

Keynote Closing remarks

**United Nations International Day of Older Persons
October 7th, 2010**

**H.E. Mr. Jorge Argüello
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations**

Dear friends,

Argentina is very proud to cosponsor this meeting and the commemoration of this International Day, to focus a much needed spotlight on the issue of ageing.

As preparations started for this event, quite a few months ago, we were told that the goals of this meeting were to raise awareness for the Millennium Development Goals and their relevance to older persons, and to contribute to further involvement of older persons as protagonists and beneficiaries of this process.

And thanks to the indefatigable commitment of Jessica Frank Lopez, Jim Collins and the members of the NGO Committee that took different organizing responsibilities, today I can say without a doubt that those objectives have been amply fulfilled.

We read in the latest report of the Secretary General “The past decades have witnessed significant increases in life expectancy in most countries, particularly at older ages. It is unclear whether the increased survivorship of older persons has translated into a healthier life”. More than half of the older adult population in the world has no access to retirement or pensions. This is the case not only for the least developed countries, but for some high-income countries as well.

The government of Argentina, a developing, middle-income country, has taken such steps as creating a system of non-contributory pensions for older persons who lack other forms of social protection, and recognizing the contribution of women in their homes. This contributes not only to ensuring that older persons can continue to be engaged fully in society, also as consumers who can demand what they need from the market, but it also helps maintain a healthy market of goods and services in response to those demands.

There needs to be a serious discussion about what is acceptable and what simply cannot be tolerated if we are going to present ourselves as democratic, inclusive States who respect human rights.

Argentina is fully aware of the urgent need for a serious discussion on how to better protect the rights of older persons. In the context of the financial crisis, both developed and developing countries are looking at reducing public expenditure by simply reducing the investment in “the least visible” populations, including older persons. We have seen today that the strategies and policies towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals can leave out persons over 60 or 65 years of age altogether. Constant vigilance and scrutiny from civil society is indispensable to ensure that the well-being and dignity of older persons are systematically contemplated in social development strategies.

And in this line, I want to share with you a very important step that has been given last Tuesday, when the Group of 77, which includes 133 developing countries in the world and China, have officially presented a draft resolution to the United Nations calling for the establishing of a working group of the United Nations to consider a Convention on the rights of older persons. This is a first step, and there is still a long way to go to secure the support of all 192 States members. Argentina, as the chair of the Group of 77 and China in 2011, will continue to spearhead this process.

And it is in this regard that your contribution is essential: as observers of the negotiations in the UN during the next months, in lobbying your governments to support this initiative, in networking with civil society and political parties in other countries to create a coordinated demand that a serious, expert discussion starts at the highest level on how to really, effectively address demographic ageing with full respect for the dignity and human rights of all older persons.

No real progress can be made without the active, committed and continued strength and the voice of civil society behind it.

Thank you.