



**UNITED NATIONS**

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
FOR LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



**1994  
International Year of the Family**

**Distr.  
LIMITED**

**LC/L.761(Conf.84/2)  
17 June 1993**

**ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: SPANISH**

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**Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting  
Preparatory to the International Year of the Family**

**Cartagena, Colombia, 9-14 August 1993**

**ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

### Nature and purpose

This regional meeting is a high-level forum which will provide inputs for the debate on the topics most closely related to the situation of families in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the context of preparatory activities for the International Year of the Family (1994). It will thus offer participants from the region a favourable environment for discussion and possible adoption of recommendations on the topics relating to the Year.

### Opening meeting

The meeting will be opened by officials of the Government of Colombia, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the secretariat of the International Year of the Family.

#### 1. Election of officers

In accordance with established practices, a chairman, three vice-chairmen and a rapporteur will be elected at the beginning of the meeting.

#### 2. Adoption of the agenda and the programme of work

The delegations will consider and adopt the agenda and programme of work. Pursuant to the terms of reference, the delegations may make any comments and suggest any modifications they deem pertinent. The official languages of the meeting will be Spanish and English.

#### 3. The situation of the family in Latin America and the Caribbean and its place in national development programmes

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean share many of the worldwide trends in the evolution of the family, including its shrinking size; the growing instability being reflected in divorce rates and separations; the increase in premarital relations; the gradual overcoming of the double standard with regard to the sexual practices of men and women; the rise in the number of households where both partners work outside the home; the greater proportion of single-parent households and those composed of partners whose union is not formalized; and cases of two or more successive unions which lead to various arrangements for child care.

To facilitate the debates, the secretariat of the meeting will circulate the document "Situation and prospects of the family in Latin America and the Caribbean" (LC/L.758(Conf.84/3)), which suggests that the meaning of the above-mentioned trends should be interpreted in light of the following five specific regional characteristics: the stage of demographic transition of many of the countries; the significance of poverty and inequalities in income; rapid socio-cultural changes; changes in the role of the State; and the importance of national idiosyncracies, which largely stem from the mixture of aboriginal, European and African cultures and from institutions such as slavery.

Finally, the document contains general guidelines for strengthening the family's capacity to ensure the well-being of its members and to collaborate in the building of more equitable, democratic and productive societies.

Delegations will also receive a copy of the document "Compendium of replies to the survey of Governments on matters related to the family" (LC/L.756(Conf.84/4)), which presents a summary of the most important government activities being carried out in relation to the family, including the current status of social policies designed to strengthen the family, the institutional aspects of these policies and national preparations for the International Year of the Family.

#### 4. Urban families and poverty

It is of fundamental importance to analyse family and domestic responses to the intensification of poverty in Latin American cities. Reactions to the economic deterioration imposed by the crisis have been basically private in nature. It is within private homes that families have applied various strategies to cope with and mitigate the effects of the crisis. The analysis of these strategies is thus essential in order to determine the true impact of the economic policies that have been implemented in the Latin American countries.

The above-mentioned document also points out that the effects of the crisis have been uneven; in other words, not all households have been equally affected. The decline in income has been proportionately greater in the middle strata than in poorer households. However, the last-mentioned are the ones that are at a greater disadvantage, especially households composed of young people or the elderly and those headed by women. The document concludes by noting that some members of the same household are more vulnerable than others. Owing to the relations between men and women and between generations, which involve unequal access to resources and income, children and women are the hardest hit by poverty and its sequels (malnutrition, illness and violence).

#### 5. Rural families and ethnicity

This is a broad, complex topic, whose analysis reveals the diversity of national and regional situations that shape and define rural families, especially those of small farmers and indigenous people. In this context, the meeting will also consider the interaction between the socio-economic dynamic of rural families, together with the various forms of union and child care adopted by them, and the gender and intergenerational relations established within them. A typology of family situations in rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean will be proposed; the main forms of rural family organization will be described; some processes modifying family behaviour will be identified; and some public policy recommendations will be formulated.

## 6. Intra-family relations

The family in the Latin American and Caribbean region has undergone transformations that are linked to urbanization and development processes. In this framework, the discussion will concern the role of family networks in migratory processes; the relationship between domestic and family organization, the labour market and social networks; and the changes that have occurred in family organization. As for internal dynamics, the analysis will focus on the conflicts occurring between the different generations in the family and between privacy and intimacy within the family itself, on the one hand, and, on the other, the State's responsibilities regarding the defence of citizens' rights. Domestic violence and sexual and reproductive practices will be examined from this point of view.

## 7. The family in the English-speaking Caribbean

The Afro-Caribbean family at first appears to be a random mixture of different types of structure, but actually follows an easily recognizable pattern. The family model includes nuclear or extended domestic units, whether formed by a visiting union, a consensual, co-residential union or a legal marriage. This pattern is governed by various cultural factors; if these are taken into account, although the western perspective may see it otherwise, the illegitimacy of children and the father's irresponsibility are not regarded as problems. At the same time, the family's economic situation erodes the ability of parents, especially fathers, to carry out their roles, and places an enormous burden on mothers. Children also become victims of poverty. It has been recognized throughout the subregion, especially as a result of recent achievements in women's struggle for equality, that there is a need to reform legislation to make it more consistent with cultural and economic realities.

## 8. National and regional preparations for the International Year of the Family and adoption of a Latin American and Caribbean regional action agenda for the family

The purpose of the International Year of the Family is to stimulate local, national and international actions as the starting-point of a sustained long-term effort to meet the following objectives:

- a) To increase awareness of family issues among Governments as well as in the private sector;
- b) To strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families;
- c) To stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families;
- d) To enhance the effectiveness of local, national and regional efforts to carry out specific programmes concerning families, by developing new activities and strengthening those in progress;
- e) To improve the collaboration between national and international organizations in support of multisectoral activities;

- f) To build upon the results of international activities concerning women, children, youth, the aged and the disabled.

Accordingly, the participants will discuss national and regional preparations for the International Year of the Family on the basis of what has been done in the countries and the progress made in the preparatory process.

The meeting may adopt a Latin American and Caribbean regional action agenda for the family, based on the conclusions of the technical meeting.

9. Adoption of the report of the meeting

Following the submission of the draft report by the Rapporteur, the participants will take a decision on the adoption of the final report.