



12 Zmeica str., sector 4, Bucharest, Romania | PO Box 1-410 Bucharest
tel. +4 0728.673.673
fax +4 031 815.27.80
contact@asociatiaprovita.ro
www.asociatiaprovita.ro | www.RupeTacara.ro | www.potisalvaoviata.ro

Bucharest, October 26, 2015

*The Secretariat
Human Rights Council of the United Nations
Palais des Nations, Room XIX
Avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva, SWITZERLAND
via electronic delivery registry@ohchr.org and gbergh@ohchr.org*

Re.: Input to Human Rights Council Resolution 29/22 on the Protection of the Family

I am writing on behalf of PRO VITA, a non-profit, civic organization organized under the laws and statutes of Romania, founded in 2005 to promote and protect in the public forum the fundamental interests of our community, among them pro-family practices, pro-life policies, and freedom of religion and conscience. We are responding to the recent call of the UN Human Rights Council for **Input to Human Rights Council on Resolution 29/22 on the Protection of the Family**. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide our input and make the following observations.

We express appreciation for the interest the UN has shown along the years to protect the family, promote its welfare, and to consider it an important engine for economic and social development. We are especially appreciative of the adoption by the UN Human Rights Council, on July 22, 2015, of Resolution 29/22 on the protection of the family. We are mindful and agree that men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and form a family, that the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society, and that it has the right to be protected by society and the state. We express concerns, however, that the natural role of the family unit as an engine of social and economic development has, in recent decades, been usurped by policies, doctrines, and trends which collectively have worked to undermine it rather than protect and promote it. Occasionally, even the United Nations and some of its agencies and treaty bodies have shared in a doctrinal and practical approach which diminishes and even destroys the legitimate ends of marriage and family and their role in society. It is a given that the family has been the main engine of economic development since the dawn of civilization. We can only hope that the UN and countries around the globe will recognize this important truism and will promote it.

First, we outline a major concern related to doctrinal aspects which undermine the role of family and marriage in promoting economic and social development. In our view, marriage



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and the family need to be protected from radical doctrines which seem intent on their ultimate demise. We note, with grave concern, in UN resolutions and commentaries authored by various UN agencies and bodies, language and doctrinal positions with which we disagree. Deconstructing marriage and the family is not a legitimate end or objective. Yet, certain countries around the world as well as regional organizations have formally adopted resolutions, programs or legislation which deconstruct family and marriage. Redefining natural marriage and family is an inappropriate social policy and is not an appropriate prerogative for the exercise of state authority. The media also bears significant responsibility for the deconstruction of the family. So does the academia. Teaching the younger generation that the family and marriage are incompatible with the post-modern world is unfortunate and counterproductive. Teaching the younger generation that marriage and the family are institutions of exploitation of women by men is wrong. Teaching the younger generation that marriage and the family have outlived their historical roles is irresponsible. Teaching the younger generation that marriage and the family are antiquated patriarchal institutions which must be eliminated is even more irresponsible.

Second, we believe that states and international organizations need to adopt specific, long-term policies and programs to protect the family unit and to reestablish to it its traditional role in social and economic development and in the fostering of solidarity and mutual emotional fulfillment for its members. States should aim to slow down family disintegration through divorce and adopt prophylactic policies and programs to prevent divorce. A large share of divorces around the globe are caused by economic factors. Yet, after divorce families become even poorer. Studies have shown that family disintegration leads to poverty. Marriage leads to wealth accumulation. In contrast, divorce generates poverty and, unfortunately, even child hunger. Married couples are much more productive economically and in the work place than divorced couples. Divorce also has an emotionally devastating effect on children. The scars of divorce on both parents and especially children are undeniable and have a long lasting impact. Counseling and services aimed at preventing divorce are less costly than the combined economic, social, and psychological impact of divorce. Counseling services should also be offered and encouraged to assist couples with conflict resolution. Similarly, states, the media, the entertainment industry, and the academia should be encouraged not to glorify cohabitation. Studies have shown that cohabitation produces significantly less stable relationships than relationships formally covenanted in marriage. Cohabitation should likewise be discouraged because it, too, has an adverse impact on children and cohabiting couples are significantly worse off economically than married couples.

Third, states, NGOs, and UN agencies should instill in the young respect for family and marriage. There is a need for a global pro-family and pro-marriage culture. A culture which aims to teach and maintain the importance of the intact family. A culture, promoted by the mass media and the entertainment industry, which is responsible. A culture which teaches

the younger generation family values, responsibility, the value of hard work, the value of diligently and steadily pursuing a career, trade or profession, respect for authority, be it parental, political, or for the elderly. A culture which instills in the younger generation the fundamentals of marriage: loyalty, fidelity, the value and importance of monogamy, mutual respect between husbands and wives and the importance of upholding dignity.

Fourth, states should adopt practical policies and programs which promote the integrity of the family. We urge the adoption of reasonable parental leave policies which are adequate for both parents and children. A special focus should be developed for the welfare of children. States should be encouraged to invest in child day care centers and adopt friendly tax policies for parents, especially for those with many children. Adoption policies should also be geared toward integrating marginalized children into the mainstream of society, and transforming them into productive members of society. We believe the state would also go a long way towards the fulfillment of its obligation to protect the family by respecting and protecting parental rights, including the right of parents to homeschool their children. The state would also accomplish this goal by understanding its own limits in matters of marriage and family life. It should not attempt to substitute itself for the family or undermine the role of parents in the rearing of their children. The authority of parents should be respected. The state cannot be a better parent to a child than the child's own biological parents. The state should likewise not employ its prerogative to educate children to, along the way, undermine parental authority or set children against their parents.

Finally, we draw on the wisdom and conclusions of a major study published in the United States on October 19, 2015 by the prestigious family scholars and sociologists W. Bradford Wilcox, Robert I. Lerman, and Joseph Price. It was published by the American Enterprise Institute and is titled **Strong Families, Prosperous States: Do Healthy Families Affect the Wealth of States?**¹ Thorough in its analysis and strong on data, the study outlines a wealth of conclusions pointing to the direct relationship between family and marriage stability and economic wellbeing and development. We limit ourselves to simply listing some of its more seminal conclusions: (1) higher levels of marriage, and especially intact marriages with children, are strongly associated with more economic growth than non-marital relationships; (2) states should be proactive in slowing down the rate of divorce; (3) strong families increase economic growth; (4) marriage encourages men and women to work harder and be more responsible in the work place; (5) states with stronger families display higher levels of growth, economic mobility, median family income, and low levels of child poverty; (6) the retreat from marriage is generally associated with increased levels of child poverty; (7) there is a positive correlation between family structure and economic prosperity, where intact families produce greater economic wealth; (8) married family life appears to deepen men's attachment to the labor force; (9) families living in married households benefit from income pooling, economies of scale, and specialization and exchange more than families in

¹ <http://www.aei.org/publication/strong-families-prosperous-states/>



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unmarried households; (10) married households have more assets and higher net worth than singles or unmarried couples; (11) children reared in stable marriages benefit from larger accumulation of human capital than children from single or unmarried households; and (12) intact marriages produce fewer delinquent children than single or unmarried households.

In closing, we thank you for the opportunity to tender our submission. We trust it will be found persuasive to encourage member states and the UN to protect and support the natural family.

Respectfully submitted,

Bogdan Stanciu
President
PRO VITA Bucharest