

ALIANȚA FAMILIILOR DIN ROMÂNIA

ALLIANCE OF ROMANIA'S FAMILIES

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Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
Civil Society Section
New York, NY
United States of America
Via electronic delivery spuvimanasinghe@ohchr.org

Re.: Promoting Human Rights through a better understanding of traditional values
A/HRC/RES/21/3

Dear Sir/Madam:

I write on behalf of the Alliance of Romania's Families, a non-profit, civic organization with a constituency of hundreds of thousands of citizens and parents. Founded in 2007, the Alliance promotes in the public forum the fundamental interests of our community, among them pro-family practices, pro-life policies, and freedom of religion, conscience and expression. We are responding to the September 27, 2012 call of the Human Rights Council on input from relevant stakeholders on "best practices in the application of traditional values while promoting and protecting human rights and upholding human dignity." We are grateful for the opportunity to provide our input on this narrow issue.

First, **we do not believe it is useful to emphasize distinctions** between "traditional" and other values. This is divisive and has already created a generational divide. Differentiation inevitably leads to strife rather than harmony, even if unintentionally. The official labeling of certain values as "traditional" and others as "progressive" tends to foster feelings of exclusion and derisiveness, the former being viewed as retrograde, outmoded, or obsolete, and only the latter as deserving of attention or respect. We believe the best practice is to encourage generations to be mutually respectful of one another and for the UN to launch programs and projects that create a dialog conducive to such respect.

Second, we believe the **UN treaty bodies** should be reformed. By practice, they assume powers which have not been intended for them to have, let alone exercise. We read decisions and opinions issued by some UN treaty bodies and are alarmed by the analysis, rhetoric, and bias. They read into the fundamental instruments of the world order radical notions and doctrines which are alien to the vast majority of the world's population. They tend to interpret the

fundamental instruments as “living documents,” something the vast majority of member states and our organization reject. That the world and societal norms are in motion is undeniable. But allowing a small number of individuals or experts to select and legitimize new norms and discard traditional norms is inappropriate and has, in our view, a delegitimizing effect upon the entire UN system. Rather, we believe consensus should continue to be the basis for framing human rights and obligations and for decreeing values with universal applicability. Along these lines, we urge a reform of the UN’s treaty bodies to reflect the true ideological and values diversity of the global society.

Third, we believe that powerful and financially resourceful countries should **not impose their view of human rights on the rest of the world**. For way too long the powerful and wealthy nations of the European Union and North America have used foreign aid as a lever to impose unwanted norms on the less powerful and less fortunate countries of the world. This policy does not engender good will among nations but ill will. One example is abstinence. While the majority of the world society believes in abstinence for our children, the powerful nations of the European Union and North America promote a sexual ideology which in our view is promiscuous and irresponsible. The practice of extracting value conformity through foreign aid is not good, but offensive and undermines the sovereignty of nations.

Fourth, a better approach in understanding the role of traditional values is for the global society to **emphasize both, freedoms and obligations**. The UN and its treaty bodies promote exclusively freedoms and human rights. We are literally faced with an inflation of rights and a dearth of obligations and responsibilities. A socially healthy society is one which emphasizes both, freedoms and obligations. It keeps them in the balance. We believe that to every freedom corresponds an obligation. The younger generation needs to be educated that it has obligations, too, not only rights. Obligations are healthy contributors to the overall, harmonious development of the young generation and society. Insistence on human rights alone is egotistical and engenders selfishness, but insistence on obligations engenders altruism and collaboration. The creation of “new human rights” should, therefore, be linked to an emphasis on obligations as well.

Fifth, an additional positive practice is to **give international recognition and viability to parental rights**. The emphasis on individual rights has usurped parental rights. For millennia parents have exercised, and, in fact, society has expected them to exercise, parental obligations. The modern welfare state, which can only be afforded in a limited part of the world, has confiscated parental obligations and has substituted its own vision for the upbringing and education of children. Totalitarian regimes of the Twentieth Century, Romania included, have done that as well, causing the world’s most tragic human cataclysms. Their experience should be a useful guide that the state, and especially the welfare state, is not helping the global society by displacing parental obligations. For this reason parents around the world demand that the prerogatives they have traditionally exercised with respect to their children -- such as education, morals, values -- be recognized internationally as fundamental rights and parental rights.

Sixth, the UN and Member States should fulfill the obligation they assumed in Article 16(3) of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “**The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society** and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” We are witnessing, in the European Union and North America, a deliberate effort, at all levels - legislative, executive, judiciary, education, mass media – to undermine the “natural and fundamental group unit of society,” namely, the family. In recent months hundreds of thousands of citizens have taken to the streets in France and Puerto Rico demanding that the state protect, not demolish, the natural family unit. Likewise, in 2006 our Alliance obtained 650.000 signatures from citizens with the right to vote in support of tangible measures by the Romanian government to protect the Article 16(3) family. In recent years, however, this concern has reached global proportions. We are very concerned that the UN and its treaty bodies are working in earnest to demolish, not implement, the global Article 16(3) mandate. In countries where the natural family has been displaced in favor of a new family paradigm, the consequences are numerous, palpable, and dire: marriage rates have plummeted, children born out of wedlock are becoming the norm, as are single parent families, public expenditures to rectify the consequences of a declining family culture are sky rocketing, the welfare state is bursting at its seams nearing collapse, the youth is disoriented, human rights are in conflict, generations are at loggerheads.

This then, we think, is the best practice and the gist of all efforts to promote freedoms and human rights through traditional values: protect and promote the Article 16(3) family; dialog, not unidirectional monolog; mutual respect not unilateral demand for recognition of new rights at the exclusion of obligations; and an equal opportunity for input in the definition and determination of social norms in the global society.

Respectfully submitted,

BY: _____
Peter Costea, PhD, President
Alliance of Romania’s Families