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Agenda item 3(a) Poverty Eradication

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

The following statement is offered by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) for the NGO Committee on Ageing – New York.

It is estimated that by 2050, approximately 80% of older persons will be living in low-income countries. And older people will outnumber those under the age of 15. Generally, these countries do not provide secure pensions for their aging populations. Extreme and grinding poverty is and will continue to be a reality for so many of our elderly.

Poverty eradication for older persons is not just an issue for those who are less fortunate or for those who are already aged, it is an issue whose resolution is necessary to the financial health of the world.

Programs and policy initiatives at the national and international level can and must be developed now, to prevent future hardships for current and future generations of older persons. If we are lucky, we will all become older ourselves, but in many countries to grow older is still a luxury.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing touched the issue of promoting self-employment and ensuring access to credit for older persons [paragraph 28]. Nevertheless, older persons around the world due to age discrimination still have no access to microfinance or loans. The Madrid Plan also contains many policy recommendations in the areas of social protection, employment, retirement and pensions that, if implemented by the member states, would dramatically reduce, if not eradicate, poverty among the world's older population.

Older persons are resources, not burdens. In the development of policy concerning the eradication of poverty, it is critical that the voices of older persons be heard. Their unique situations must be incorporated into the creation of new initiatives. As the disability advocacy community has so forcefully said "Nothing about us without us." This applies equally to the development of policies and programs to address the needs of older persons.

Often, older people are excluded from participation in formal and informal poverty eradication system because of their age. Throughout the world, the elderly are, in essence, invisible in the families, in their communities, and in the governments. Often, older persons are considered to have had their best days behind them.

The NGO Committee on Ageing- New York advocates within the United Nations community to encourage and support the active participation of older persons in the planning and implementation of economic and social policies globally. The NGO Committee, in the year marking the Tenth Anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, stands ready to work with the Commission for Social Development, the member states, and NGOs to further the recommendations of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and to promote a human rights instrument for older persons.