Mr. President,

My delegation warmly welcomes the holding of this Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to mark the Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

This anniversary is a good opportunity to consider what has been achieved over the past 20 years, and thus, to highlight the importance of the family and to understand its functions and needs, to pay attention to the rights and responsibilities of all family members, to strengthen national institutions and to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of the family.

Along this line, the Holy See hopes that this meeting will help States and the United Nations as a whole to acknowledge the role of the family in the elaboration and implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals. The family is critically important as one of those “intangible assets” that societies and States need. From preventing conflicts to building peaceful societies, from fostering agriculture to preventing crimes in inner cities, from caring for the earth to assuring food security, from eradicating poverty to sustaining healthy communities, the family is and will always be at the forefront. Its contribution to the life of societies and States transcends tangible measures and defies monetary quantifications. Indeed, a family animated by unity and mutual responsibility undeniably contributes to nurturing future generations and to taking care of the more vulnerable members of our society, like the sick, the elderly and the marginalized. As Pope Francis affirms, the family is such a fundamental pillar in society: it is the “foundation of co-existence and a guarantee against social fragmentation.”

Given the exceptional potential of the family and its obvious and widely acknowledged social and economic contribution to society, it is sad to note that, as underlined in the Secretary General’s Report, “families are rarely the focus of major policy initiatives.

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1 Pope Francis, Address to the participants in the international colloquium on the complementarity between man and woman, 17 November 2014.
Often, such policies target women and children separately, and not the family unit per se"\(^2\). Whereas that may be understandable for specific reasons, the fight against violence and discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women and the promotion of the rights of the child could yield greater results if we take the more integrated approach of taking into account the family unit.\(^3\)

Indeed, studies show that those who build stable families have lower risk of domestic violence, mental illness and alcoholism. Children show lower risk of alcoholism, drug addiction and mental illness, lower incidences of later becoming criminals, and higher academic achievements. In so many cases, the breakdown of families also contributes to the feminization of poverty and to stunted child development. From an economic perspective, a stable family is the lowest cost option for both its members and the State.\(^4\)

Mr. President,

My delegation considers it urgent that the post-2015 development agenda create a conducive environment to strengthen and support the family, to enable it to undergird the maintenance of peace and security, the advancement of women and girls, the respect for fundamental human rights, the reconciliation of work and family life and the shared parental responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child.\(^5\)

My delegation, while echoing the recommendations articulated in the Secretary General's Report, wishes to reiterate a strong call for all international and national institutions, all State and civil society structures to “promote and advance family empowerment through appropriate family-centred policies and programmes”\(^6\), without falling into what Pope Francis referred to as “the trap of being limited by ideological concepts.”\(^7\) Indeed, the family is an indispensable, natural and anthropological asset for humanity. Let us promote and support it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

\(^2\) A/67/61
\(^3\) A/69/61
\(^4\) The family Watch, The sustainable family 2009 Annual Report.
\(^5\) A/Res/67/142, OP8
\(^6\) A/69/61
\(^7\) Pope Francis, Address to the participants in the international colloquium on the complementarity between man and woman, 17 November 2014.