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Building Upon the Doha Declaration

This colloquium brings together organizations and members of civil society that are strikingly diverse in religion, cultural background and ethnic origin. Yet, despite all differences, we are bound together by shared values related to the celebration, protection and promotion of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society. Regardless of theological and cultural differences, the world's great faiths share a common understanding of the natural family. This shared understanding, moreover, can provide the basis for a stable, productive and peaceful world. Indeed, the international community has relied upon this shared understanding to establish the legal norms that are essential to strengthening the family. By building upon and emphasizing these norms, the organizations gathered here can establish the broad outlines of a new and positive agenda for family-affirmative action; action that will indeed empower the family.

I. Our Shared Understanding of the Family

I begin with our shared understanding of the natural family, an understanding that transcends cultural boundaries. The Qur'an states that "Allah has made for you mates from yourselves and made for you out of them, children and grandchildren."[1] The Bible, in the second chapter of Genesis, reflects the same concept: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone."[2] The profound importance of the family unit established by Adam, Eve and their children is recognized in The Torah[3] and explained in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church.[4] The fundamental truth that the natural family is the basic unit of society, furthermore, extends beyond the great monotheistic religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The classic Taoist text, The Chuang Tzu, explains that familial ties are the basis of a stable society because "[w]hen people are brought together by Heaven, . . . when troubles come, they hold together."[5]

Why does the natural family hold society together despite troubles? Because such a family has extraordinary strength. This family is characterized by (1) a strong, committed marital relationship between a man and a woman (2) which centers upon transmitting important ethical, religious and cultural values to children (3) in an atmosphere that emphasizes the essential interconnectedness, complementarity and responsibilities of family members toward each other, toward grandparents and other members of the extended family, and the broader family of mankind.

Some may object that this description is idealistic, religious, not widely shared and, quite simply, inapplicable to the complexities of the modern world. But, however appealing this skepticism sounds to the modern ear, the best research ratifies and confirms the importance of the well-functioning natural family. A treatise compiled by the United Nations University in 1995 at the

conclusion of the 1994 International Year of the Family concluded that, even in situations of direst poverty, the single most important factor influencing social outcomes for individuals is whether they are members of a strong, stable, natural family. As the authors concluded:

Children thriving in poor communities were statistically most likely to live in families characterized by traditional fireside family values; devoted mothers and fathers, happy marriages, and warm cooperative bonds with siblings, grandparents, other relatives and the broader community.[6]

Solid scientific evidence, therefore, demonstrates that the natural family is much more than a religiously motivated ideal. It is an observable, describable and reproducible unit of surpassing importance.

But, despite its importance, not enough energy has gone into the imagination and creation of a family-friendly world. This is an on-going tragedy because substantial evidence suggests that family-focused efforts can be extraordinarily successful in reducing or even eliminating human suffering. The world needs policies to strengthen and empower the family. Thankfully, the international norms essential to positive, family-affirming policies are already in place.

II. Policies to Protect and Empower the Family

In 2004, the Doha International Conference on the Family was convened under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned. The Conference was a complex, year-long series of events organized by various governmental and non-governmental partners. Meetings were organized in Switzerland, Sweden and Malaysia. Large governmental and civil society events were convened in Mexico, Benin, Azerbaijan and Latvia. Declarations, papers, essays, personal statements, findings and proposals for action developed at these events were collected and reported to the final session of the Doha International Conference on the Family, held in Doha, Qatar on November 29-30, 2004. At that meeting, governmental representatives negotiated and adopted the Doha Declaration – which reaffirms long-standing international norms related to family life. On December 6, 2004, the UN General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution formally noting the Doha Declaration.

The Doha Declaration is a positive and helpful reaffirmation of some of the most significant existing international commitments to the family. As noted by the Chair of the Doha International Institute at the outset of this event, the declaration does not state new international norms or values. Rather, the document brings together already negotiated and agreed international affirmations regarding the family from such well-regarded sources as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Conference on Environment and Development, the Conference on Human Rights, and the World Summit for Children.

As this colloquium on empowering the family draws to a close, I would like to focus your attention once more on these consensus commitments. They broadly relate to three important topics: the family's crucial responsibilities in bearing and rearing children, the central importance of marriage, and the family's historic role as the foundation of society.

A.   The Family and Children

The first, second and fifth paragraphs of the Doha Declaration reaffirm the international community's recognition of "traditional fireside family values."[7] Paragraph one recommits the nations

of the world "to the recognition of the family, in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles,"[8] "with respect for cultural, religious and social aspects, in keeping with freedom, dignity and personally held values."[9] Paragraph two notes that, because of "the dignity and worth inherent in the human person,"[10] the "child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care before as well as after birth."[11] It also provides that "motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance."[12] Paragraph five, in turn, recognizes that "[t]he family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children from infancy to adolescence."[13]

Taken together, these three paragraphs from the Doha Declaration confirm the centrality and importance of the family in the bearing and rearing of children – a reality now underscored by an avalanche of modern scholarship. Recent research indicates that – for a child – no other living arrangement comes close to being raised in a stable, loving family with the child's father and mother. This living environment supports a child's education, minimizes the risk of poverty, aids in crime prevention, and supports healthy socialization.

a. The family and education. Studies consistently show that children in two-parent families are significantly less likely to drop out of high school than children in a one-parent family.[14] In some studies, the likelihood of dropping out more than doubles for children in one-parent compared to two-parent households.[15]

b. The family and poverty. Studies also show that children raised outside marriage are more likely to be raised in poor economic conditions.[16] These children suffer not only from economic deprivations, but also from a lack of parental attention and from high rates of residential relocation, all of which work to disadvantage the child's development.[17]

c. The family and crime prevention. Recent studies emphasize the critical role dual-parenting plays if children are to become law-abiding citizens. As one researcher noted, "the single most important factor in determining if a male will end up incarcerated later in life is . . . whether or not he has a father in the home."[18] The mother-child relationship is equally important. "As mothers spend less time with infants and toddlers . . . the boys' developing brains, and thus their behavioral systems, are affected."[19] Children without this crucial early bonding are "more likely to start out on a path of later narcissism and out-of-control behavior as [they] compensate[] for [the] early deprivation."[20]

d. The family and socialization. Marriage is an unequaled institution for fostering healthy socialization. "[C]hildren of divorce do not accept monitoring or supervision from live-in partners nearly as much as they do from married parents."[21] Young adults in single-parent households are more likely to give birth out of wedlock, and are more likely to be out of both school and the labor force.[22] Furthermore, "children who spend part of their childhood in a single-parent family . . . report significantly lower-quality relationships with their parents as adults and have less frequent contact with them."[23]

The above research, taken together, demonstrates that – for the good of our children – society has a compelling interest in promoting and supporting stable family life. Although young people are increasingly bombarded with pessimistic views about the family, scholars now note that they "yearn[] for a return to stable family life, and . . . are much less likely than their elders to consider divorce a good option."[24] Any breakdown in the importance placed upon the importance of stable family life impairs the social welfare of future generations.[25]

B.   The Centrality of Marriage

The fourth paragraph of the Doha Declaration reaffirms consensus language relating to marriage. It provides, in pertinent part, that "[t]he right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized,"[26] and "husband and wife should be equal partners."[27]

Marriage, as it has been conceived by and practiced for centuries, has marked benefits for marital partners and their offspring. Marriage is more than the union of two persons, it is a social institution "culturally patterned and integrated into other basic social institutions, such as education, the economy, and politics."[28] Marriage, in a real sense, underlies every social institution. It should be no surprise, therefore, that current research suggests marriage is indispensable to the welfare of society and the individuals that comprise it.[29] Recent studies strongly support the propositions that marriage promotes physical health, mental and emotional health, and social productivity.[30]

a. Marriage and physical health . There is a positive – and multi-factored – causal relationship between marriage and physical health. Married men and women live longer than non-married individuals.[31] These statistics are especially significant for unmarried men who "face higher risks of dying than married men, regardless of their marital history."[32]

Married people are also less likely to report "problem drinking" than are non-married persons.[33] Excessive alcohol consumption has been linked to a variety of health-related problems, including liver failure and heart disease. Although men are the clear beneficiaries of marriage in this regard, even married women are nearly one-third less likely to report drinking problems than divorced women.[34]

Married persons, both men and women, are less likely to engage in risk-taking behavior.[35] With respect to activities such as drunk driving, smoking, and drug abuse, married persons are less likely to engage in such activities compared with their non-married counterparts.[36] Perhaps even more importantly, however, researchers believe that marriage actually encourages responsible, healthy behaviors.[37] And, perhaps flowing from all of the above, research indicates that married individuals "suffer less from illness and disease and are better off than their never-married or divorced counterparts when they do fall ill."[38]

b. Marriage and mental health . The health benefits of marriage do not stop with the body. Research now indicates "the psychological well-being of the married is substantially better than that of the unmarried."[39] "Married people have lower rates of depression and suffer significantly less from any psychiatric disorder than their divorced, never-married, or cohabiting counterparts."[40] Married individuals, furthermore, are less likely to be admitted to a public mental institution,[41] less likely to be admitted to a psychiatric clinic,[42] and more likely to cope with psychologically stressful events.[43]

Marriage has also been linked with reports of increased happiness, life satisfaction, and overall occurrence of positive emotions.[44] Marriage offers individuals a "spiritual connection to their deepest values" and satisfies the basic human need for "emotional and physical closeness."[45] Some scholars have opined that marriage "provides individuals with a sense of obligation to others, which gives life meaning beyond oneself."[46] Furthermore, "some consensus exists that marriage improves women's material well-being and men's emotional well-being."[47] Indeed, "'no part of the unmarried population – separated, divorced, widowed, or never married – describes itself as being so happy and contented with life as the married.'"[48] As one scholar put it, "[t]he positive effect of marriage on well-being is strong and consistent, and selection of the psycho-

logically healthy into marriage or the psychologically unhealthy out of marriage cannot explain the effect."[49]

c. Marriage and social productivity . Marriage, finally, has a significant (but often overlooked) impact on social productivity. Marriage, to take but one example, has proven to be a positive factor in the workplace. Besides providing health and psychological benefits, marriage positively affects wages and productivity. One study, in fact, has indicated that married men logged more than double the hours of cohabiting, single men.[50] This translates into a "wage premium" for marriage that positively affects men and women.[51]

Another scholar has noted that marriage tends to minimize what Karl Marx described as the alienation between a worker and his employment. "[M]arriage and family still involve the un-specialized, holistic self, providing a context where people bring together their many specialized roles . . . and [can] strategize about the future of family and career within a union that provides value and continuity."[52] Yet another noted scholar has concluded that the development and rein-forcement marriage (and the inter-generational conception of family built upon that model) is the essential foundation for personal liberty and an efficient market economy.[53]

In sum, the weight of social science demographic research indicates that marriage has unique benefits for women and men, as well as for the children that develop from and within the marital union. Marriage offers individuals (and society) natural and inherent benefits. Indeed, the pro-creative and normative functions of marriage provide the very foundation of civilized society – all of which brings us to the final (and summary) norm recapitulated in the Doha Declaration: the family as the fundamental group unit of society.

 C.   The Fundamental Group Unit of Society
The third paragraph of the Doha Declaration restates the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "[t]he family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society"[54] and is entitled to "the widest possible protection and assistance."[55]
As reflected in the precise and elegant terms of the Universal Declaration, the family is not merely a construct of the human imagination. The family has a profoundly important connection to nature. This connection begins with the realities of reproduction, but extends to the forces that shape civilization itself. It encompasses, among other things, the positive personal, social, cultural and economic outcomes which current research suggests flow from a man learning to live with a woman (and a woman learning to live with a man) in a committed marital relation-ship. The family, in short, is the "natural and fundamental group unit of society" because, as set out earlier, mounting evidence shows that the survival of society depends upon the positive out-comes derived from the natural union of a man and a woman who join their cooperative efforts to bear, rear and acculturate their children.

III. Working Together
The Doha International Conference for the Family laid a much-needed foundation for future co-operative efforts by governments, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, acad-emicians, faith communities and members of civil society. The extensive, interlocking activities of the Doha International Conference for the Family provided a broad range of actors in the international community with important opportunities for recommitment to "the natural and fun-damental group unit of society." The data, scholarship, legal analysis and ideas gathered during the Conference point to hopeful new policies for the families of the world.

Perhaps most importantly, the Conference demonstrated that men and women, fathers and mothers, from all cultures and from all political and religious backgrounds can come together to preserve society's most fundamental unit. There is an astonishing amount of work yet to do, but the Doha International Conference for the Family provides clear hope that we can link arms with cultures around the world to successfully complete that work.

With the efforts of men and women of good will from all over the globe, the consensus language – collected in The Doha Declaration – can provide the basis for informed and effective action to slow and reverse social disintegration. The best way to improve society is to strengthen the family. But, despite the clarity of the path, we have not been quick to see it. Perhaps the reason why is explained by Goethe:

What is the most difficult of all?

That which seems to you the easiest,

To see with one's eyes

What is lying before them.[56]

We must all now see what is lying before our eyes. We have a shared commitment to the natural family.   Let us now empower the family to act for the common good of all mankind.

(Endnotes)

1 . The Qur'an, Al-Nahl (Sura 16:72).
2 . The Holy Bible, Genesis 2:17.
3 . The Torah, Bereishis 2:18 (explaining that man was not intended to live alone, but to marry).
4 . Catechism of the Catholic Church, ¶ 2207 (1994).
5 . The Chuang Tzu: A New Complete Translation of the Classic Taoist Text (Martin Palmer and Elizabeth Breuilly, trans. 1996).
6 . Marian F. Zeitlin, Ratna Megawangi, Ellen M. Kramer, Nancy D. Colletta, E.D. Babatunde, and David Garman, Strengthening the Family: Implications for International Development (United Nations University Press 1995) at 1.
7 . Marian F. Zeitlin et al., note 6 above, at 1.
8 . Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Chapter III, ¶ 40-k.
9 . United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Health ¶ 6.12.
1 0. World Conference on Human Rights, Preamble.
1 1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble.
1 2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 25-2.
1 3. World Summit for Children, ¶ 18.
1 4. Linda J. Waite, Does Marriage Matter?, 32 Demography 483, 494 (November 1995).
1 5. Id. Importantly, Waite notes that these statistics "take into account differences in a number of characteristics that affect educational attainment," thus accentuating the accuracy of the statistics' indications.
1 6. Waite above note 14, at 494.
1 7. Id. (citing N.M. Astone & S.S. McLanahan, Family Structure, Residential Mobility, and School Dropout: A Research Note, 31 Demography 575-84 (1994)). "The presence of two parents potentially means more parental supervision, more parental time helping with homework, and another parental shoulder to cry on after a hard day." Id.
1 8. Michael Gurian, The Good Son: Shaping the Moral Development of our Boys and Young Men 182 (1999) (referring to research studies conducted by the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University).
1 9. Id. at 42-43.
2 0. Id. at 43. Gurian notes that today there is a cultural strain on the early bond between both mothers and fathers. "Most boys lose their mothers not because of death but because the importance of the mother-son bond has been gradually diminishing in our culture, and thus in the home. Pressures on contemporary mothers are such that mothers can't mother their sons as they wish and need to. Similar pressures have for years frayed the father-son bond . . . ." Id. at 42. Gurian also notes that "[t]he reason the question of working mothers and child care is so developmentally crucial now is that mother-child attachment itself has changed a great deal by force of culture. Our economic system forces many mothers to work far away from their babies, and the 'aunties' — the child-care workers provided by our culture — are generally so slightly paid that they don't stay around long enough to form bonds. This situation is potentially dangerous to the developing child." Id. at 74.

2 1. Sanford M. Dornbusch et al., Single Parenthood, Society 30 (July 1, 1996) (available on Westlaw at 1996 WL 9295204).

2 2. Waite, above note14, at 494.

2 3. Waite, above note 14, at 495 (citing D.N. Lye, et al., Childhood Living Arrangements and Adult Children's Relations with Their Parents, 32 Demography 261-80 (1995)).

2 4. Elizabeth VanDenBerghe, The Enduring, Happy Marriage: Findings and Implications from Research in Strengthening Marriage and Family: Proclamation Principles and Scholarship 28 (David C. Dollahite, ed., publication forthcoming, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City).

2 5. See, e.g., David Popenoe, "Family Caps," Society 25, (July 1, 1996) (available on Westlaw at 1996 WL 9295227): That substantial family disintegration has occurred in the United States in recent decades is now widely recognized. Here are some of the key statistics: From 1960 to 1990 the divorce rate in the United States doubled or tripled (depending upon how one calculates the rate); the percentage of families headed by a single parent tripled, growing from 9 percent to 27 percent; the percentage of out of wedlock births increased from 5 percent of all births to 30 percent; and the percentage of children living apart from their biological fathers more than doubled, growing from 17 percent to 36 percent. It is very much in the public interest for the government to prevent such family disintegration--to promote marriage and the two-parent family and to try to limit single-parent families and out of wedlock births.

2 6. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16-1; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 23-2.

2 7. International Conference on Population and Development, Chapter II, Principle 9; United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Chapter II, ¶ 31.

2 8. Steven L. Nock, Marriage in Men's Lives 11 (1998).

2 9. Brigitte Berger, "The Social Roots of Prosperity and Liberty," 35 Society 44 (March 13, 1998) (available on Westlaw at 1998 WL 11168752) ("Although of late we can witness a public rediscovery of the salutary role of the nuclear family of father, mother, and their children living together and caring for their individual and collective progress, policy elites appear neither to have fully understood that public life lies at the mercy of private life, nor do they seem to have apprehended the degree to which the [traditional] virtues and [traditional] ethos continue to be indispensable for the maintenance of both the market economy and civil society.")

3 0. Nock, note 28 above, at 3.

3 1. Lee A. Lillard & Linda J. Waite, 'Til Death Do Us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality, 100 American Journal of Sociology 1131 (1995); see also James S. Goodwin et al., The Effect of Marital Status on Stage, Treatment, and Survival of Cancer Patients, 258 JAMA 3125, 3125 (1987) ("Married persons live longer, with lower mortality for almost every major cause of death, in comparison with single, separated, widowed, or divorced or divorced persons.")

3 2. Waite, above note 14, at 489. Researchers explain this causal relationship by pointing to marriage's tendency to curb risky and unhealthy behaviors, increase material well being, and provide a network of help and support, all of which combine to lengthen an individual's life. Id.

3 3. Waite, above note 14, at 486. Problem drinking was measured by factors such as drinking more than one planned, failing to accomplish things on account of drinking, and being informed that drinking was hurting one's health. See id.

3 4. Waite, above note 14, at 487, figure 5. Waite notes that "excessive drinking is a particular male pattern of social pathology; for example, marital conflict is associated with problem drinking for men and with depression for women." Id. at 486 (citing A.V. Horwitz & H.R. White, Becoming Married, Depression, and Alcohol Problems among Young Adults, 32 Journal of Health and Social Behavior 221-37 (1991); C.A. Robbins & S.S. Martin, Gender, Styles of Deviance, and Drinking Problems, 34 Journal of Health and Social Behavior 302-21 (1993); I. Waldron, Gender and Health-Related Behaviors, in Health Behavior: Emerging Research Perspectives 193-208 (D.S. Gochman, ed. 1988)).

3 5. Waite, above note 14, at 486. Risk-taking behavior was determined by looking at five factors: (1) carelessness resulting in accidents around house and workplace, (2) taking risks against one's better judgment, (3) serious arguments or fights at home, (4) serious arguments or fights outside the home, and (5) problems leading to arguments with others. See id. at 486-87.

3 6. VanDenBerghe, above note 24, at 29.

3 7. This may be so because "marriage provides individuals with a sense of meaning in their lives and a sense of obligation to others, thus inhibiting risky behaviors and encouraging healthy ones." Waite, above note14, at 488 (citing W. Gove, Sex, Marital Status, and Mortality, 79 American Journal of Sociology 45-67 (1973); D. Umberson, Family Status and Health Behaviors: Social Control as a Dimension of Social Integration, 28 Journal of Health and Social Behavior 206-19 (1987)). Additionally, scholars have noted that "marriage provides individuals – especially men – with someone who monitors their health and health-related behaviors," which may also curb the tendency to engage in potentially harmful activities and encourage healthy, productive ones.

Id. (citing Catherine E. Ross, Reconceptualizing Marital Status as a Continuum of Social Attachment, 57 Journal of Marriage and the Family 129-40 (1995); D. Umberson, Gender, Marital Status, and the Social Control of Behavior, 34 Social Science and Medicine 907-17 (1992)).

3 8. VanDenBerghe, above note 24, at 29 (citing G.T. Stanton, Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society (1997); Waite, above note14; Gove, above note 37)); see also L. Verbrugge, Marital Status and Health, 41 Journal of Marriage and the Family 267-86 (1979) (report of a comprehensive study using numerous national surveys and looking at acute and chronic conditions, conditions limiting physical and social behavior, and medical treatment).

3 9. Gove et al, above note 37, at 7.

4 0. VanDenBerghe, above note 24, at 30.

4 1. Gove et al., above note 37, at 5, 9, table 1.

4 2. Id.

4 3. Id. at 13 (citing L. Pearlin & J. Johnson, Marital Status, Life Strains and Depression, 42 American Sociological Review 704-15 (1977)). Some researchers have linked married individuals' heightened ability to handle traumatic events with the intimate relationship existing between spouses. "[I]ntimate social relationships . . . increase effective coping by strongly enhancing two intrapsychic resources, self esteem and one's sense of mastery, both of which [are] important coping resources." Id. at 14 (citing R.C. Kessler & M. Essex, Marital Status and Depression: The Importance of Coping Resources, 61 Social Forces 484-507 (1982)).

4 4. Wendy Wood et al., Sex Differences in Positive Well Being: A Consideration of Emotional Style and Marital Status, 106 Psychological Bulletin 249, 251 (1989) (citing Walter R. Gove, The Relationship Between Sex Roles, Marital Status, and Mental Illness, 51 Social Forces 34 (1972)).

4 5. VanDenBerghe, above note 24, at 33.

4 6. Waite, above note14, at 498.

4 7. Id.

4 8. VanDenBerghe, above note 24, at 30.

4 9. Ross, above note 37, at 129.

5 0. Waite, above note 14, at 495, figure 15.

5 1. Id. Some scholars have suggested that the wage premium for married individuals evidences enhanced productivity – most likely the result of more time (because the other spouse is at home attending to those affairs), reduced negative health behaviors, and increased incentive to perform well so as to provide for the family. Id.

5 2. VanDenBerghe, above note 24, at 34.

5 3. Berger, above note 32, at 44.

5 4. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16-3; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 10-1; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 23-1.

5 5. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 10-1.

5 6. Goethe, Xenien Aus Dem Nachlass #45 (quoted in Marian F. Zeitlin et al., note 6 above, at v).