



Russian Orthodox Church
Patriarch's Commission
on the Family, Protection
of Motherhood and Childhood

**Statement
by the Patriarch's Commission on the Family,
Protection of Motherhood and Childhood
(Russian Orthodox Church)**

On the publication of UNICEF's Position Paper in support of legalisation of same-sex union

18th December, 2014

On November 2014 the UNICEF (United Nations' Children's Fund) published a Position Paper entitled *Eliminating discrimination against children and parents based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity*.¹ In this document the UNICEF's gave its definitions of *sexual orientation* and *gender identity*, condemned various states for 'criminalizing' homosexual conduct and promotion of homosexuality, called for changing the social norms, and also declared its official support for legalising same-sex unions – all allegedly to protect the rights of children. In view of the publication of this document, the Patriarch's Commission on the Family, Protection of Motherhood and Childhood of the Russian Orthodox Church issues the following statement:

1. The Commission is gravely concerned at the fact that the UNICEF is using its capabilities, international status, and resources, provided to it by the various states, to lend support to developments and concepts not only devoid of sound international legal basis, but also contrary to most of the nations' traditional cultures, as well as norms of natural and religious morality. Such actions are harmful to the international community and will undermine the moral legitimacy of the UNICEF and other UN bodies.

2. The family is based on a marital union of a man and a woman, one of the most important purposes of which is the procreation and upbringing of children. For this very reason the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other major international treaties recognised the family to be the 'natural and fundamental group unit of society'.² The marriage of a man and a woman and the natural family based on it are vital to the survival of humankind and of each individual nation, essential to genuine human dignity and freedom. Attempts at changing the definition of marriage and family, extending it to same-sex unions, are deeply harmful to the society and offending to fundamental human rights and dignity. Laws aimed at putting such attempts into practice are nothing if not a form of lawlessness.

3. Such attempts are especially harmful to children. The UN Children's Fund must know that children are born of a union of a man and a woman, not of a same-sex union. It is in the best interests of a child to be born into and raised by family, so that he can know his loving and caring father and mother. Placing children to be raised by same-sex couples is a gross violation of the rights and interests of a child. Calling for legalisation of same-sex unions in connection with the upbringing of children, the UNICEF, therefore, is acting contrary to its mandate, promoting not protection of the rights of children, but their substantial violation.

4. The Commission would like to remind that the terms *sexual orientation* and *gender identity*, employed in this document, do not enjoy international recognition and are not defined in any of the global fundamental international treaties. As the authors of the document themselves rightly note, as yet, there is no binding international instrument that explicitly addresses "discrimination" against individuals based on their "sexual orientation" and "gender identity". Introducing these artificially constructed categories into the existing lists of prohibited grounds for discrimination, as some of the international bodies are doing, is arbitrary and illegitimate.

5. The Patriarch's Commission on the Family, Protection of Motherhood and Childhood expresses its hope that the state authorities of the Russian Federation and other UN member states will point out that it is impermissible for the UNICEF, the UNCRC, and other international bodies to use their capabilities to give legitimacy to developments that are immoral and contrary to universally acknowledged human rights, including the rights of the child. The Commission calls upon all Orthodox Christian faithful and other people of good will, including politicians and public figures, as well as NGOs at all levels, to use every legal means to stop international bodies from abusing their capacities in such a manner.

¹ UNICEF. Position Paper No. 9 (November 2014) – *Eliminating Discrimination Against Children and Parents Based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity*

² Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, et al.