

# **26<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons UNIDOP2016**

**6 October 2016 10 AM – 1PM  
ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York**

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Organized by:  
The NGO Committee on Ageing/NY in partnership with  
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Focal Point on Ageing

Sponsored by  
The Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations

[www.ngocoa-ny.org](http://www.ngocoa-ny.org)

Archived Webcast of Event:  
<http://webtv.un.org/search/2016-united-nations-international-day-of-older-persons-unidop/5159989930001?term=older%20persons>

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS (UNIDOP) 2016

## REPORT

### TAKE A STAND AGAINST AGEISM

The 26th International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP) was held at the United Nations in the ECOSOC chamber on October 6, 2016 from 10 am to 1 pm. The event challenged negative stereotypes of older persons and aging, and highlighted global policies and programs that address ageist beliefs and practices.

UNIDOP was organized by the NGO Committee on Ageing/New York in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Focal Point on Ageing. The Permanent Mission of Argentina was the primary sponsor for the event. The UNIDOP 2016 Planning Working Group was led by Co-Chairs Nélica Quintero, PhD, Representative, APA NGO team to the United Nations and Susanne Bleiberg-Seperson, PhD, Representative, Generations United to the United Nations.

Ageism is a widely prevalent form of discrimination that targets people based on their age. Ageism is found in some form in all societies and is expressed in individual's attitudes, institutional and policy practices, as well as media representations.

The opening session included welcoming remarks by Dr. Janet Sigal, Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing/NY and Main Representative, APA NGO Team at the United Nations, and the Co-Chairs of the event, followed by remarks by Ambassador Garcia Moritán, Representative of the Permanent Mission of Argentina and Ms. Daniela Bas, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) at the United Nations. A message from Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations was included in the folders distributed to the audience.

The keynote speaker, Ms. Ashton Applewhite, activist and author of *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto against Ageism* discussed many prevalent misconceptions about older people and aging, and the impact that negative stereotypes can have on people's self-perceptions and health, noting that longevity is a hallmark of human progress, and that human rights don't diminish with age.

A panel focusing on ageism in different contexts was moderated by Ms. Edith Lederer, Chief Correspondent at the United Nations for the Associated Press. Panelists included Dr. David Nabarro, Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development (video presentation); Ms. Alana Officer, Senior Health Adviser, Department of Ageing And Life Course, World Health Organization; H.E. Ambassador Burhan Gafoor, Permanent Mission of The Republic of Singapore to The United Nations, and Mr. Necodimus Chipfupa Regional Director for South Africa, Helpage International. Among the issues addressed were the importance of gathering and analyzing disaggregated data and evidence-based research focused on the needs and challenges of older persons; the need to adopt a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons; the impact of both negative stereotypes and positive perceptions of aging on health and well-being; Singapore's Action Plan for Successful Ageing, and ageism in Africa.

Over 250 people attended the event, including representatives of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations. The event was webcast and is available to view at [webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org).

### **OPENING SESSION**

The first presentation for the event was a video entitled, *No More Donuts for You*, produced as part of the AARP Disrupt Ageing Campaign which documented the reactions of people of various ages when openly confronted with ageism as a hired actress pretends to be a food truck vendor employee who simply refuses to serve anyone over age 40.



**DR. JANET SIGAL**  
**CHAIR OF THE NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING**  
**MAIN REPRESENTATIVE, AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL**  
**ASSOCIATION NGO TEAM AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

On behalf of the UN NGO Committee on Ageing, NY, Dr. Sigal opened the program with welcoming remarks to the 26<sup>th</sup> International Day of Older Persons at the United Nations, organized in partnership with UNDESA and the Focal Point of Ageing and staff, and sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Argentina. Dr.

Sigal also acknowledged the Mission co-sponsors and the World Health Organization as well as the financial contributors to this year's celebration. Dr. Sigal noted that the NGO Committee on Ageing has been working on behalf of older persons since its formation in 1977 raising world awareness of the opportunities and challenges of global aging, and that it continues to engage in advocacy to protect the human rights of older persons worldwide, and to create a society for all ages.



**DR. NÉLIDA QUINTERO**  
**CO-CHAIR, UNIDOP 2016**  
**REPRESENTATIVE, AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL**  
**ASSOCIATION NGO TEAM AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

Dr. Quintero gave a brief introduction to the program topic, noting that prejudices and beliefs based on long-standing negative stereotypes of older persons often support behaviors and practices that can be discriminatory and harmful. Dr. Quintero also stressed that ageist beliefs are continually reinforced

in many ways, through cultural and media representations, and are used in turn as an argument to support discriminatory actions towards older persons in many spheres, including medical and workplace settings. Dr. Quintero also briefly described the program agenda.



**DR. SUSANNE BLEIBERG SEPERSON  
CO-CHAIR, UNIDOP 2016  
REPRESENTATIVE, GENERATIONS UNITED**

Dr. Seperson welcomed the audience and thanked everyone for their participation, providing additional information regarding the documentation distributed as part of the event. Dr. Seperson affirmed that the efforts towards taking a stand against ageism build upon the United Nations Principles for Older Persons that were adopted by the General Assembly

Resolution 46-91 in December 1991. Dr. Seperson also noted that work towards those goals continues with a call for governments to implement policies that enhance the independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity of older persons.



**H.E. AMBASSADOR MARTÍN GARCÍA MORITÁN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MISSION OF  
ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Ambassador Moritán pointed out that after the adoption of the 2030 agenda it is imperative to recognize the essential contributions that older persons can make to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ambassador Moritán also noted that the contributions of older persons to societies and to development are fundamental and

often overlooked, and that it is crucial to develop indicators and collect and analyze data disaggregated by age, as well as share good practices and lessons learned to better understand the experiences, challenges, evolving needs and contributions of older persons in order to design appropriate responses and policies. A universally legally binding document is needed to overcome the flaws in implementation of existing mechanisms that are meant to address issues relevant to older people.



**Ms. DANIELA BAS**

**DIRECTOR, DIVISION FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT, UNDESA**

Ms. Bas stressed that there is much we can learn from people of different ages and backgrounds. Ms. Bas also noted that ageism characterizes older persons as passive and dependent and leads to social exclusion, which is at odds with the aim of the 2030 Agenda to Leave No One Behind. Ms. Bas highlighted the fact that social policies and human rights go hand in hand and called for a rejection of all forms of ageism,

concluding with a quote by Confucius: “What I hear I forget, what I see I remember, what I do, I understand,” underlining the need to take action to challenge ageism.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: “CONFRONTING AGEISM: THE REST IS NOISE”**



**Ms. ASHTON APPLEWHITE**

**ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR OF *THIS CHAIR ROCKS: A MANIFESTO AGAINST AGEISM***

Ms. Applewhite discussed the various misconceptions about older people in contrast with reality and facts, pointing out that longevity is a hallmark of human progress, and that human rights don't diminish with age. Ms. Applewhite also stated that when the value of people is based on economic productivity, other important social contributions are often overlooked, and that ageism is a socially constructed idea that

serves a social and economic purpose. Like racism, ageism is not about how we look, but is about how people in power assign value to how we look. Ms. Applewhite also highlighted the fact that health has the biggest effect in how we age and that research studies have shown that health can be impacted by the beliefs people hold about aging. Since many of these beliefs are taught from childhood, they eventually become internalized and remain unchallenged. Among the actions that could be taken to combat ageism, Ms. Applewhite listed the adoption of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People and a push to collect more detailed and extensive data on older persons, broken down by sex, age, ethnicity, education and income, to bring more visibility and awareness to issues related to older persons and to ageism. Ms. Applewhite then exhorted the audience to challenge ageism and to speak up whenever discrimination is encountered. Ms. Applewhite stressed that unless we take a stand against ageism, the rest is noise.

## PANEL

### COMBATting AGEISM IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

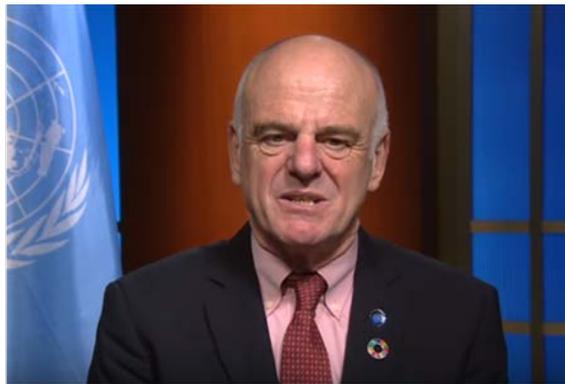


**MS. EDITH M. LEDERER**

**CHIEF CORRESPONDENT AT THE UN FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Ms. Lederer, who in 2016 celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the Associated Press, briefly introduced the theme of the panel “Ageism in Context” as well as the panel speakers. Ms. Lederer underlined the fact that while the population of those over 60 will grow from 900 million to 1.4 billion by 2030, globally in almost every country older men and women are often denied jobs, loans and basic social

services on the basis of their age.



**DR. DAVID NABARRO**

**SPECIAL ADVISER ON 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

In his video message, Dr. Nabarro remarked that while millions of people around the world are affected by humanitarian disasters and protracted crisis, older people, women and children are frequently excluded from relief efforts. Dr. Nabarro stressed the importance of the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one

behind and the commitment to deliver impartial humanitarian assistance to every person, regardless of age, gender or disability.



**MS. ALANA OFFICER**

**SENIOR HEALTH ADVISER, DEPT. OF AGEING AND LIFE COURSE, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

Ms. Officer spoke about the importance of data collection to combat ageism, observing that these days, most people can expect to live into their 60's and beyond, and that while people are living longer, they are not necessarily living healthier lives. There is much diversity in health and functioning in older age, but the data is either insufficient or only focused on a few countries. From data analyzed by the World

Health Organization (WHO), we know that 60% of people, particularly in high income countries, find that they are not respected. The research shows that ageism not only affects health and the provision of health care services, but also that health care providers often have ageist views. Ms. Officer noted that this year the WHO adopted a global strategy and action plan on ageism and health, calling for a global

campaign against ageism. This campaign proposes steps to combat ageism, such as improving the existing evidence-based data available, especially from low income countries. Ms. Officer also remarked that to move forward with this effort, we need to learn from what has already been done to combat racism and sexism, as well as create platforms to share ideas regarding various possible ways to combat ageism.



**H.E. AMBASSADOR BURHAN GAFOOR  
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS**

Ambassador Gafoor talked about the fact that while Singapore is a relatively young country with a population of about 5 million, it is also one of the most rapidly aging countries in the world, along with Japan and a few other countries. To address the needs of older people, Singapore has adopted a whole society or whole government approach and created a Ministerial Committee on Ageing, headed by the

Health Minister. The program is called "I Feel Young" and it contains 70 initiatives in various fields to ensure that citizens are aging well, healthily and happily, focusing on preventive care, nutrition and exercise. As part of this program, A National Silver Academy was established that offers many learning opportunities and a research and development program that studies the problems faced by older people in an effort to create a caring and inclusive society. The initiative also stresses the importance of teaching younger people about the valuable contributions of older Singaporeans, who helped in the establishment of Singapore in 1965, and provides services to this group through the Pioneer Generations Package. Ambassador Gafoor also talked about the importance of sharing ideas and experiences among countries, highlighting a housing approach that Singapore learned about from Japan and which co-locates elder care and child care facilities, finding an increase in intergenerational bonding which is very important in fostering an inclusive society.



**MR. NECODIMUS CHIPFUPA  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH AFRICA, HELPAGE  
INTERNATIONAL**

Mr. Chipfupa remarked that ageism is quite prevalent worldwide and particularly in Africa, where discrimination is a daily experience. Mr. Chipfupa stressed that a movement to combat ageism and bring necessary changes is needed and also underlined the importance of promoting dialogue between older men and women to empower them to work together and adopt a network approach to combat ageism, as well

as the need for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People; he highlighted programs such as the Accountability and Fulfilment for Older People to Raise their Dignity (AFFORD), Better Health for Older People in Africa (BHOPA) and HelpAge's Older Citizen Monitoring Groups (OCMG), which treat older persons as a constituency to work with and learn from.

Mr. Chipfupa pointed out that to achieve genuine change in the lives of older women and men, (omit space)it is important to promote dialogue between older people, civil society organisations, governments and service providers ,and stressed the need for a data revolution to gather more data on older persons in Africa and around the world, disssagregated by age, gender and disability to inform policy and interventions that address the concerns of older persons.

### INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE/QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION



During the interactive dialogue session, some of the issues discussed related to strategies that may be useful to combat ageist attitudes as well as the role of language and the institutionalization of ageism. For instance, setting an age as a criterion to determine when someone should stop working can promote ageist views and should be questioned. Governments can have an important role in combatting ageism through legislation, rules and regulations and by bringing awareness to the issue of

ageism through formal education. In Australia, there is no set retirement age.

In reference to ways that an individual can challenge ageism, It was suggested that people should point out ageist beliefs and behaviors when they encounter them, since a lifelong exposure to ageist messages has taught many to accept them without questioning. Other suggestions included raising consciousness and awareness and learning from other movements, such as Occupy Wall Street , ActUp, the gay rights and women’s movements. The private sector could also be engaged by supporting older workers.

People are seen as less valued in all kinds of cultures, and it was noted that in societies where value is placed primarily on participation in paid employment, the important social and economic contributions of unpaid work, which many older people are engaged in, are ignored. Such oversight feeds the misperception that older people are an economic burden, whereas in the United Kingdom, older adults contribute 40 billion pounds sterling more to the economy than what they receive through pensions.

In Singapore, an effort has also been made to provide educational opportunities for older persons, so that they may continue to be engaged and self-fulfilled. Education has been focused on the young, but life-long learning is important, especially to keep up with technology, as an example, and it may foster intergenerational interactions.

Age diversity in all kinds of spheres can also play an important role in combatting ageism. People are more likely to have a friend of a different race or culture than to have a friend who is not a family member who is more than 10 years younger or older than they are. Acknowledging that we all get older can bridge the imaginary old/young divide that pits us against each other.

It was also suggested that resources need to be allocated to support older persons from governments, the private sector and individuals. A Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would be important in an effort to combat ageism, especially if it is a catalyst to action and change.

## **CLOSING SESSION**



### **H.E. MR. PETER THOMSON**

#### **PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

H.E. Mr. Thomson called for focused attention to the pervasive and destructive issue of ageism, noting that the veneration of the wisdom and enlightenment of older persons has not benefited their lived experience.

Mr. Thomson pointed out that older persons are often overlooked as resources and their social contributions obscured. The upholding of the human

rights of older persons must be addressed as a global priority, combatting ageism and other forms of discrimination and vulnerability, including gender inequality, disability and race, poverty, food insecurity and lack of adequate housing. The principal objective of the 71st Session of the General Assembly is to drive a universal push to achieve meaningful progress for implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mr. Thomson asserted that it is essential that young people learn about the SDGs in school and that the experience and knowledge of older generations are needed in supporting this effort.



### **MR. MATEO ESTRÉMÉ**

#### **DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MISSION OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING**

Mr. Estrémé noted that it is helpful and important to shed light on the issue of ageism with events such as UNIDOP and promote positive views of aging to change negative behaviors. Ageism is destructive and should be eradicated. Ageism and other forms of discrimination hurt older persons, and older women

are particularly affected. Mr. Estrémé remarked that the 2030 Agenda calls for leaving no one behind, stressing that to further such aim, we need to learn from good practices around the world and to take concrete actions, especially when it comes to gathering data on older persons in an effort to eradicate ageism at every level, local and international.

## **LUNCHEON PROGRAM**

### **PROMOTING POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF OLDER PEOPLE**



#### **MR. JOSH COLLETT**

##### **VICE-PRESIDENT, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AARP**

Mr. Collett spoke about the importance of combatting ageism through a global movement, and highlighted the WHO's network of Age-Friendly Cities, an emerging global movement that takes a comprehensive approach to making life better for all and putting older people at the center of action. Mr. Collett talked about various approaches to broaden the conversation on aging and making it

relevant to new audiences, engaging others through the OECD and World Economic Forums. Mr. Collett also mentioned Ms. Joann Jenkins's book, *Disrupt Aging*, which aims to change the conversation of aging by challenging stereotypes and attitudes and sparking new solutions to allow people to choose and change how they live.



#### **MR. POL VANDENBROUCKE**

##### **VICE PRESIDENT OF MEDICAL STRATEGY, PFIZER**

Mr. Vandebroucke talked about the role of the private sector in combatting ageism, noting that Pfizer has been engaged in the field of aging in a number of ways, such as co-hosting luncheons and events at the UN focused on healthy aging; supporting the inclusion of older people in the scope of the Sustainable Development Goals ; advocating to increase attention on non-communicable diseases among people of all ages, and bringing awareness

and challenging the misperceptions on growing older through the 4-year old *Get Old* social media campaign. Mr. Vandebroucke also mentioned other Pfizer supported events at the World Health Assembly in Geneva on the impact of ageism on health and tools developed to combat ageism and promote a community-based approach to healthy and inclusive aging used by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.



**DR. BECCA LEVY**

**PROFESSOR OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY, YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, AND PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY, YALE UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Levy spoke about her latest research findings which contribute to the campaign to reduce ageism.

Dr. Levy, the leading researcher in the science of reducing ageism, is credited with creating a field of study that focuses on how positive and negative age stereotypes, which are assimilated from the culture,

can have beneficial and adverse effects, respectively, on the health of older individuals. She outlined her studies which provide evidence that ageism and age stereotypes can contribute to cognitive and physical functioning, as well as longevity. These studies draw on a variety of methods including cross-cultural and experimental designs. Dr. Levy has given invited testimony before the United States Senate on the effects of ageism, contributed to briefs submitted to the United States Supreme Court in age-discrimination cases and contributed scientific findings in global reports.

*ECOSOC Chamber, UNHQ, New York  
6 October 2016 (10 AM – 1 PM)*

## Opening Session

- Video                    **“No Donuts for You: Fake Age Limits Targets Ageism”** Disrupt Ageing, AARP
- Welcome                **Ms. Janet Sigal**, Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing in New York  
**Ms. Nélide Quintero** and **Ms. Susanne Bleiberg Seperson**, Co-Chairs, UNIDOP Programme Sub-committee, NGO Committee on Ageing in New York
- Remarks by            **H.E. Ambassador Martín García Moritán**, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Argentina to the United Nations  
  
**Ms. Daniela Bas**, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, UNDESA

## Keynote Address

- “Confronting Ageism – Or The Rest Is Noise”**  
**Ms. Ashton Applewhite**, Author of “This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto against Ageism”

## Panel Discussion

### **“Combating Ageism in Different Contexts”**

- Video Message        **Dr. David Nabarro**, Special Adviser on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Moderator             **Ms. Edith M. Lederer**, Chief Correspondent at the UN for the Associated Press
- Panelists                **H.E. Ambassador Burhan Gafoor**, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Singapore to the United Nations  
  
**Ms. Alana Officer**, Senior Health Adviser, Ageing and Life Course, WHO, Geneva  
  
**Mr. Necodimus Chipfupa**, Regional Director, Southern Africa, HelpAge International
- Interactive dialogue

## Closing Session

- Remarks by            **H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson**, President of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly  
  
**Mr. Mateo Estrémé**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Argentina to the United Nations and Chair of the General Assembly’s Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

## NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING, NEW YORK

Chairperson: **Janet Sigal**, American Psychological Association  
Vice-Chairperson: **Cynthia Stuen**, International Federation on Aging  
Treasurer: **Katharine Weiss**, International Association of Homes and Services for the Aged  
Corresponding Secretary: **Martha Bial**, International Association of Gerontology & Geriatrics  
Recording Secretary: **Katherine Kline**, AARP  
Past Chairperson: **James Collins**, International Council on Social Welfare  
Members-at-Large: **Erica Dhar**, AARP  
**Jack Kupferman**, Gray Panthers  
**Norma Simon**, International Council of Psychologists and Gray Panthers  
**Peter Walker**, International Council of Psychologists  
**Frances Zainoeddin**, Gray Panthers

### International Day of Older Persons Planning Committee, 2015

**Susanne Bleiberg-Seperson** (Generations United) and **Nélida Quintero** (American Psychological Association) Co-Chairs

**Muriel Beach**, International Longevity Center Global Alliance  
**Martha Bial**, International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics  
**Florence Denmark**, International Council of Psychologists  
**Erica Dhar**, AARP  
**Helen R. Hamlin**, International Federation on Aging  
**Kathy Kline**, AARP  
**Valerie Levy**, International Federation on Aging  
**Dominick Martino**, AFSCME, District Council 37  
**Laurie Norris**, Gray Panthers  
**Rosa Perla Resnick**, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse  
**Janet Sigal**, American Psychological Association  
**Norma Simon**, International Council of Psychologists  
**Tiana Toumayan Smilow**, Armenian International Womens Association  
**Cynthia Stuen**, International Federation on Ageing  
**Sandra Timmerman**, International Federation on Ageing  
**Arlene Tuff**, AFSCME, District Council 37  
**Katie Weiss**, International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing

# NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING – NEW YORK

## Organizational affiliations

AARP  
AFSCME-DC37 Retirees

Ageing, Work and Health Research Unit,  
University of Sydney  
Alzheimer's Disease International  
American Psychological Association  
Armenian International Women's Association  
Care Rights  
Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE)  
Dobroe Delo Civic Foundation  
ElderCare Buddy  
Elders Share the Arts  
European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG)  
Fordham University – Graduate School of Social  
Service  
Fordham University – Global Healthcare  
Innovation Management Center  
Generations United  
Global Action on Ageing  
Global Alliance on Women's Health  
Gray Panthers  
Guild of Service  
HelpAge USA, affiliate of HelpAge International  
Instituto Qualivida  
International Association of Homes and Services  
for the Ageing  
International Alliance of Women  
International Association of Gerontology and  
Geriatrics  
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International Federation on Ageing  
International Federation for Home Economics  
International Longevity Center  
International Network for the Prevention of Elder  
Abuse

Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA)  
KAIST Graduate School of Science and Technology  
Policy  
League of Women Voters

MedCom Int. GmbH, German Seniors League  
NYC Housing Authority; Aging in America  
Sanctuary for Longevity Project  
South Beach Psychiatric Center  
The Global Aging Forum, Inc.  
Uniao Geral dos Trabalhadores, UGT  
VA Boston Healthcare System  
World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations  
Yilaga, India