

Amsterdam 2009: Amsterdam Declaration

Representing families and organizations from over 60 nations, we delegates to the World Congress of Families V, convening in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, this 10-12 August 2009, affirm Article 16, par. 3, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, agreeing that 'the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and is entitled to protection by society and the State.'

In solidarity with earlier WCF Declarations, we define the natural family to rest on the lifelong marriage of a man to a woman, for the purposes of welcoming and nurturing new human life, providing love, companionship, and mutual support, building a home rich in functions, and strengthening the bonds of the generations.

We define ourselves as pro-child. We affirm those social, cultural and legal structures that encourage optimal outcomes for children, in terms of health, learning and later civic engagement. We favour work arrangements that enable parents to spend more time with their children. We understand the biological and social sciences to teach that children predictably do best when raised by their natural parents in a married-couple home.

We affirm that the future of nations rests on families that are spiritually grounded. Religious organizations should be free to uphold their own moral teachings about marriage and family in the public square.

We affirm that the natural family exists prior to the state. Public policies must respect this family autonomy.

We call for sound laws and policies that will:

- support the natural institution of marriage;
- discourage divorce, especially when children would be involved;
- encourage couples that commit themselves to the rearing of children;
- protect the primary right of parents to guide their children's moral and practical education;
- protect the physical, mental, social and spiritual development of children;
- and guard vulnerable human life, especially at the beginning and end of the life cycle.

This Congress gave special attention to the status of the natural family in developing nations. In this light:

- We affirm intergenerational solidarity. Beyond the immediate circle of

mother, father and their children lies the rich tapestry of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Urbanization, industrialization, migration, wars, epidemics, and selfish individualism have all weakened extended family bonds. We favor actions that would re-energize this broader family circle as the place where individuals might find help in times of crisis, unemployment, sickness, poverty, old age, and bereavement.

- We raise up the natural family as our solution to poverty. Support to people living in extreme poverty should be given in a family context, wherever possible. We endorse actions that favour family home ownership and micro-enterprises, deliver appropriate vocational training to young men and women, and renew rural economies as rich alternatives to migration to the cities. We view each new child as an asset for the world, a new mind and a new pair of hands.
- We identify declining birthrates as the core demographic problem facing the 21st century. We favor responses that discourage abortion (including sex selective abortion), enable larger and healthier families, and encourage economic growth.
- We respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic with a program of abstinence, faithfulness and character building through life skills education. We believe that this approach will inspire and reinforce family life in societies, break the cycle of infection, and best serve the interests of children. We also urge special initiatives to improve treatment for victims and to assist orphans and elderly care-givers in rebuilding viable homes.
- And, we call for a family-centered approach to good health: Sexual education should be parent-guided and focus on skills such as self-restraint, relational faithfulness, and the making of responsible choices. Access to pre- and post-natal care should be expanded, including counseling on positive alternatives to abortion, including adoption. Breastfeeding should be promoted as a child-survival strategy.

Adopted this day, 12 August 2009, in the City of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

This statement may not necessarily reflect the views of individual speakers and delegates.