime union of one woman and one man." In response, the prime ministers said that his government has sent an "Act on life partnership, which regulates the rights of same-sex couples in an identical way as traditional marriage, up through the Parliamentary procedure." Additionally, Mr. Vukotic explained that today in Croatia, citizens are legally able to declare that they

have changed their sexual identity "simply by signing a paper in front of a notary public." Despite Mr. Vukotic's deep commitment and effort, the fight for family values appears far from over in Croatia.

A Deeply Faithful Politician

From Slovakia came Dr. Anna Zaborska, a medical doctor. She is both a member of the Slovak Parliament and the European Parliament, where she is the chairwoman of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Her father, who spent twelve years in prison in communist Czechoslovakia, was a former ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the Vatican. Dr. Zaborska is a devout Catholic and a staunch conservative. On families, the Slovak Press Agency quoted her as saying, "We want to protect the traditional family based on the marriage of one man and one woman. We voted on this basis in the National Parliament but we want to proceed in the same way together with our partners in Europe in the European Parliament."

Even where her faith-based views may be controversial, Dr. Zaborska remains firm. When asked about aborting a child that is the result of rape, she replied, "Such cases are very rare; abortions that result from rape are only about 1 percent of the total amount.... The woman getting pregnant after an act of violence endured a trauma. Undergoing abortion, she is exposed to another one -- she ends her child's life.... The jolt from killing her own child is often bigger than the one suffered from rape."

These were just a few of the fine presenters that gave of their time to support an effort to uphold values each of them believes in deeply. The battle to protect the family continues. Against fierce opposition, we need to ally ourselves with others that are determined to do good.