

STATEMENT BY CARICOM PRO-FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS ON THE UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES - MAY 15, 2016

The following Statement by CARICOM pro-family organizations, affirms our unwavering belief that the natural family is the key to a healthy, stable and prosperous nation. We urge the Government of Jamaica and the Governments of CARICOM to do all within their power to ensure that this perspective be deliberately and consistently placed at the centre of the UN's post-2015 development agenda.

On the occasion of the 22nd celebration of International Day of Families, we, the undersigned, reaffirm the key role and importance of the family as the foundational unit of any society. The truth enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that “The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”¹

The natural family unit possesses inherent dignity and rights which all signatories are morally bound to respect and protect. The Family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children. Children, in turn need healthy and harmonious family life in order to facilitate their full potential. Thus the family is both our link to the past and our bridge to the future.

The Caribbean family has an unfortunate burden of much turbulence and trial. Colonialism and slavery were essentially socio-political and economic regimes whose ideology demeaned human dignity, negated fundamental freedoms, assaulted marriage and family life and trampled on universal standards of morality.

The tragic legacies of this extensive period continue to be felt today in various social arrangements and family practices that derail the psychological and emotional development of our children, depriving them of their human right to a safe and secure family environment. This loss is manifested in countless damaging ways in their adult lives and relationships.

It is a painful truth that many of the economic and social challenges currently facing CARICOM societies - crime, domestic violence and child abuse, teenage pregnancy, poverty and illiteracy, drug abuse, sexual exploitation, fatherless households - have direct linkages to the parlous condition of family life in our societies.

The UN General Assembly Resolution on the International Year of the Family, 1994, notes that the family offers a *‘uniquely comprehensive and synthesizing approach to social issues...[since] families, as basic units of social life, are major agents of sustainable development at all levels of society and that their contribution to that process is crucial for its success.’*² This view is supported by multiple stakeholders in Caribbean societies who are convinced that restoring the well-being of Caribbean families is foundational to addressing our social issues. The growing body of empirical data demonstrates that intact, functioning families comprising marriage of one man to one woman together raising their children in a nurturing home environment is an important generator of social, human, and financial capital for economies around the world. Only through the close and focussed co-operation of

¹ Article 16 (3), Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

² A/RES/47/237 , UN General Assembly Resolution on the International Year of the Family, 1994, Preamble

the State, Church, school, business, civil society and each individual citizen, can Caribbean societies enable the healing of the Family in our nations as a priority for engendering national stability, growth and development.

We are concerned, however, that the rebuilding of healthy Caribbean family life is being threatened by new socio-political and economic movements that espouse ideas contrary to human dignity, fundamental human rights and freedoms, good social ordering and the survival of the natural family.

Attempts by certain advocacy groups, transnational actors, governments and UN entities, to impose 'rights' based on a false anthropology, violate our national sovereignty, laws and universal moral principles that are the bases of genuine fundamental human rights.

We reject these attempts, as well as attempts to introduce new concepts such as 'sexual orientation', 'gender identity,' 'comprehensive sexuality education', 'sexual and reproductive rights' and other such terms that undermine the well-being of the natural family. These terms are neither referenced in the internationally agreed human rights legal framework nor are they subject to international agreement, definition or consensus and have been proven to result in the suppression of existing fundamental freedoms of conscience, speech, parental rights and religious liberty, wherever these terms are implemented in law or policy.

We affirm the inherent dignity of every human being as made in the image of God, and the intrinsic worth of every human life from conception to natural death. We underline the importance of preserving the universality, indivisibility and inalienability of fundamental human rights and the role of the State in adopting a balanced and egalitarian approach to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all its citizens.

Furthermore, we embrace with utmost conviction, the sovereign right to base our laws, holistic public health policies, educational curricula and other public policies on accurate and verifiable principles of healthy and responsible human sexuality, and to endorse behaviours and lifestyles that benefit the common good and ensure a healthy future for Caribbean societies.

Jamaica : Our National Plan for Development, *Vision 2030* anticipates a *Jamaica that will be the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business*. To achieve this, we must recognise and pattern international best practices for family. The intact, natural family founded on the marriage of one man to one woman, is the ideal to which we ought to aspire as the vehicle to achieve social cohesion and stability, sustainable economic growth and development. We urge our duly elected government to do all within its power to ensure that this perspective be deliberately and consistently placed at the centre of the UN's post-2015 development agenda.

Representative signatories:

Social Solutions – Anguilla
Concerned Citizens Coalition for a Healthy Society- Antigua and Barbuda
Proteqt. Inc – Barbados
Love March Movement - Barbados
Belize Action- Belize
Jamaica Coalition for a Healthy Society – Jamaica

Love March Movement – Jamaica
National Association for the Family - Jamaica
Caribbean Centre for Family and Human Rights – St Lucia
Celebrating Life /Future Generations – Trinidad and Tobago
Elpis Centre- Trinidad and Tobago