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Business giant, Lee Iacocca once said, “the only rock that stays steady, the only institution that works is the family.” This simple, yet profound, principle is one that has not only withstood the test of time but is also the foundation basis of emerging brain science.

Here is what we know: We know that strong families are the building blocks of strong communities and strong communities are the building blocks of strong nations. Thanks to leaders like Dr. Jack Shonkoff, we know that relationships with other human beings are not a luxury for children, but an absolute necessity. But you do not need to be a Nobel Prize-winning economist or a world-renowned neurologist at Harvard to be able to recognize that children do best when raised by loving and protective parent. For many of us, we need only to reflect on our own life experience to understand the impact that a loving embrace or encouraging words have in times of stress.

Despite these certainties, millions of children in the world are growing up without the care of a protective, permanent family. These children live in institutions or on the streets; they have been torn from their families because of war or disaster; or they have been bought and sold for sex or labor. And worst yet, the number of children who suffer such fates is rising. For this to change, governments of the world need to not only recognize that children have a basic human right to a family; they must also establish and enforce laws and systems to protect this right. It is for this reason that the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) is proud to support the U.S. Government’s Action Plan for Children in Adversity.

Under its tenets, the millions of children outside of family care will have the opportunity to benefit from programs that prevent children from being separated from their families and quickly reunify them when separation proves inevitable. It also makes the commitment to pursue adoption, foster care, kinship and guardianship for children whose biological families are unable or unwilling to care for them. This is a major step forward and holds promise not only for the futures of children, but the future of nations.