

My name is Susan Roylance, and I'm speaking in behalf of the Howard Center, an ECOSOC accredited organization.

Yesterday, as I listened to a news conference regarding the Habitat III process, and the stakeholder section specifically, I was concerned with the belief that the implementation of this "New Urban Agenda" will best be accomplished by a new group of "stakeholders" who will be empowered separate from the governments of their cities and towns. They talked of the expected inflow of people into the cities, that will create new problems that must be solved – jobs provided, housing, food, transportation, etc.

I attended the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, twenty years ago, and have participated in most of the major UN conferences since that time. While participating in a PrepCom for the Children's Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, I became aware of the serious orphan problem as a result of the many parents that had died from AIDS. As a result, I helped develop an HIV/AIDS Prevention Program for Children – which involves the parents. While introducing that program in Kenya, I discovered the plight of the farmers in Kenya – who could not even harvest their fields of maize because of the flood of corn from developed countries that subsidize their farmers. They could import corn into Kenya cheaper than the local farmers could harvest their crops. My husband is an agriculture expert. As a result, we ended up going to Africa to help the farmers.

I want to give you one example. In the Chyulu Hills area, we became aware of a man who graduated from high school, married, and moved to Nairobi, in hopes of finding a job to provide for his family. I'm sure he is typical of many of the people who flee from the rural areas – to the cities – to find a job. He ended up selling milk, one cup at a time, in the slum area. His home was clean, but the surroundings were not healthy. Their first child died, while they lived in the slums.

At that same time, my husband and I, with the support of the Reach the Children Foundation, helped drill 3 drills in the Chyulu Hills area, to get water for crop production. As a result, that next year, the people in the Chyulu Hills area were able to produce crops to sell – and prevent famine. These families, some in small family farms, can now take care of their family in the rural area – much better than they could have in the slums.

As a result, during the discussions of the MDGs, we prepared a book on "The Family and the MDGs." This book shows how the family unit can become empowered to solve the international Millennium Development Goals.

We are now preparing a book titled, "Family Capital and the SDGs." We are gathering information from experts in the various areas of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets, and we plan to launch this book in Quito, in October, at the Habitat III conference.

I ask you to seriously consider the recognition of the family unit, and how empowering the family can help achieve both the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. By empowering the family, it is not the social protection floors, but the combined activities, talents and resources of the family that achieves the goals.

The Zero Draft speaks of “quality of life” in nine different paragraphs. The quality of life can be obtained in the rural areas, as well as in the cities. I noticed that a comment by Columbia in the recent country comments on the Zero Draft, pointed out “Other human settlements, including rural areas can be spaces to enjoy rights and high quality of life.”

80% of the poor in developing countries are dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood, in one way or another. If we want to avoid the rush to the cities, to find jobs, we need to look at solutions in the rural areas. This is a critical part of solving the impact of increased populations in the cities.

If anyone would like a copy of our book on the *The Family and the MDGs*, I have a few copies with me. And, I hope you will look forward to receiving the new book on *Family Capital and the SDGs*. We hope this contribution by our organization will be helpful in achieving the goals and targets of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs – by empowering the family unit.