

Mexico City Declaration & Doha Declaration Chart Course for Restoring Respect for the Family and Incorporating the Family Perspective in Policy

by Thomas W. Jacobson (2004)

The *World Congress of Families III*¹ (attended by 3,300 from 75 nations) and the *Doha International Conference on the Family* (attended by 1,000) were the largest pro-family conferences held in 2004 in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family; and were, more importantly, major international, cross-cultural, private sector and government collaborative efforts to strengthen and preserve the essential and irreplaceable institutions of marriage and family. These conferences and their outcome documents – the *Mexico City Declaration* and the *Doha Declaration* - were representative of the 134 conferences held in 34 nations during 2004. The goal of these conferences, their declarations and action plans was to restore respect for marriage and family, and encourage governments, businesses and organizations to incorporate a family perspective into their policies, which would include avoiding or changing policies that are harmful to marriages and families.

In the current international environment – where the obvious and historic truth about male and female gender is denied for silly notions about 5 genders [male, female, homosexual, transgender, transsexual] or gender being a “social construct”; where unnatural and dangerous sexual behaviors are valued and protected above and at the expense of religious freedom and freedom of speech (as in Sweden, Canada and several European nations); where the concepts of human rights and discrimination have been so distorted that special interest groups are able to get their needs or desires classified as new “rights”; and where judges have lost their respect for the Laws of Nature and the rule of law, making rulings that undermine virtue, morality, and the institutions of marriage and family, which are essential to the preservation of freedom in any nation – these Declarations shed light on the principles that must be upheld and positive actions that can be taken to help restore respect for the family.

The wisest king who ever lived wrote, “all those who hate [wisdom] love death” (Proverbs 8:36). Those who hate wisdom may find themselves defending, at all costs, destructive practices such as abortion (without truly realizing the process kills a baby) or same-sex unions (without understanding or caring about its impact upon marriage and family). We should not follow their path to death. Rather, there is wisdom evident in the Mexico City and Doha Declarations quoted in part below.

¹ The first *World Congress of Families* – attended by 700 – was held in Prague, the Czech Republic, in 1997, and adopted a *Declaration* “affirming the central, vital, and essential role of the natural family.” The *World Congress of Families II* – attended by 1,600 from 65 nations – was held in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1999, and adopted *The Geneva Declaration*. The *World Congress of Families III* was held in Mexico City, March 29-31, 2004, and adopted the *Mexico City Declaration*.

Mr. Jacobson originally wrote this paper in 2004 when he was serving as Representative to the United Nations for Focus on the Family (U.S.A.), from 2001 to 2010.

MEXICO CITY DECLARATION

The World Congress of Families III Mexico City, Mexico – March 31, 2004

We ... [who are] from many national, ethnic, cultural, academic, social and religious communities, affirm that the natural family is established by the Creator and is fundamental to the good of the society. ...

We address ourselves to all people of goodwill who, with the majority of the world's people, value the natural family. Challenges to the family's very legitimacy as an institution include extreme individualism, easy divorce, radical homosexual activism, irresponsible sexual behavior, and the reinterpretation and misapplication of human rights. To protect and promote the family and to direct public policy with a family perspective, this Declaration asserts principles and recommends actions that respect and uphold the vital functions that the family plays in society.

The natural family is the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centered on the union of a man and a woman in the lifelong covenant of marriage. The natural family is defined by marriage, including extended family members, procreation, and adoption. ...

Marriage, the cornerstone of healthy family life, brings security, contentment, meaning, joy and spiritual maturity to the man and woman who enter this lifelong covenant with unselfish commitment. ... Children are entitled to the complementary parental love and attention of both father and mother, which marriage bestows. ...

The natural family provides the optimal environment for the healthy development of children.

Sexuality exists for the expression of love between husband and wife and for the procreation of children in the covenant of marriage. Marriage between a man and a woman forms the moral context for sexual union. ...

Every human person has intrinsic value throughout the continuum of life from fertilization until natural death. ... Taking innocent human life through abortion and euthanasia is a direct attack on human life and dignity. Respect for human life demands the life-protecting options of adoption and palliative care. The destruction of embryonic human beings, lethal human embryo experimentation and abortifacients also involve the wrongful taking of human life. ...

Procreation is the key to the survival of the human race. An increasing number of countries are experiencing below population birth rates due to misguided population-control programs that promote contraception, abortion, delayed marriages, and the abandonment of the institution of marriage. ...

Parents possess the primary authority and responsibility to direct the upbringing and education of their children, except in clear cases of abuse and neglect. ... The family is the child's first school with parents their first and most important teachers. ...

The natural family is the fundamental unit in society for economic growth and development. ... A nation cannot create true wealth if its policies lead to family disintegration. ...

Government should protect and support the natural family and not usurp the vital roles that it plays in society. ... Government should secure an orderly, lawful, and just society that allows families freely and responsibly to:

- Marry and bear children
- Pursue meaningful work
- Provide for their material and health needs
- Direct the education and upbringing of their children
- Participate in charitable, civic and recreational activities
- Care for elderly family members
- Provide security for their present and future generations, and
- Practice their religion.

As the primary educators, parents have the right to teach their religious and moral beliefs to their children and to raise them according to their religious precepts. ... Religious institutions have the crucial cultural-leadership role of affirming that:

- The natural human family is established in creation
- The family is essential to a good society, and
- Life and sexuality are gifts from the Creator to be enjoyed, respectfully & wholesomely.

We exhort all persons, families, social entities, governments, and international organizations throughout the world to adopt the family perspective to craft and pursue realistic targets for action, and to respect and uphold the institution of the natural human family for the good of present and future generations, in accordance with the principles and recommended guidelines of the Declaration adopted at the third World Congress of Families in Mexico City.

(To read the entire Declaration, including the Actions recommended after each principle, go to the World Congress of Families web site, www.worldcongress.org, and choose the “Mexico City Declaration” on the right panel.)

THE DOHA DECLARATION

The Doha International Conference on the Family Doha, Qatar – November 30, 2004

Preamble

Reaffirming that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, as declared in Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Noting that 2004 marks the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations' 1994 International Year of the Family and that the Doha International Conference for the Family was welcomed by UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/15 (December 15, 2003);

Acknowledging that the objectives of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family include efforts to (a) strengthen the capacity of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families; (b) stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families; (c) undertake analytical reviews at all levels and assessments of the situation and needs of families; (d) strengthen the effectiveness of efforts at all levels to execute specific programmes concerning families; and (e) improve collaboration among national and international nongovernmental organizations in support of families;

Taking into consideration the academic, scientific and social findings collected for the Doha International Conference, which collectively demonstrate that the family is not only the fundamental group unit of society but is also the fundamental agent for sustainable social, economic and cultural development;

Recognizing the need to address the challenges facing the family in the context of globalization;

Realizing that strengthening the family presents a unique opportunity to address societal problems in a holistic manner;

Reiterating that strong, stable families contribute to the maintenance of a culture of peace and promote dialogue among civilizations and diverse ethnic groups; and *Welcoming* the announcement by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar and President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, State of Qatar, to create an international Institute for Study of the Family.

In this regard, we reaffirm international commitments to the family and call upon all governments, international organizations and members of civil society at all levels to take action to protect the family.

Reaffirmation of Commitments to the Family

We reaffirm international commitments to strengthen the family, in particular:

1. We commit ourselves to recognizing and strengthening the family's supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with full respect for the world's diverse cultural, religious, ethical and social values.

2. We recognize the inherent dignity of the human person and note that the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care before as well as after birth. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

3. We reaffirm that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to the widest possible protection and assistance by society and the State.

4. We emphasize that marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses and that the right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized and that husband and wife should be equal partners.

5. We further emphasize that the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children from infancy to adolescence. For the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. All institutions of society should respect and support the efforts of parents to nurture and care for children in a family environment. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children and the liberty to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Call for Action

Taking into account the above commitments, we call upon all governments, international organizations and members of civil society at all levels to:

Cultural, Religious and Social Values

1. Develop programs to stimulate and encourage dialogue among countries, religions, cultures and civilizations on questions related to family life, including measures to preserve and defend the institution of marriage;
2. Reaffirm the importance of faith and religious and ethical beliefs in maintaining family stability and social progress;
3. Evaluate and reassess the extent to which international law and policies conform to the principles and provisions related to the family contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international commitments;

Human Dignity

4. Reaffirm commitments to provide a quality education for all, including equal access to educational opportunities;
5. Evaluate and reassess government policies to ensure that the inherent dignity of human beings is recognized and protected throughout all stages of life;

Family

6. Develop indicators to evaluate the impact of all programs on family stability;
7. Strengthen policies and programs that will enable family to break the cycle of poverty;
8. Evaluate and reassess government population policies, particularly in countries with below replacement birthrates;
9. Encourage and support the family to provide care for older persons and persons with disabilities;

10. Support the family in addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, including malaria and tuberculosis;
11. Take effective measures to support the family in times of peace and war;

Marriage

12. Uphold, preserve and defend the institution of marriage;
13. Take effective measures to strengthen the stability of marriage by, among other things, encouraging the full and equal partnership of husband and wife within a committed and enduring marital relationship;
14. Establish effective policies and practices to condemn and remedy abusive relationships within marriage and the family, including the establishment of public agencies to assist men, women, children and families in crisis;

Parents and Children

15. Strengthen efforts to promote equal political, economic, social and educational opportunities for women and evaluate and assess economic, social and other policies to support mothers and fathers in performing their essential roles;
16. Strengthen the functioning of the family by involving mothers and fathers in the education of their children;
17. Reaffirm that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children;
18. Reaffirm and respect the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

We request the host country of the Conference, the State of Qatar, to inform the United Nations General Assembly of the proceedings of the Conference, including the Doha Declaration, in particular during the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family to be held on 6 December 2004.

(This is the entire Doha Declaration except for the introductory paragraphs. To view those paragraphs and the Declaration, see the Doha International Conference on the Family web site: www.dicf.org.qa).