

# A Declaration on the Rights of Children, Youth, and Their Families

## **ARTICLE I: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE**

Recognizing that every child has the inherent right to life (UNCRC Art. 6); and,

Whereas the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection before, as well as after birth (UNCRC Preamble);

We call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to ensure the survival and optimal development of children (UNCRC Art. 6; Children's Summit, Art. 19).

## **ARTICLE II: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO A FAMILY**

Recognizing that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State (UDHR, Art. 16 (3)); and

That the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (UNCRC Preamble; Children's Summit, Plan of Action, Art. 18);

We call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to protect and strengthen the institution of the family to ensure the optimal development of children (based on Children's Summit, Art. 14 & 20(5)).

## **ARTICLE III: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO BE REARED BY THEIR MOTHER AND FATHER WHO HONOR THEIR LEGALLY SANCTIONED MARRIAGE WITH FIDELITY**

Recognizing that children and youth who reside in a stable, intact family with their legally married mother and father, generally exhibit greater well-being in every measurable indicator including physically, socially, emotionally, economically and academically; and that the child shall have the right, as far as possible, to know and be cared for by his or her parents (UNCRC Art. 7);

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We call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to discourage sexual relations and childbearing outside of the marital bond and to promote the institution of marriage as the best environment for children.

## **ARTICLE IV: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO THE PROTECTION AND GUIDANCE OF THEIR PARENTS**

Recognizing that parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child (UNCRC Art. 18); and

That parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children (UDHR Art. 26(3)); and

That only in cases of extreme abuse or neglect shall the State have the right to intervene in the parent/child relationship (UNCRC Art. 9);

We call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to respect family autonomy and the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents to direct the upbringing of their children (UNCRC Art. 3, 5 & 18; ICPD, II, Principle 11).

## **ARTICLE V: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

Recognizing that each child needs an education to develop the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (UNCRC Art. 29.1(a)); and

That the best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his or her education and that this responsibility lies in the first place with the parents (ICPD, II, Principle 10);

We call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to establish basic education programs for all children that are respectful of the child's parents, and his or her own cultural identity, language and values (UNCRC Art. 29.1(c)).

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## **ARTICLE VI: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO A RELIGION**

Recognizing that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance (UDHR Art. 18; UNCRC Art. 30); and

That the introduction of children to the culture, values and norms of their society begins in the family (Children's Summit, Plan of Action, Art. 18); and

That parents have the right to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions (ICESCR, Art. 13-3; ICCPR, Art. 18-4);

We call upon States Parties and the United Nations system to fully respect the right of parents to guide the moral and religious education of their children (UNCRC Art. 14).

## **ARTICLE VII: EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO INNOCENCE AND CHILDHOOD**

Recognizing that the rights enumerated in this declaration are legitimate universal protection rights that belong to every child; Noting, with alarm, the increasing international trend to grant autonomous adult rights to children prematurely;

That children have a right to enjoy their childhood free of adult concerns and responsibilities; and

Being greatly concerned by the increase of sexual education programs that promote premature sexual exposure and sexual experimentation among children and youth;

We call upon States Parties and the United Nations System to respect the right of parents to guide the sex education of their children (ICESCR, Art. 13-3; ICCPR, Art. 18-4) and to cease promoting or supporting programs that condone or encourage sexual activity among children and youth.

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## **ARTICLE VIII:**

### **THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN REQUIRES THE PROTECTION OF THE FAMILY**

Recognizing that for the full protection of the rights of the child and the family enumerated in this declaration, all governments must fulfill their legal obligation to protect the institution of the family (based on UDHR Art. 16(3); ICPD, II, Principle 9; ICESR, Art. 10-1; ICCPR, Art. 23-1; Children's Summit, 14; UNCRC Preamble; Disabilities Preamble (x));

Therefore, we call upon all UN Member States and the United Nations system to mainstream a family perspective in all laws, policies and programs and to ensure the rights of parents are recognized in all governmental actions impacting their children.