



**Proceedings of the 17th Annual Celebration of the  
International Day of Older Persons**

***Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities  
of Ageing: Empowering Older Persons***

**Thursday, October 4, 2007**

**10:00 am – 5:00 pm**



**Presented by:**

The CONGO NGO Committee on Ageing/NY

in collaboration with

The UN Department of Public Information

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The World Health Organization

And

The UN Population Fund

## MISSION STATEMENT

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

October 4, 2007

#### Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing\*: Empowering Older Persons

The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual United Nations International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) observance in New York gives recognition to the achievements since 2002 in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the principal outcome document of the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

This International Day forum will examine progress towards achieving the objectives set forth in the Madrid Plan from the perspective of the empowerment of older persons, giving attention to the protection of their rights, their participation in society and the promotion of a positive image of ageing. In reviewing progress, the program will utilize wherever possible findings from “bottom up” review and appraisal processes recommended by the Commission for Social Development.

The OBJECTIVES of this 2007 UN IDOP forum are:

1. To raise awareness of the objectives set forth in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
2. To identify the actions of those working to achieve these objectives:
  - governments
  - civil society, especially NGO's
  - private enterprises
  - UN bodies
3. To explain and give examples of the 2007-2008 “bottom-up” review and appraisal process
4. To provide input to the first cycle of the regional review of progress and appraisal to date, noting any exemplary partnerships of governments, NGO's, academia, businesses, and UN bodies.

\*This theme was endorsed in February 2006 by the United Nations Commission for Social Development as the global theme for the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

**Program Outline**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS**  
***Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing:***  
***Empowering Older Persons***

October 4, 2007  
Conference Room 2

9:00 am – Registration in lobby

10:00 am – 10:30am.

**PLENARY**

Opening Remarks: **Kiyotaka Akasaka**, Under Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, UN

Greetings: **Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary-General, UN

**Srgjan Kerim**, President, UN General Assembly

**Florence Denmark**, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, NY

10:30am – 11:15 am.

**TRIBUTES TO JULIA T. ALVAREZ**

**Erasmio Lara-Peña**, Ambassador Enriquillo del Rosario Ceballos, Charge d'Affaires, Dominican Republic

**Alexandre Sidorenko**, UN Focal Point on Ageing, Department of Economics and Social Affairs, UN

**Alexandre Kalache**, Director, WHO Ageing and Life Course Programme

**Helen R. Hamlin**, former Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, NY and Main Representative of the International Federation on Ageing to the UN

Response: **Julia T. Alvarez**, former Permanent Alternate Representative of the Dominican Republic to the UN

11:15am – 12:30pm

**KEYNOTE ADDRESSES**

**Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the UN

**Robert Vos**, Director, Development Policy and Analysis Division, Department of Economics and Social Affairs, UN

12:30 – 2:30pm

**LUNCH BREAK**

2:30 – 3:00pm.

CULTURAL PROGRAM

**The United Nations Chorus**

3:00 – 4:55pm.

GLOBAL NGO PANEL

IMPLEMENTING THE MADRID PLAN: REPORTS FROM THE 5 UN REGIONS

Moderator: **Johan Schölvinck.**, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs

**Abul Haseeb Khan.**, Director, Resource Integration Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Ephraim Gathaiya**, Chief Executive, HelpAge Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

**Elisa Dulcey-Ruiz.**, Colombian correspondent, Latin America Gerontology Network, Bogotá, Colombia

**Dirk Jarré**, International Cooperation Office, European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG), Kronberg im Taunus, Germany

**Nabil Naja**, Head, Department of Geriatrics, Dar Alajaza Al-islamia Hospital, Beirut, Lebanon

IMPLEMENTING THE MADRID PLAN: HOLDING GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE

**Richard Blewitt**, Chief Executive, HelpAge International, “Age Demands Action”

Questions and Answers

4:55 – 5:00 pm

Closing remarks: **Florence Denmark**, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, NY

You are encouraged to remain for a brief program after the close of the IDOP for the launching of the WHO Age-friendly Cities Guide by Dr. Alexandre Kalache, Director, WHO Ageing and Life Course Programme and Joy Phumaphi, World Bank Vice President and Network Head, Human Development. Please join us in celebrating this new exciting venture which is based on a WHO study conducted in 35 cities in 22 countries.



## THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS  
1 October 2007

The theme of this year's International Day of Older Persons focuses our attention on the challenges and opportunities of ageing.

Population ageing brings significant economic and social challenges, for developed and developing countries alike. Sobering statistics show that some 80 per cent of the world's population are not covered by social protection in old age. Finding ways to provide economic support for a growing number of older persons, through sustainable pension programmes and new social protection measures, is a daunting task, particularly in developing countries.

Yet at the other side of the equation, we have one of the great achievements of our time -- considerably extended life expectancies in nearly all parts of the world, thanks to improved standards of health care. Older persons now have many more opportunities to keep contributing to society beyond any set retirement age. Our views on what it means to be old are changing all the time. Where older persons were sometimes seen as a burden on society, they are now increasingly recognized as an asset that can and should be tapped.

The role of older persons in economic and social development is a major feature of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, as is promoting democracy and the rights of older persons through their participation in all aspects of society. This year, we mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Madrid Plan, and the launch of its first review and appraisal. Crucially, this will be based on an inclusive and participatory approach, engaging older persons themselves in the process.

This International Day of Older Persons is an opportunity to stimulate discussion among all stakeholders on progress in implementing the Madrid Plan, in line with the Millennium Development Goals and the broader UN development agenda. I urge you all -- Member States, NGOs, the UN system, older persons and their organizations -- to seize this opportunity, today and in the months ahead. Together, taking a balanced approach to both the challenges and opportunities of ageing, we will be able to give life to our shared vision of a society for all ages.

**Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**



**Ban Ki-moon** is the eighth Secretary-General of the UN.

Mr. Ban has longstanding ties with the United Nations, dating back to 1975, when he worked for the Foreign Ministry's United Nations division. In 2001-2002, as Chef-de-Cabinet during the Republic of Korea's Presidency of the General Assembly, he facilitated the prompt adoption of the first resolution of the session, condemning the terrorist attacks of 11 September, and undertook a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the Assembly's functioning, thereby helping to turn a session that started out in crisis and confusion into one in which a number of important reforms were adopted. In 1999, Mr. Ban served as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization.

Mr. Ban has also been actively involved in issues relating to inter-Korean relations. In September 2005, as Foreign Minister, he played a leading role in bringing about another landmark agreement aimed at promoting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula with the adoption at the Six Party Talks of the Joint Statement on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.

Ban Ki-moon is a national of the Republic of Korea.

\* \* \* \* \*



The President of the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly, Dr. **Srgjan Kerim** brings with him a wealth of experience in international political and economic affairs and extensive knowledge of the United Nations system. From 2000 to 2001, Dr. Kerim was Foreign Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in which capacity he also served as Chairman of the South-East European Cooperation Process. He then became his country's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, from 2001 to 2003, during which time he served as vice-chairman both of the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, 2002) and of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). In addition, he was a member of the group of facilitators of the President of the fifty-sixth UN General Assembly, focusing on UN reform, and was a co-organizer of the Regional Forum on

Dialogue of Civilizations.

Over the course of his distinguished career spanning more than three decades, Dr. Kerim also represented his country as Ambassador to Germany, from 1994 to 2000, and to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, from 1995 to 2000. During this period, from 1999 to 2000, he served as Special Envoy of the Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

Earlier, during his political career in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Dr. Kerim held the posts of Assistant Minister and Spokesperson in the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 1989 to 1991. Before that, he was Minister for Foreign Economic Relations of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia (SFRY), from 1986 to 1989.

In the field of academia, Dr. Kerim was a professor of international economic affairs with the Faculty of Economics of the University of Belgrade. In addition, he was a visiting professor at the University of Hamburg (Germany) and at New York University. He has lectured widely on Balkan issues, is the author of nine books dealing with international politics, economics and youth, and has written more than 100 scholarly papers. He holds a doctorate in international economics from the Faculty of Economics of the University of Belgrade and is fluent in English, French and German as well as Serbian, Croatian and Bulgarian.



**Kiyotaka Akasaka** is the UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

Prior to his current post, Mr. Akasaka held the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) from August 2003 to March 2007. He was Japan’s Ambassador to the UN from 2000 to 2001 and served as a bureau member for the preparation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002.

In 1997, Mr. Akasaka was appointed the Deputy Director-General of the Japanese Foreign Ministry’s Multilateral Cooperation Department, in which capacity he served as one of his country’s senior negotiators in the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change. From 1993 to 1997, he served as an official with the World Health Organization (WHO) and from 1988 to 1991 he was member of the Secretariat of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the precursor of the World Trade Organisation.

Mr. Akasaka is the co-author of several books, including *The GATT and the Uruguay Round Negotiations* and *The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*, and has also written many articles on trade, the environment and sustainable development.

Kiyotaka Akasaka is a national of Japan.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Florence L. Denmark**, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, UN NY, has represented both the International Council of Psychologists and the American Psychological Association at the United Nations since January 2000. Dr. Denmark received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. She was the Robert Scott Pace Distinguished Professor and Chair of the psychology department at Pace University for 13 years. Prior to that time, Dr. Denmark was the Thomas Hunter Professor of Psychology at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is currently the Robert Scott Pace Distinguished Professor at Pace University.

Dr. Denmark has served as President of the American Psychological Association (APA), the International Council of Psychologists, and other regional and national organizations. At this time, she is a liaison to the APA’s Committee on Ageing. An internationally recognized scholar, researcher and policy-maker, with a particular expertise on the aging of women, she is a Fellow of the APA and has received many national and international awards and four honorary doctorates. Dr. Denmark has authored or edited 15 books and over 100 articles and book chapters. She has presented numerous papers and reports on ageing at local, regional, national and international meetings. In 2004, Dr. Denmark received the American Psychological Foundation’s Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement in the Public Interest. In 2005, she received the Ernest Hilgard Award for Distinguished Sustained Contribution to General Psychology.

\* \* \* \* \*

**WELCOME REMARKS FOR THE IDOP – October 4, 2007**  
**Florence L. Denmark, Ph.D.**

Good morning. On behalf of the NGO Committee on Ageing, I’d like to welcome you to the 17<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of International Day of Older Persons. It’s wonderful to see all of you here. Today’s program, “Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing: Empowering Older Persons,” is an important topic that gives recognition to the achievements since 2002 in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the principal outcome document of the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

As Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, noted in his message: “Population Ageing brings significant economic and social challenges, for developed and developing countries alike.” He also states that, by “taking a balanced

approach to both the challenges and opportunities of ageing, we will be able to give life to our shared vision of a society for all ages,”

I want to thank His Excellency Kiyotaka Akasaka, the Under Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the UN, for his opening remarks, and His Excellency Mr. Bali Ilkin, Vice President of the UN General Assembly, for his greetings. We are fortunate to have tributes paid to Julia Alvarez the former Permanent Alternate Representative of the Dominican Republic who was instrumental in establishing a UN International Day of Older Persons in 1992 and having 1999 declared the first International Year of Older Persons. The following people will be acknowledging the achievements of Ambassador Alvarez: Erasmo Lara-Peno, (Ambassador Enriquillo del Rosario Ceballos, Charg d’Affaires, Dominican Republic), Alexandre Sidorenko (UN Focal Point on Ageing, Department of Economics and Social Affairs at the UN), Alexandre Kalache (Director, WHO Ageing of Life Course Programme), and Helen Hamlin (former Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, NY and Main Representative of the International Federation of Ageing to the UN).

Following the tributes, we will have two keynote addresses, one by Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the UN, Juan Antonio Yanez-Barnuevo, and another by Robert Vos, Director to the Development Policy and Analysis Division of the UN’s Department of Economics and Social Affairs. Following lunch, we will have a performance by the United Nations’ chorus, and then we will hear from our Global NGO Panel. They will speak about implementing the Madrid Plan, giving reports from the five UN regions. The Regional Panel consists of experts representing various regions of the world and will be moderated by Johan Scholvinck, the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, to the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs. The panelists are Abul Haseeb Khan from Bangladesh, Ephraim Gathaiya from Kenya, Elisa Dulcey-Ruiz from Colombia, Dirk Jarre from Germany, and Nabil Naja from Lebanon. Finally Richard Blewitt, Chief Executive to HelpAge International, will be speaking on “Age Demands Action.” I am sure the afternoon panel will produce a lively and productive discourse.

Today’s International Day of Older Persons could not have occurred without the United Nations Department of Public Information, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the UN Population Fund, who are co-sponsoring this day. The UN-NGO Committee on Ageing appreciates the generous grant provided by the UN Population Fund. Many thanks are also due to this International Day of Older Persons Committee Chairs, Helen Hamlin and James Collins. The listing of the IDOP Committee and the Executive Committee of the NGO Committee on Ageing can be found in your program.

Once again, welcome to the United Nations, the seventeenth annual commemoration of the International Day of Older Persons, the first briefing of the season of the Department of Public Information.

Thank you.



**Alexandre Sidorenko’s** was born in St. Petersburg, Russia. Early education in Ukraine. Graduate studies in medicine. PhD in cellular immunology. Lecturer at the Kiev Medical University (1975-1978). Ten years experience in experimental gerontology at the Kiev Institute of Gerontology (1978-1988).

Joined the United Nations Secretariat in 1988, first in Vienna, Austria, since 1993 - in New York. UN Focal Point on Ageing; Chief of the United Nations Programme on Ageing (1993-2002); Coordinator of the International Year of Older Persons (1999). Major responsibilities have included the coordination of the UN activities in the area of ageing, including promotion and monitoring of international policy and programmes on ageing. In 2000-2002, coordination of substantive preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, Spain. Since October 2002 - UN Focal Point on Ageing.

Principal tasks include follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing. Specific areas of professional involvement are the monitoring of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the development of evidence based policy on ageing.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Julia Tavares de Alvarez** was born in the Dominican Republic and educated in the United States, an early and formative bicultural/bilingual experience that encouraged her to think of herself as a connector of cultures and a citizen of the planet.

She married Dr. Eduardo Alvarez and began a family in the Dominican Republic. In 1960 the family fled from the repressive dictatorship of Trujillo to Brooklyn, NY, where for many years she administered the Alvarez Medical Center, providing services, counseling, and encouragement to new immigrant families

In 1978, her brother, Manuel Tavares, was appointed foreign minister of the Dominican Republic, and he had problems finding bilingual staff for the nation's United Nations mission. He asked his sister to help. A part-time position soon evolved into Julia's appointment as Ambassador and Alternate Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations.

In the United Nations, Ambassador Alvarez focused on the problems of elderly people, in particular elderly women. She earned the nickname "ambassador on aging," and after years of lobbying she managed to establish a UN "International Day of Older Persons" in 1992. Another achievement was having 1999 declared the first "International Year of Older Persons".

In addition to championing elders throughout the world, Ambassador Alvarez and her husband decided to give something back to their own country. In 1992, they donated their house and several properties in the Dominican Republic to the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother (SSM), a Catholic religious order that runs hospitals in the United States. SSM set out to establish the first Center on Aging in the Dominican Republic. Starting with the poorest of the poor in rural areas near the border with Haiti, SSM with the guidance of Ambassador Alvarez and her husband founded preschools staffed by retired teachers, thus targeting two of the most vulnerable populations, the very young and the old, providing education for the former, a job for the latter, and care and community for both.

In 2002, Ambassador Alvarez resigned her UN post in order to return to her home town of Santiago along with her husband. There, they oversee the work of the SSM and spend their days rooted in the land they love the best.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR JULIA TAVARES ALVAREZ**

A highlight of the morning session was a tribute to Ambassador Julia Alvarez whose efforts on behalf of older persons worldwide resulted in the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002. Tributes were presented by Enriquillo del Rosario Ceballos, Charge d'Affaires of the Dominican Republic; Alexandre Sidorenko, UN Focal Point on Ageing, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; UN; Alexandre Kalache, Director, WHO Ageing and Lifecourse Programme; and Helen R. Hamlin, International Federation on Ageing Main Representative and former chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing. Because the Ambassador could not attend, her daughter, writer and educator, Julia Alvarez, responded on her behalf.

The NGO Committee on Ageing presented Ms. Alvarez a specially re-printed copy of a booklet of Ambassador Alvarez's writings on older persons which the Committee compiled and published following the 1999 International Year of Older Persons. The booklet contained this dedication:

"Ambassador Julia Tavares Alvarez has long been a devoted and dedicated advocate on behalf of the world's older persons of today and tomorrow. When she arrived at the United Nations in the 1970's as Permanent Alternate Ambassador from the Dominican Republic, she foresaw the population explosion or in her words, the agequake, and worked tirelessly to bring this knowledge to the Member States.

It was her work and energy during the First World Assembly on Ageing in 1982 and the years following, that inspired and motivated her colleagues and the NGO community and which enabled the General Assembly decision to declare 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons and then to hold a Second World Assembly on Ageing. .

Out of the Assembly came the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, a comprehensive blueprint to understanding the numerous issues facing older persons and the ways in which all governments can respond to and serve the continuing enlarging population. In this fifth anniversary year following the Assembly and NGO World Forum, there is continuing determination throughout the world to implement the Madrid Plan and to fulfill its Commitments.

Without the impetus and inspiration of Ambassador Julia Alvarez, we would not be celebrating this anniversary. In tribute to her dedication and steadfastness, in honoring her many accomplishments, the NGO Committee on Ageing rededicates this volume and ourselves to continuing and maintaining her work on behalf of a Society for All Ages.”

The NGO Committee on Ageing, New York  
The Seventeenth Annual Commemoration of the International Day of Older Persons  
October 4, 2007

---

## KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

### The Second World Assembly on Ageing

**Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo**  
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations**

I am very pleased to accept your invitation to attend this event today, following the tribute to Ambassador Julia Alvarez, for many years Deputy Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations, who was a leader in the promotion of the rights of women and older persons. We do not forget that it was she who worked tirelessly to establish the international Day of Older Persons, which we are celebrating today, as well as the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

In particular, I appreciate having been invited to present the global framework for the convening of the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in 2002 and its follow-up, as well as a Spanish perspective of the actions in favor of older persons on the national and international levels.

As you know, the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing was convened by General Assembly resolution 54/262, of 25 May 2000. Various reasons warranted this convening, such as the demographic changes that had occurred since the First World Assembly in Vienna in 1982 and the necessity to adapt technologies, products and services, as well as the design of cities and the labor environment, to multigenerational societies. We all bear in mind that, according to United Nations forecasts, 22 per cent of the world population will be more than sixty years old by the year 2050. And this percentage will logically be much higher in Spain, as in the rest of Europe and the developed world -but also, more and more, in large portions of developing countries.

The primary goal of the Madrid Assembly was "to construct a society for all the ages", so that, besides reviewing the implementation of the outcome of the 1982 Assembly, a Plan of Action with a built-in strategy for the long term was eventually adopted. The Plan of Action presented three high-priority lines: to maintain and foster development in a world that ages, to advance in health and well-being for older people and to ensure a favorable and safe environment for all the ages.

Over the last few years, Spain has made a determined and sustained effort to implement the commitments and objectives decided in the Madrid World Assembly on Ageing.

On the national level, and in compliance of the goals of the World Health Organization to promote active ageing and its long-term prevention, Spain is proud of its recent Law for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and the Assistance to Persons in a Situation of Dependency. The so-called Law of Dependency Care has created a new universal citizenship right in Spain: the right of older persons and people with disabilities who cannot take care of themselves to receive attention and assistance with the support from the public system. With the approval and

implementation of this law, the Dependency Care System becomes the fourth pillar of the Welfare State, together with the National System of Health, the Educational System and the Pensions System.

In the first year that this law has gone into effect, attention to greatly dependent persons has been guaranteed by providing public social services or economic assistance. This year, the Dependency Care System will assist more than 1,125,000 dependent persons and, according to demographic forecasts, this number will grow significantly in the next few years.

In addition, other policies that benefit older persons have been developed around two objectives: to guarantee economic security for older persons and to promote active ageing. As regards economic security, in the last few years, basic pensions have been increased between 20% and 25%. As to the promotion of active ageing, the Vacation Subsidies Program for Older Persons has been expanded and the Government will allocate more than 200 million euros for the development of the program during the next two years. Each year, more than one million older persons will enjoy these assisted vacations.

Lastly, I would like to highlight some activities fostered by the Spanish Government in the international sphere to promote the welfare of older persons, such as the contribution to the 2002 Madrid Assembly follow-up process:

- In November 2006, the meeting of the focal points on ageing of the Member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - encompassing the whole of the European continent- was held in Segovia. In this meeting, given that five years had elapsed, the procedure of evaluating the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan on Ageing and the Berlin Regional Strategy was debated.
- In a few weeks, the Ministerial Conference on Ageing for the European Region, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe, will be held in Leon, in which the Madrid Plan and the Berlin Strategy will be reviewed. Before the Leon Conference, a Forum of Civil Society will take place, in which representatives of non-governmental organizations and academics will analyze and debate the implementation of the Madrid Plan, with the aim of presenting their contributions to the Conference. In this regard, a preparatory meeting for the Forum was held in Madrid in June with forty NGO representatives. In addition, a meeting was held to prepare the Research Forum where some thirty researchers took part. With all this, we wish to guarantee that the Leon Conference will be the stage where debate will allow evaluating the progress made in Europe with regards to the recommendations of the Madrid Action Plan and the Berlin Regional Strategy, with an approach based on dialogue and participation.
- In 2008, we foresee hosting the Congress of the European Federation of Associations of Older Persons, which will serve as a platform for non-governmental organizations to contribute towards the permanent evaluation of the implementation of the Madrid Plan and the Berlin Regional Strategy.

I wish to recall, finally, that the United Nations Commission on Social Development, in its next session in 2008, will examine the conclusions of the regional conferences held in Spain, China and Brazil, completing the first cycle of evaluation of the Madrid Plan. We trust that the participative approach that has been chosen, involving the organizations representing older people in the evaluation of the impact of the agreed measures on their quality of life, will contribute to a more thorough implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at the national and international levels.

Thank you *very* much.



**Robert Vos** is Director of the Development Policy and Analysis Division at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and in that capacity responsible for, among others, the UN's annual flagship publications the *World Economic Situation and Prospects* and the *World Economic and Social Survey*, as well as for the secretariat of the Committee for Development Policy. He is also an affiliate Professor of Finance and Development at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and Professor of Development Economics at the Free University, Amsterdam. Previously, he was the Deputy Rector of the Institute of Social Studies and worked as

senior economist at the Inter-American Development Bank. He has written widely on issues of international trade and finance, macroeconomic policies for development, poverty and income distribution and social policies. His most recent books include *Who gains from Free Trade? Export-led Growth, Inequality and Poverty in Latin America*, published by Routledge, London in 2006, and *Illusions and Disillusions with Pro-Poor Growth*, published Sida, Stockholm in 2006.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Ageing and Development**

**Robert Vos**  
**Director, Development Policy and Analysis Division**  
**UN-DESA**

(The Powerpoint presentation accompanying this address can be viewed at ....)

October 1st is the International Day of Older Persons and which we are observing today. Just another day? Perhaps, but it should remind us that the world's population is ageing, brought about by the combined effects of declining mortality and fertility rates and longer longevity. By mid-century, one out of five people, or almost 2 billion people, will be over 65 compared to one out of ten now. This is dramatic enough. What is equally compelling is that eighty per cent of older persons in the world will be living in developing countries by 2050; that is, within a span of just two generations.

This ageing of the world's population is one of humanity's major achievements. We should cherish this.

Yet, significant challenges are keeping in step with this historic and emerging trend. For example, can health systems adapt to growing and new demands for care? What about the sustainability of social protection schemes? How do we keep our pension systems viable? The challenges are largest, of course, in developing countries, where the vast majority of older persons lack adequate income protection, and where deteriorating health and declining incomes threaten their overall welfare and security.

While these are serious challenges, it would be very misleading though to view the ageing of the world's population as a "problem". When properly empowered, through their own and through society's efforts, assisted by governments and NGOs, older persons can be a most valuable asset to any society. I am sure all of us have benefited from the advice and help of older persons, especially our parents and grandparents. Moreover, while much of history has been a catalogue of achievements, as much as of crimes and follies, mostly of younger persons, it is probably true that it has often been older persons who have shown the wisdom, perseverance and energy to save humanity from disaster.

Nevertheless, the world is facing an ageing population, with all the attendant opportunities, and countries share common concerns. One common thread is that ageing is taking place at an historically rapid pace, especially in the developing countries, and that urgent action must be taken now if we are to provide for the needs of a rapidly expanding population of older persons. The 2007 *World Economic and Social Survey* dealt with this question of "Development in an Ageing World"<sup>1</sup>, and I would like to draw attention to some of its analysis and to some of its conclusions and recommendations that may be of value to your deliberations.

The bad news, if you like, of the report is that it shows that the challenges I have mentioned are serious, but the good news is that they are also quite manageable and solvable.

Before addressing some of these challenges and how they could be managed let me first emphasize the importance of strengthening the position of older persons in society. NGOs have been the main advocates of this. I am not

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *World Economic and Social Survey 2007: Development in an Ageing World*,  
<http://www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/index.html>

saying this to be nice to the organizers of this event, but it is just a mere recognition of their contribution and we should be most grateful to them for this. Thanks to the work of many NGOs, issues that were previously hidden have been brought to public attention, such as elder abuse, both by their family members but also in institutions such as nursing homes. While more needs to be done, in several contexts such forms of abuse are now better addressed through legal channels and through appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

NGOs have also been opinion leaders in emphasizing the positive contributions of older persons can make to society. A “society for all ages” is not one in which stereotypes prevail which do not give attention to the authority, wisdom, dignity and restraint that comes from a lifetime of experience. It is also not one that make older persons live in undue fear of deterioration, dementia and dependency. The effects of such feelings of negative self-worth have been seen in research. One study of older men and women found that respondents in the more positive self-perception group lived, on average, 7.6 years longer than those in the more negative self-perception group.

Efforts, then, to improve the self-image of older persons, particularly by changing society attitudes towards them, can help prolong the life – and healthy life - of older persons. This attitudinal change will help older persons stay longer in active employment and make an active contribution to society rather than, as was so often the case when other stereotypes of older persons prevailed, sinking into destructive self-pity with costs not just to the victims of such distress, but also to society as a whole, which does not benefit from their empowerment.

Luckily, therefore, there are many non-governmental organizations dealing wholly or mainly with issues of concern to older persons play a major role in the political process. One such example is the AARP here in the United States, which has a membership of 36 millions – and to which a large number of serving staff from all nationalities at the United Nations belongs. HelpAge International is a prominent global network of NGOs whose mission is to improve the lives of disadvantaged older persons. In recent years, it has been particularly influential in advocating for social pension plans to assist impoverished older persons in sub-Saharan Africa. I will pick up on such plans a minute.

Several countries have also set up mechanisms for direct consultation and participation of older persons in the design and evaluation of government programmes. Invariably these bodies include older persons, as well as academics and representatives of institutions working with older persons. For instance, in India, a National Council of Older Persons, whose membership comprises government representatives (25 per cent) and academic and retired persons from rural and urban communities (75 per cent) is accepted by the Government as a watchdog agency designed to monitor policy on ageing. Many more countries should follow this example.

All such initiatives as those mentioned above could hardly succeed without the full support of the NGO community. They also make it clear that life is a continuum, and that there is no sudden cut-off point at which society should start preparing its members for their later years, or even considering them to be “old”. As the comedian George Burns put it, “you can’t help getting older, but you don’t have to get old”.

In this regard, luckily now also many governments have become more focused in establishing goals for ensuring an active life for older persons and promoting their rights in the five key areas of the Madrid Plan of Action: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity. As the Plan states, and I quote, “the promotion and protection of all human beings and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, is essential for the creation of an inclusive society for all ages in which older persons participate fully and without discrimination and on the basis of equality.” End of quote.

To live up to this, societies will need to find adequate mechanisms for preventing age discrimination in labour markets, ensuring intergenerational solidarity through adequate old-age income security systems, and mobilize the resources needed to provide adequate health and long-term care.

Stating rights is a good thing, but it creates obligations. The mentioned goals of the Madrid Plan no doubt pose formidable challenges in this regard. These challenges are big not only because of the rapid pace of population ageing, but also because the increase in the number of older persons has been accompanied by a rapid change in their living arrangements.

Thus ways of providing them with income security and health and long-term care will have to change too. The traditional family structure has altered as, with female emancipation and the spread of reproductive health, more

women have been able to participate in the labour force. Fewer have stayed at home to look after their parents. Moreover, divorce rates have risen in many countries, with the result that many more older persons live alone. The net effect of these factors is that in the developed countries 25 per cent of older persons live alone, and another 43 per cent with a spouse only. In the developing countries, on the other hand, only 7 per cent of older persons live alone, 13 per cent with a spouse only and fully 75 per cent with their children or grand-children. Yet this situation is likely to change and resemble more that of the developed countries. It is especially older women that are most likely to live alone. In Europe and the United States already more than one third of older women live alone.

The very real need for older persons to be able to live an independent life, free of an undue reliance on the generosity of their younger family members and free of the fear of poverty has only increased with these changes in living arrangements. This but emphasizes the need for the further empowerment of older persons, including through the more formal provision of incomes, including pensions, and ensuring the re-adaptation of health care systems. Let me focus on the challenges regarding providing income security.

Next to these changes in living conditions, population ageing is accompanied by rapidly increasing dependency ratios which indicate relatively more people are becoming dependent on the incomes generated by relatively fewer people in working age. Developed countries are now at the turning point where the dependency ratio will be increasing rapidly in the coming decades, driven by growing numbers of old-age dependents. In developing countries dependency ratios are still expected to decline until 2025, after which these will also increase though because of the rapid rise in old-age dependency.

Under these circumstances, a major concern for older persons is how they will maintain their independence and income security when they are no longer able to obtain paid employment. Transfers from social networks and family members, particularly children, can provide additional security for older people. However, these often are unstable income sources. As I mentioned earlier, social attitudes towards caring for older persons are also changing, even in developing countries, and as families get smaller, the willingness of children to take care of their old parents is diminishing. Formal pension systems will thus need to expand as families are unable or unwilling to provide income security.

These are serious concerns. The more so, because we should take it that population ageing and increasing dependency ratios (as currently defined) are inevitable trends. Several European governments today are actively trying to encourage childbearing. But even if the measures they are introducing prove effective, their effect on birth rates nonetheless will not be expected to substantially alter the projected trends. At best they might delay a bit the process of rising dependency rates. A number of developed countries are also considering legislation that would allow more migrant workers to enter their labour markets. The analysis in the *World Economic and Social Survey* shows, however, that in order to stop the increase in the dependency ratio this would require massive numbers of migrants in quantities that no industrialized country is likely to be willing to admit. For instance, to offset the increase in its old-age dependency ratio, the European Union should be willing to accept a net inflow of 13 million immigrants every year for the next 50 years, while Japan and the US would each need to absorb 10 million immigrants per year.

The analysis in the Survey suggests therefore that the greater potential for counteracting the projected changes in the labour force growth lies in raising the participation rates of women and older workers.

In the latter case, many countries still possess quite some scope to enact measures aiming at increasing the participation rate of older workers—typically those aged 55 to 64—by bringing the effective retirement age more closely in line with the statutory retirement age. And, the evidence presented in the *World Economic and Social Survey* shows that modest increases in participation rates in industrialized countries would be sufficient to counteract possible adverse economic growth effects of population ageing.

There is also a range of options to remove disincentives to prolonged employment, such as altering workplace practices to better accommodate the needs of workers as they age; improving working conditions to sustain working capacity over the life course; countering age-based discrimination; and promoting positive images of older workers. Older workers will also be in a better position to extend their working lives if they are given the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning and on-the-job training initiatives.

Such measures are expected to increase economic growth in ageing countries, though the impact may not be very large. But more importantly, they will enlarge the basis for keeping pension schemes viable.

The challenges are largest, of course, in developing countries, where, in many countries, deteriorating health and declining incomes threaten the welfare and security of many people as they enter old age. Nearly 80 per cent of older persons living in developing countries lack adequate income security.

In recent decades, pension reforms in developing countries have focused on private ownership or management, ostensibly to make the systems more financially viable. The results have been mixed, if not dubious. This has done little for all those without access to any formal pension scheme. At face value, a universal pension system in poor countries may seem utopian. Upon closer examination however, this appears to be far from unaffordable, even for the poorest nations.

Some developing countries have managed to introduce social pensions that provide minimal income security to all persons in old age. These schemes are not necessarily based on contributions made while employed.

Instead, everybody who has reached a certain age can get a pension, or benefits are given to all who can show they have no other means to survive. In Bolivia, Botswana and Mauritius, for example, such pensions are granted to all who have reached 65 years of age. In Argentina, Namibia and South Africa, social pension benefits are targeted at the poor.

Is it reasonable to use general taxpayers' money for such purposes? Well, why not? Such provisions keep older persons out of poverty, and thereby facilitate their fuller participation in society. Such social pension schemes significantly contribute to poverty reduction.

In Brazil, only 3.5 per cent of older persons receiving a social pension remain poor, unlike 51 per cent of those who do not. Similarly, the universal pension scheme in Mauritius has reduced poverty among older persons by more than 40 per cent.

Moreover, such pension benefits are often shared with household and family members. For example, in Namibia, more than 70 per cent of pension income is shared among household members and spent on food and education for grandchildren. In Bolivia, higher caloric consumption as well as lower school drop-out rates were recently observed in rural households benefiting from the universal pension benefit. In Brazil, the rural pension has been linked to higher expenditure on seeds and tools to support agricultural production as well as improve household access to credit.

But can poor countries afford to provide all older persons with a minimum income? International measures put the (extreme) poverty line at a dollar a day. According to the analysis we conducted for the *World Economic and Social Survey*, in two thirds of developing countries, the cost of a pension benefit of that amount would cost their societies less than one per cent of national income. And, even a benefit of two dollars a day is quite manageable, even in 2050, when the numbers of older persons will have reached a grand scale.

It may be less affordable, though, for some of the poorest countries, which have far fewer fiscal resources and face many competing demands. For countries like Bangladesh, Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire, the estimated costs of a universal social pension scheme would be equivalent to their entire health budget.

But even then, countries might consider increasing age eligibility (such as in Nepal, where benefits are available to those over 75), or introduce differentiated benefits that increase with age to keep the scheme within affordable limits. In such cases, there could also be a role for the donor community, which may already be supporting education and health budgets, to also contribute by supporting non-contributory pensions.

A pension for all thus seems affordable. Therefore priorities should be set to ensure that ageing is an achievement that can be cherished by all of humanity.

Together with the other aspects of empowerment and giving older persons greater opportunities to stay longer in the labour market that I have addressed this morning, such a plan for a universal pension scheme for all countries in the world would play a major role in meeting the objectives of the Madrid Plan of Action. As said, population ageing is a given and inevitable process. But, as I have tried to convey to you through these examples, dealing with the challenges of ageing should not pose insurmountable obstacles. Without elaborating this further here, we also conclude that the expected rise in health costs due to the increased demand for care by an ageing population can

remain within quite manageable proportions. In sum, we can't help getting older, but with the right choices a "society for all ages", that is a world with equal opportunities for a decent living at all ages, is within reach.

---

**GLOBAL NGO PANEL**  
**IMPLEMENTING THE MADRID PLAN: REPORTS FROM THE 5 UN REGIONS**



**Johan Schölvinck**, Panel Moderator, is currently Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, a function he assumed in February 2002.

Since joining the United Nations in 1980 at UNCTAD in Geneva, he has held various positions in the Secretariat, including Chief of the Population and Development section in the Population Division, Chief of the Policy Coordination Branch in the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary-General for Development Research and Policy Analysis as well as Information Officer in the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa. He was also a member of two Security Council Missions to Kuwait and Iran in 1991 concerning damage assessments.

In his current function his main responsibilities consist of guiding the various activities of the Division including technical cooperation, issues pertaining to ageing, persons with disability, youth, and the family as well as providing substantive support to the Commission for Social Development, to the Economic and Social Council and the Third and Second Committees of the General Assembly. In this regard the World Summit for Social Development, its five and ten year reviews, the Millennium Declaration, the Second World Assembly on Ageing as well as the World Summit, and especially the recently adopted Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, form important guide posts especially in connection with poverty eradication and social integration, two essential elements in the work of the Division.

Mr. Schölvinck holds an engineering degree from the Agricultural University of Wageningen, the Netherlands, and M.S and Ph.D. degrees in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University, USA. Prior to joining the United Nations, he was Assistant Professor in Environmental Economics at Rutgers University, USA.

Mr. Schölvinck is a national of the Netherlands.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Abul Haseeb Khan** has been the Director of the Resource Integration Centre (RIC) of Bangladesh since 1986. He has a particular interest in the use of Microcredits to contribute to the economic advancement of elderly persons. Based on Mr. Khan's leadership in Bangladeshi and regional NGO's, his creativity in bringing economic development to seniors, and his contribution to political and social activism, he has been recognized as an Ashoka Fellow for outstanding innovative programs and development in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Mr. Khan graduated from Dhaka University, Economics Department. Skilled in strategic planning, project design and implementation, advocacy, management and evaluation, he has served as Chairperson of the South Asian Forum on Ageing; Chairperson of the Network for Information, Response and Preparedness on Disaster; Chairperson of the Ageing Resource Center; and Secretary General of the Forum for the Rights of the Elderly.

The enhancement of the economic situation of Bangladesh's elderly population is a part of his commitment to Human Rights for an ageing population and for all Bangladeshis.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **IMPLEMENTING THE MADRID PLAN: ROLE OF NGOS IN BANGLADESH**

### **Socio-demographics of Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated nations with 145 million residents. It is also a poor nation: 36% of the population is living on income below \$1 a day; 83 % are living on less than \$2 a day. A total of 7%, or about 10 million, of the population are older people.

### **Role of NGOs in Bangladesh**

NGOs in Bangladesh ensure participation of older people in decision making through forming organizations at the grass roots level. These NGOs link elders with local elected government and government administrations, providing consultations and dialogue with government. They also advocate for older people at the national, district and local levels.

### **Priority issue # 1: Inclusion in Society and Visibility in Government**

As in many other countries, older Bangladeshis suffer from isolation, loneliness and ignorance. NGOs in Bangladesh promote older people's inclusion in society and visibility of key issues affecting them in government. There are a number of priority issues that NGOs address on behalf of and with older adult residents. They actively promote the inclusion of aging issues in school and university textbooks. They are also advocating for a national tax with projected revenues dedicated to the needs of older people. They are active in raising awareness of MIPAA goals at the national and district government levels and linking them to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These MDGs cannot be met if older persons are excluded from poverty reduction strategies. A series of workshops is planned for 2008 under the slogan "Age demands Action". NGOs also advocate for giving local government the responsibility to register older people, and are active in collecting disaggregated data on people 60 years of age and older.

### **Priority Issue # 2: Financial Security**

Although older persons comprise 7% of the population, less than 1% of government resources are allocated to meeting their needs. Bangladesh NGOs are advocating for an increase in coverage by the Old Age Allowance for persons age 60 years and older by a minimum of 18% by 2009, increasing access to these benefits to 2 million older people, from the current level of 1.7 million. In addition, they are promoting an increase in the Old Age Allowance from 220 to 500 taka (from approximately \$3 to \$7 U. S. Dollars). Also sought are increases in the number of recipients and the value of the Widow's allowance. NGOs are promoting access to interest-free micro-credit for older people, who are currently excluded from this program that already covers 20 Million younger families.

### **Priority Issue # 3: Health Security**

There is no geriatric specialty care nor are there geriatricians in Bangladesh, and the primary care system excludes older persons. Two priority issues for NGOs include the provision of free health care and medicine for older people upon their presenting their identification cards, and increasing the number of doctors with expertise in geriatric issues.

### **Priority issue # 4: Security in Emergencies**

Older adults are currently excluded from emergency planning, and are at risk of severe deprivation in emergency situations, whether related to natural disasters or civil strife. When, for example, there is flooding, the younger members of the family go the shelters, and the older persons must stay in the house to guard the belongings. The

belief has been that “they will die soon anyway” – a tragedy! Bangladesh NGOs are now preparing flood shelters for older people through disaster programs.

### **Gaps in Needed Resources and Services**

NGOs in Bangladesh have identified a number of serious gaps in services and resources needed by older people:

- There is poor resource allocation targeted to the well-being of older people generally. As noted above less than 1% of government resources are addressed to meeting their needs.
- There is also a lack of government, NGOs and private sector initiatives to assist and support older adults and the families who care for them. There are thousands of NGOs in Bangladesh, many international in scope, that do not address the needs of older persons. Similarly disregarding the needs of older persons are the international donors – addressing elder poverty is not included in their formal Poverty Reduction Strategies.
- Finally, there is a lack of age disaggregated information on socio-economic parameters which could help government officials and NGOs better target and plan for meeting the needs of older people in Bangladesh.



**Ephraim Munga Gathaiya** serves as Chief Executive Officer of HelpAge Kenya. Mr. Gathaiya brings decades of experience assisting vulnerable groups in Kenya. Since 1999, his work and focus in the field of Ageing involved drafting Kenya’s current policy on Ageing; development of the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing; and participation in the Second World Assembly on Ageing that produced the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Fighting for the rights of older persons and for the elimination of abuse has been the hallmark of his career. As a result of his commitment to improving the welfare of older persons in Kenya, Mr. Gathaiya has been awarded the Head of State Commendation (HSC Civilian Division) from Kenya’s President.

In addition to his demonstrated programmatic and managerial abilities for the elderly, he has been the General Manager of a HIV/AIDS programme in Kenya; currently serves as a board member for a number of rural secondary schools; has worked with needy and vulnerable youth; and has been the Director of Programmes and Chief Executive for the Kenya Red Cross Society.

Academically, he has achieved a distinguished Diploma in Social Work and a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Policy and Administration, as well as attended innumerable seminars and workshops to enhance community development, disaster management, and programs for vulnerable populations.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **HELPAGE KENYA**

HelpAge Kenya (HAK) is National Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to improving the lives of Older Persons. Our mission is to champion the rights, special and general needs and the well being of Older Persons, through advocacy for their rights and the implementation of sustainable development Programmes, in close collaboration with them. For the last 25 years since inception, HelpAge Kenya has been instrumental in targeting intervention on the situations of the Older Persons nationally. Our dedication to join hands with the global ageing fraternity was exemplified in our participation during the second World assembly in Geneva in 2002. Our input was captured in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) document and ever since, we have been supporting the Government in ensuring that the Madrid plans benefits have trickled down to the Older Persons in Kenya.

HAK's vision is of a society where the rights of the Older Persons are appreciated, guaranteed, and protected and also where Older Persons are availed opportunity to live in dignity through easy access to health care, information, shelter and other basic needs.

HAK's mission is to champion the rights, special and general needs and the well being of the Older Persons, through advocacy for their rights and implementation of sustainable development Programmes in close collaboration with the Older Persons.

Older Persons in Kenya lack access to information either due to illiteracy or due to actual lack of access, given the poor infrastructure. In addition, majority of Older Persons in Kenya live in the rural areas and those in the urban areas are concentrated in the Slum areas. HAK has developed a network of 35 Community Based Partners who are instrumental in disseminating information to the Older Persons. In one of our Programmes-Sponsor a Grandparent Programme, we have deliberately taken efforts to discuss with the over 3,500 beneficiaries on the MIPAA as well as enhanced their capacity to lobby the local government administration to implement the recommendations at the local level. Despite the fact that this has generated minimal success in terms of pushing for implementation by the government, the level of awareness generated has made the local leaders aware that Older Persons in those areas know their rights and would ensure that they are safeguarded.

### **ADDRESSING ISSUES OF OLDER PERSONS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS**

There has been a number of international forums addressing issues of older persons and which have in one form or another assisted in improving the status of older persons. Some of the major ones are:-

- a) The Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing - 1982 and since the time it took place significant actions saw the designation by United Nations, the 1st October as the International Day of Older Persons. Also this is the meeting, which gave the birth of HelpAge Kenya.
- b) Madrid International Plan of Action 2002 on Ageing, where over 125 countries including Kenya participated and came up with an action plan to provide economic, social and political protection to older person (MIPAA).
- c) The AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing. In 2000, HAI and the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) signed a memorandum of understanding to guide collaboration between the two organizations.

### **SITUATION ANALYSIS ON OLDER PERSONS IN KENYA**

As indicated in the Kenyan Draft National Policy on Older Persons and Ageing and I quote; below show the situation of older persons in Kenya.

"According to the 1999 National Population and Housing Census Report, the population of persons aged 60 years and above was about 1.4 million, representing 4% of the total population. According to the demographic projections, it is expected to reach over 2 million by the year 2020.

In terms of socio-cultural profiles, various communities in Kenya differ in their treatment of older persons. While some communities revere old age and give older persons upper echelons in making strategic decisions, a few do not regard old age in the same esteem. The socio-cultural attitudes held by the society, the socialization processes and older persons perception of their own status, roles and rights are of particular significance in determining the status of older persons within the society.

In rural areas, older persons are left behind without traditional family support and financial resources. Older women are the majority in rural areas and are the most disadvantaged as they have little or no control over economic resources and are disempowered by traditional practices. Policies and programmes for rural development, food security and agricultural production must take into account the implications of this ageing rural population.

In urban areas, many older persons are crowded in slum areas. Urban development policies and programmes need to target the interests and needs of these older persons.

In marginal areas and semi-arid lands, which constitutes over 80 percent of the country's land area nomadic pastoralism is the main source of livelihood for the local communities. The harsh environment in these areas necessitate continuous migration in search of better forage and watering facilities for livestock. Older persons are in most cases disadvantaged due to lack of mobility and are therefore in most cases confined to informal settlements

with very poor physical and social services and facilities. The situation is further exacerbated by frequent cases of community conflicts in competition for the grazing and watering resources and of cattle rustling which are accompanied by serious loss of life".

## **NATIONAL POLICY ON OLDER PERSONS AND AGEING**

With regard to the three priority directions set out in the MIPAA, HelpAge Kenya took up certain aspects of each of the directions given their interrelation. We have been addressing different issues in the three priority directions within our Programmes in an integrative way due to the pressing nature of the situations of the Older Persons in Kenya. But fundamentally, our key preoccupation has been the development of a framework for the implementation of these strategies. This has been in the form of lobbying the government to embrace the development of a policy on Older Persons as well as implement it. Currently, the Draft National Policy on Older Persons and Ageing has undergone different levels of scrutiny and has actually been presented to the Cabinet, who positively cited clauses that needed further consultations with the different stakeholders and which have already been addressed. The policy addresses 13 thematic areas of concern on the ageing which are:-

- \* Poverty
- \* Health
- \* Family and Culture
- \* Gender
- \* Food Security and Nutrition
- \* Housing and Physical Amenities
- \* Education, Communication and Training
- \* Employment and Income Security
- \* Social Security
- \* Social Welfare
- \* Preparation for Retirement
- \* Conflicts and Disaster situations
- \* Law and Rights of Older Persons

## **DRAFT KENYA CONSTITUTION**

HelpAge Kenya played a key role during the Review of our National Constitution and we were able to have a whole article (39), detailing how older person's issues will be addressed.

### **Issues covered under the Draft Constitution**

#### **Older Members of Society**

Older members of society are entitled to continue to enjoy all the rights and freedoms set out in the Bill of Rights.

The State shall take legislative and policy measures to ensure the rights of older persons to:

- a) participate fully in the affairs of society;
- b) pursue their personal development;
- c) be free from all forms of discrimination and abuse;
- d) live in dignity and respect;
- e) retain control over their lives, including the right to make their own decisions in relation to their social, economic and political matters; and
- f) receive reasonable care and assistance from their families and from the State

Parliament shall enact legislation to establish a council to define and advise on policies and programmes for older members of society who need care and protection.

## **POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

Whilst the cycle of poverty in developing countries is hard to break for anyone, the challenges are even greater for Older Persons as society ignores their needs and fails to recognize their potential. In recognition of this fact, HelpAge Kenya began by addressing poverty issues at the decision-making level by getting involved in the process of development of national economic plans. These were the 2003 PRSPii, the 2006 'Economic Recovery Paper for Wealth Creation and Poverty Reduction' and the now underway "Vision 2030". Our involvement has ensured that

Older Persons are captured in the document and their contribution recognized. For instance, more contributors were brought on board the National Social Security Fund where people working in the Non Formal Sector were allowed to contribute their premiums, a docket that was a privilege to those who were formally employed. This to some extent addressed the issue of Income Security for the Older Persons in the informal sector after retirement. In addition, the government created a conducive environment for the establishment of self-help groups that were registered under the Department of Social Services, where the Older Persons could come together and undertake joint activities to improve their incomes and livelihood.

Apart from involvement in the development of the economic strategies, HelpAge Kenya also lobbied for the deliberate participation of Older Persons in local decision-making structures. These are like the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) and Constituency HIV/AIDS Control Committees (CACC). This ensured that Older Person participate in articulating their own issues which are taken into consideration at the local Government level. While undertaking needs assessments in different areas in the country, HAK came to the realization that the local Government administrators have been discriminating against the Older Persons and thus making services inaccessible. This was addressed by undertaking advocacy activities to sensitize the administrators on the importance of ensuring that Older Persons gain proper access to government services as well as to information. (Done through older citizens Monitoring Programme - OCM)

Aside from lobbying the government, HelpAge Kenya has undertaken various Programmes aimed at reducing the impacts of poverty and HIV/AIDS among Older Persons and orphans under their care. This has been by supporting the development of Community based Older Persons Self-help groups as well as initiating a Revolving Fund within the groups, from where the Older Persons access credit on commonly agreed friendly terms, to initiate micro businesses. This concept has ensured that Older Persons continue being active after employment as well as sustained income flow within their households. It is common knowledge that Older Persons have become the silent managers of the HIV/AIDS orphan crisis in Kenya. They have taken the burden of caring for the sick as well as the orphans and this has been made possible to some extent by access to micro-credit from the Non-Formal institutions like the self-help groups. Apart from income related activities, HelpAge Kenya has collaborated with locally based NGOs and Community Based Organizations to improve the living conditions of the Older Persons by providing them with decent shelter. Construction of houses for the Older Persons has not only enhanced the Hygienic conditions, which they are in, but it has also assured them security from abuse. There has been an upsurge of Rape and violence against the older Women and poor living conditions was major contributant to it.

In addressing the rural urban diverge, Older Persons who mostly live in the rural areas have been supported with information on how they can enhance their livelihoods. This has been by giving them information on proper Agricultural practices as well as supporting them with the Agricultural inputs. In acknowledging that the high level of ignorance has been an impediment to their participation in development therefore, HelpAge Kenya teamed up with the Government's Department of Adult Education in developing a training curriculum that is friendly to the Older Persons and tailored to meeting their specific need. The Adult Education Programme was introduced by the government in areas where HelpAge Kenya has developed strong self-help groups of Older Persons, who not only benefited from basic literacy classes but also received Non Formal Education where they were trained on specific life coping skills.

### **CASH TRANSFER**

While old age poverty has continued to marginalize Older Persons and enhancing their vulnerability, the government has realized that Social Security is a critical requirement in ensuring equitable distribution of resources to its populace. It is for this reason that the government teamed up with HelpAge Kenya and HelpAge International to undertake a pilot CASH TRANSFER project, to ascertain its impact in the economic wellbeing of the Older Persons. The situation is under review to seek whether this can be replicated elsewhere in the country.

### **OLDER CITIZEN MONITORING PROGRAMME - HEALTH**

In 2003, through funding from DFID, HelpAge Kenya undertook a project where Older Persons participated in monitoring the delivery of health services to them in Public Health Facilities. An audit established that Negative attitude towards the Older Persons by the Health providers, Distance to the Health facilities, Lack of special Geriatric care as well as poverty have contributed largely to Older Persons not accessing quality health services.

These factors were confirmed after Older Persons later decided to monitor the provision of the services from their local Health facilities and later used the findings of the monitoring to lobby the government at the local and the national level to change the health system. At the National Level, some of the outcomes of this project are that there was a radical change in the provision of health service where unlike before where health service provision focused on the Disease, it was changed to focus on Age cohorts. It was argued that health related problem differ in their originality and methods of curing, among the different age groups. Six Health Age cohorts were identified i.e. Pregnancy and Childbirth; Early Childhood; Late Childhood; Adolescence; Adulthood; and The Elderly. Consequently, The National Health Sector Strategic Plan (2005-2010) which is currently under implementation reflected this change of approach, which will eventually see the establishment of special Geriatric facilities in each Public Health Centre. At the local level, Older Persons engaged the local administrators at the local hospitals in discussions on access to treatment and as a result, various institutional changes were undertaken. For instance, Older Persons were not required to queue like everyone else and they started being accorded privacy once they were admitted as inpatients. This privacy was by way of separating where the Older Persons were boarded from the other age groups.

On the violation of the rights of Older Persons, HelpAge Kenya has been undertaking media campaigns to sensitize the public on the rights of Older Persons. We have also been developing IEC materials, which are largely disseminated within our Programmes and countrywide.

Between November 2006 and January 2007, the government of Kenya conducted a review and appraisal of the implementation of the MIPAA, as well as the African Union Plan and Policy Framework of Action on ageing. This exercise was undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Gender, Sports Culture and Social services, HelpAge International and HelpAge Kenya. A total of 726 Older men and Women, drawn from 12 districts, were interviewed in 48 focus group discussion, together with Local administrative leaders together with representatives of CBOs and FBOS. HelpAge Kenya played a key role of mobilizing the Older Persons for this discussion. Given our expansive network in the country, we teamed up with the District Social Development Officers from the government in identifying the areas to undertake the review, and we also took part in facilitating these interviews.

The findings of this review have helped shape the recommendations we have been making in the Kenya Age Demands Action Campaign. On Monday, as part of this campaign, a delegation of older people met with representatives from the Ministries of Health, of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services and the Ministry of Finance. At these meetings older people called on their Ministers to more effectively implement MIPAA by doing four things: one, committing to enacting and effectively monitoring the Kenyan Government Policy on Older Persons and Ageing; two, initiating a social protection plan as part of the national poverty reduction strategy; three, increasing the current retirement age from 55 to 60; and fourthly, providing targeted support to older caregivers as part of the national HIV and AIDS strategy.

In conclusion, HelpAge Kenya, being the only National NGO in the country dealing with issues of the Older Persons has become a point of focus and an authority when it comes to offer guidance as well as Share Best Practices on sustainable interventions.

Thank you.



**Elisa Dulcey-Ruiz** has been the Colombian RLG-correspondent (RED LATINOAMERICANA DE GERONTOLOGÍA – LATIN AMERICAN GERONTOLOGY NETWORK), since its creation in May 1999, within the framework of the International Year of Older Persons.

She is a Colombian Psychologist, Master in Education. Her main professional interests include life span psychology and aging, and social psychology. In those areas she was university professor and researcher during more than thirty years, most of them in the Javeriana University, in Bogota. She is Director and Researcher of the Centre of

Gerontological Psychology, and President of the Interdisciplinary Association of Gerontology (AIG of Colombia) (2006-2008). She is author of several publications.

The RLG is an articulated virtual network around the website < [www.gerontologia.org](http://www.gerontologia.org) >. Its central aims are: 1) to act as a link between gerontological knowledge and daily practice in order to generate a positive image of ageing and old age, and a better quality of life during old age in different local realities; 2) to stimulate exchange, active participation and debate on gerontological issues; and 3) to act as a central point to which others can refer and which provides appropriate skills, training and up-to-date documentation.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF AGEING  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**  
ABOUT THE EXECUTION OF THE *MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN* OF ACTION ON AGEING<sup>2</sup>  
Latin American Network of Gerontology – RLG

(The Powerpoint presentation accompanying this address can be viewed at ....)

**ABSTRACT**

This document, prepared by the LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF GERONTOLOGY (RLG) for the celebration of the 17th *International Day of Older Persons* in the UNITED NATIONS, New York (October 4, 2007), presents regional challenges, limitations and advances in the application of the objectives proposed in the 2002 *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*. It considers three main aspects related, in its order, to: the Latin American Network of Gerontology, its identity, its reason of being, and its activities; ageing in Latin America; and the role that the Latin American Network of Gerontology has played in order to raise awareness on the objectives set forth in the *Madrid International Plan*. It includes some results of a survey recently carried out in Latin American countries on the advances and limitations perceived in governmental and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) actions, with respect to these objectives.

**I. ABOUT THE LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF GERONTOLOGY AND ITS MISSION**

The LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF GERONTOLOGY (RLG) is a nonprofit Social Civil Organization, with a pluralistic character, that works in favor of the older persons. Constituted as a virtual network in the internet site [www.gerontologia.org](http://www.gerontologia.org), the RLG was created on the *International Year of Older Persons*, in May, 1999, in Montevideo, Uruguay. Since 2002 it is being coordinated from Chile.

The RLG is supported by Caritas Germany and enjoys the patronage of Caritas Chile. It works with the *Caritas' Regional Older Persons Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean* ("*Programa Regional del Adulto Mayor de Caritas en América Latina y el Caribe – PRAM*").

The team charged with the task of meeting the organization's aims is made up of a coordinator living in Chile, correspondents in five countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Mexico), a webmaster and a specialist adviser in gerontology. The functions of correspondents and the gerontology adviser have been assumed by highly qualified professional volunteers with a strong social commitment.

The **reason for being** of the RLG is centered in ageing, old age, and the quality of life of older persons in Latin America and the Caribbean Spanish-speaking countries.

The **objectives** of the RLG are: 1) to serve as a link between the theory in gerontology and its application to different local realities; 2) to act as a reference center, providing updated information and documentation, and 3) to stimulate interchange, active participation and debate on gerontological issues.

---

<sup>2</sup> Report prepared by Ximena Romero Fuentes, Coordinator of the *Latin American Network of Gerontology - RLG*, in collaboration with Elisa Dulcey-Ruiz, Correspondent of the RLG in Colombia. This report was presented by Elisa Dulcey-Ruiz, on behalf of the *Latin American Network of Gerontology - RLG*, in the celebration of the *International Day of Older Persons*. This celebration was called by the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Committee on Ageing. United Nations, New York, Thursday, October 4, 2007.

We, who take part of the Latin American Network of Gerontology, **believe that:**

- Ageing and old age are not only a biological process and a condition, but mainly social and cultural constructions.
- Old age is an integral part of the life span.
- Older persons must be considered subjects of rights and liberties, capable to decide by themselves.
- It is necessary and urgent to promote the capacities and opportunities of the older persons, so they can grow stronger.
- It is possible and decisive to improve the conditions of life, and then promote healthful behaviors in all ages.
- Through networking we can create alliances in order to make our actions more efficient.

#### **Website, newsletter, contacts and regional interaction**

The RLG's website [www.gerontologia.org](http://www.gerontologia.org) acts as its main platform for contacts and exchanges. The organization also issues a monthly electronic newsletter with a subscriber list of around 1,600, 73% of whom then pass on the newsletter among their own contacts<sup>3</sup>. Both tools are available free of charge to those interested in the work of the RLG.

The RLG users come from the entire Latin American region. With regard to its profile, they express the heterogeneous nature of those whose work is aimed at older persons in the region, both in terms of their experience and the variety of the work they carry out in relation to training, empowerment and motivation<sup>4</sup>. All these factors serve to strengthen the pluralistic nature of the RLG and help to explain its sustained growth and spread<sup>5</sup>.

## **II. LATIN AMERICAN AGEING**

The demographic transition in Latin America is a now a fact in most countries of the region. Characteristics of this process are the accelerated rhythm of ageing and the precarious social, economic and political conditions which the countries face concerning individual and population ageing. The extension of poverty, the great social inequality and economic insecurity constitute strong obstacles to overcome in order to enable us to obtain better welfare and quality of life for all generations throughout the whole life span<sup>6</sup>.

### **AGEING IN LATIN AMERICA**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2050</b>
Population > 60 years (1.000)	41 284,7	98 234,8	184 070,7
Percent of population > 60	8,0	14,1	23,4
Rate of annual growth (2000-2025 y 2025-2050)	3,5	2,5	---
Percent of population > 75 years	1,9	3,5	7,9
Average age	24,6	32,5	39,4

<sup>3</sup> According to data from a survey of subscribers to the monthly RLG Newsletter in March, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> A study of the data on newsletter subscribers shows that 72% are women. In terms of trade and profession, 24% work in the field of health (doctors, nurses, kinesiologists, etc.); 14% are educators (school teachers, university lecturers, socio-cultural coordinators, etc.); 12% are gerontologists (graduates, including older persons who have graduated from universities of the third age); 12% are social workers; 9% are psychologists; 9% are civil servants (coordinating programmes at municipal level or state services, etc.); 4% are involved in communications (journalists, social communicators); the remaining 16% is made up of retired persons, carers, sociologists, anthropologists, lawyers, architects, directors of long-stay establishments, economists, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> Between 2002 and 2006, the RLG website received 407,980 visits. In 2007, the average daily hit rate has been over 800.

<sup>6</sup> According to studies of the World Bank, "10% of the richest individuals receive between 40% and 47% of the total income in the vast majority of the Latin-American societies, whereas the poorer 20% only receives between the 2% and 4%" (2003) *Desigualdad en América Latina y el Caribe ¿ruptura con la historia?*. David De Ferranti; Guillermo E. Perry; Francisco H. G. Ferreira; Michael Walton, According to CEPAL in its report *Panorama Social de América Latina* corresponding to the year 2000, states that in the year 2005, "39% of the population of the region lived in conditions of poverty (209 million people) and 15.4% of the population (81 million people) lived in extreme poverty or indigence."

Aging Index	25,2	60,7	128,2
-------------	------	------	-------

Source: CEPAL/ECLAC, 2002<sup>7</sup>.

The Latin American and Caribbean population ages in the context of an extended and persistent poverty. Latin America is the most unequal region of the world: 10% of the richest receive 48% of GNP, while 10% of the poorest receive only 1, 6%. Economic and social insecurity is reflected, among others things, in the high rates of precarious employment, and unemployment, as well as in little social coverage and protection (CEPAL/ECLAC, 2006; OIT, 2006)<sup>8</sup>.

The situation of older adults is as heterogeneous as the conditions that are observed across each country. Nevertheless, economic insecurity, lack of social protection and poverty, especially in women, constitute –to different degrees – a shared reality. Only two out of every five older adults, who reside in urban zones, can count on an income coming from social security, and in the rural zones only one out of every five.

It is true that participation of older adults in the workforce has experienced an increase, but this insertion has come about basically in informal employment, where the income received is less than that for other age groups.

The prolongation of permanence in the job market is more related to solving subsistence conditions, rather than to enjoying participating in the field of work as a right.

The situation in the present generations of older women is especially vulnerable. The wide historical gaps between genders are reflected in the greater rates of illiteracy, of economic dependence on the spouse, and the meagre pensions during widowhood, which make it impossible to lead a dignified life. Although they may receive support from their families, they provide care and homework, which is insufficiently valued. Besides, they are exposed to mistreatment.

The health coverage for older adults has increased, but not its quality. On the other hand, the majority of health professionals lack an adequate knowledge on gerontology and protocols of action with a holistic conception of the health of the older adults.

Although Latin America is not exempt from the processes of weakening of community ties and the impact of family transformations, the family continues to be an important resource with which the region counts to face the challenges of an increase in longevity. Likewise democracy, although still threatened, is being established increasingly more, and the possibility of citizen participation and pronouncement is also augmenting.

### III. THE LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF GERONTOLOGY AND THE 2002 MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING

The activities of the Latin American Network of Gerontology oriented to the execution of the *Madrid International Plan* emphasize the importance of constructing a *society for all the ages*, as well as to consider -both in theory and in practice- the challenges implied in demographic and individual ageing. The RLG stimulates the application of the *United Nations Principles for Older Persons*, as well as the necessity to create conditions for the fulfillment of the objectives of the *Madrid International Plan* in each country and locality of the region.

**The RLG has published the *Madrid Plan* and the *Regional Strategy for the Application of the Madrid Plan on Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean*, and has placed great importance on their distribution along with a plethora of documentation published by the United Nations and other international bodies on ageing and old age. Through its editorials and electronic newsletters, the RLG has facilitated educational work on the**

<sup>7</sup> CEPAL/ECLAC – José Miguel Guzmán (2002). *Envejecimiento y Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas, CEPAL.

<sup>8</sup> CEPAL/ECLAC (2006). *Panorama Social 2006*. United Nations publication. LC/G.2326–P. OIT / ILO (Organización Internacional del Trabajo / International Labour Organization) - Bertranou, Fabio (Coordinator) (2006): *Envejecimiento, empleo y protección social*. Santiago de Chile: OIT/ILO.

active role to be played by Social Civil Organizations, and by citizens in general. It has encouraged NGOs from developed countries to act as advocates with their own governments, in order to expand international cooperation for the benefit of old people in Latin American countries<sup>9</sup>.

**Specific activities of the RLG related to the *Madrid Plan on Ageing*:**

- Diffusion of information and documentation, as well as promotion of debate on the *Madrid International Plan*. The RLG emphasizes the importance of governmental and nongovernmental efforts to achieve its objectives, considering the differential circumstances of each country and sub-region.
- The role of the RLG's correspondents involves working towards the fulfillment of the *Madrid International Plan* from their various institutions. Furthermore, the RLG encourages all its visitors to play a part in meeting the objectives of the *Madrid Plan*.
- Since 2005 the RLG has established the award *A society for all the ages*, oriented to stimulate the work of promotion of quality of life, participation and autonomy of older persons in the Latin American region.
- In alliance with Caritas in Latin America, it promotes the *Regional Programme for Older Persons* which looks to improve the quality of life of old people, especially of the poorest.
- Together with Caritas organizations in Latin America it campaigns for the right to a universal pension that guarantees a minimum standard of living for today's older generations. This demand was presented, for example, through the panel entitled "Poverty as a source of vulnerability preventing old people from exercising their rights" at the meeting of civil society organizations, held in June 2003 at the headquarters of the Economical Commission for Latin America and Caribbean – ECLAC (CEPAL).
- The evaluation of achievements and obstacles for the fulfillment of the objectives established in the *Madrid International Plan*<sup>10</sup>.

The next reference to the results comes from the regional consultation carried out by the RLG at the beginning of the second semester of 2007, on the perception of the fulfillment of the objectives of the *Madrid International Plan* on the part of governments and NGOs.

In general, there is a perception related to ignorance of the implications of demographic change, along with the negative images of ageing and old age. Without a doubt, these constitute basic aspects characterizing the context in which governments and the social civil organizations work.

**A. PERCEPTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS**

Although the topic of old age (much more than that of ageing) is increasingly more present in governmental information and norms (generally disperse), it becomes evident that ageing is still far from being considered as a theme of transversal interest in public policies related to national and local development. A lack of political will can be observed on the part of the governments to assume their role and responsibility in regards to the generation of public policies that are consistent and coherent with the accelerated ageing of the population, taking into account the old persons of today and of the future.

**Perceived obstacles:**

- Decisions and norms, frequently based on stereotypes, and prevalence of deficit models of old age and the older persons.
- Plans with short term perspectives and little strategic vision.
- Decisions and directions not looking forward to promote autonomy, nor based on consultation of the opinions of the older persons on decisions affecting them.
- Legislations without the endorsement of budgetary reserves for its implementation.
- Weak valuation of the contribution that NGOs can make.
- There is need to advance in the idea of integral policies, which incorporate the conception of old people as subjects of rights.
- The contribution of the family is still an advantage in Latin America; nevertheless, the changes experienced by these along with the strong poverty that extends and persists in the region, demand an active and urgent role on

<sup>9</sup> To this purpose the RLG has developed a strong alliance with Caritas Germany to help it approach a number of European NGOs with a Catholic background.

<sup>10</sup> During August 2007, the RLG carried out a consultation to a deliberate sample of 19 informants of 13 countries of the region. The results of this consultation are reflected in this report.

the part of the states, which would make it possible to guarantee equitable policies harmonizing the needs and rights of all the older persons.

The dimensions of gender, ethnicity, and the impact of migrations (internal and external), as well as the conditions of the older persons who live in the rural world, have received little or no attention on the part of the governments of the region.

Though advances towards mitigation of poverty conditions in which the older persons live have been made, the measures which have been adopted tend to be discontinuous, taking little account of the differential and contextualized character of ageing and old age. At the same time, interested parties are seldom asked their opinions on decisions affecting them.

The social security systems, above all regarding pensions, result quite precarious. In several countries of the region, less than a quarter part of the population constituted by old people receives a pension, although their constitutions state that “the right to social security is universal and inalienable”.

**Perceived achievements** with respect to the action of governments:

- More countries have created some kind of organization or dependency that works specifically in relation to the subject of aging, the old age, and the older persons.
- More countries stimulate projects and programs related to the older persons.
- Greater attention is being given to self-care promotion and prevention in health.
- Increase of debates on aspects of social security, specifically of the pensions systems.
- Increasing number of governmental and not-governmental calls and encounters on the subject, including the *Regional Strategy for the implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*.
- A positive, although slower aspect, is the recognition of the increasing presence of older people in the region and of their role in society<sup>11</sup>.

## **B. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CIVIL SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY NGOS**

Without a doubt, at the same time that the older population is rising, and the old age is mentioned more frequently, an interest to establish services and nonprofit organizations oriented to the older people is also increasing. The civil organizations with more historical tradition in the supply of services directed to older people were generally tied to religious institutions. However, during the decade of the nineties, a well-known increase of associations, corporations and networks that begin to take action in the field of old age is observed. Although this tendency is generalized, there are differences related to the *Ageing Index* of each country. In general terms, actions tend to concentrate in urban zones, especially in the great cities.

The role of NGOs has been historically important, especially in the provision of assistance services directed towards the poorest and most marginalized older adults. The preparatory process of the *International Year of the Older Persons* and the impulse provided by the *Madrid International Plan*, has contributed to motivate the creation of NGOs, networks, and other associations. Despite the persisting weakness in strengthening an approach which considers the older adults as subjects of rights, an increase of experiences can be observed.

Some NGOs in Latin America have played an important role in motivating the fulfillment of the *Madrid International Plan* objectives. They have stimulated the social participation of the older persons, their recognition of their own rights, the voluntary services, the development of support networks, the education for self-care, and the necessity of to promote positive images of aging and the old age.

Also, NGOs gradually have been gaining experience in increasing their capacity of advocacy and political incidence in favor of the improvement of conditions and quality of life of the older persons. However, some limitations on the work of NGOs in the field of ageing and old age in Latin America still remain.

---

<sup>11</sup> However, sometimes, such recognition of the increase of the adult older population is used with electoral aims (a political-electoral form of abuse).

### Perceived obstacles:

- Limited knowledge and scarce public awareness about the demographic change and its implications.
- Prevailing deficit images of the older persons, which are reflected in considering them as *patients* (ill persons), as dependant persons, and as persons without capacity for decision making.
- Few opportunities exist to accede to education opportunities in the field of gerontology in accordance with the availability of time and economic resources of professionals and volunteers of NGOs interested in updating their knowledge.
- Insufficient experience and economical weakness of some NGOs.
- Atomization of efforts and little networking.

Despite what was previously mentioned, there is evidence of a tendency towards greater organization and strengthening of the NGOs of the region, which seek the possibility of making alliances and encourages accountability for their actions by showing transparency.

### Perceived achievements with respect to NGOs' actions:

- New Civil Society Organizations, with more knowledge and more commitment to solve problems.
- Increased interest in professionalization.
- Increased awareness about the importance of overcoming protectionism, which could generate dependency.

The actual changes that the older persons experience, which gradually question the classic roles, where capacities and contributions are not valued, are motors which encourage the possibility of new approaches in the work of NGOs.

## CONCLUSION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries the possibilities of citizen participation -including, obviously, of the older persons- are increasingly stronger. Besides, their cultural wealth and their multiple shades are important anchors of identity. On the other hand and lamentably, Latin America is the region of the world characterized by greater inequality, an individualistic society tending to assume behaviors that put in risk health and quality of life. It is also a region in which physical and social barriers prevail.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize a few urgent **problems and challenges** to carry on efforts to solve in the region:

- Poverty (poverties), in terms of unsatisfied basic needs; insufficient learned capacities, scarce real and perceived self-efficacy<sup>12</sup>, marked individualism and poor intergenerational solidarity.
- Although in the context of the Latin American region economic growth is demonstrated, economic and social inequality tend to increase. Inequities in terms of opportunities and poor quality of services (education, health, work, housing...) also remain.
- It seems to exist an irrefutable consensus with respect to the null or little advances in the matter of generation of services and support to the families in the situation to take care of fragile older persons, as well as in residential policies destined to promote the construction or adaptation of friendly, accessible houses to people of all ages.
- Latin America needs to promote, through the mass media, images that contribute to educate the population on the subject of aging as a consubstantial process to human life, which breaks stereotypes and false beliefs about aging and old age, and that valorizes the contribution of the older persons to society.

Finally, and as an invitation oriented to work together in order to face those challenges, in coherence with new realities, we present some considerations:

---

<sup>12</sup> Perceived **self-efficacy** is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. Bandura, Albert (1994). *Self efficacy*. On line: <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/BanEncy.html> (28.09.2007).

- (1) We remember an affirmation of the *Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing* (1982): *Eventually, the transition to a positive, active and developmentally oriented view of aging may well result from action by elderly people themselves, through the sheer force of their growing numbers and influence. The collective consciousness of being elderly, as a socially unifying concept, can in that way become a positive factor* (III. Recommendation 32).
- (2) In October 1st, 1998, at the Headquarters of the United Nations, on the occasion of the opening of the *International Year of the Older Persons*, sociologist Gunhild O. Hagestad, said that: *to face the new demographic revolution, and the new longevity, we needed new thinking, new language, new conversations, ...and we have new key challenges: the challenge of fighting age segregation, of maintaining continuity across life phases; of policies that not single out and separate age groups, of education for all ages, lifelong learning, and learning for a long life*<sup>13</sup>.
- (3) And, in 1969, not far from this building, in the *Natural History Museum*, anthropologist Margaret Mead, referred to intergenerational relationships saying: *We need to learn to confront new realities, and the only way of doing it is by perceiving the challenge, different generations holding hands, constructing bridges between us, and restarting the communication*<sup>14</sup>.

We believe that those sentences summarize our challenges, our opportunities, and our dedication.

**LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK OF GERONTOLOGY (RLG)**  
United Nations, New York, October 4, 2007.



**Dirk Jarré** presently serves as the International Cooperation Officer of EURAG, the European Federation of Older Persons

Mr. Jarré has studied sociology and law at different universities. After having worked on development issues in Black Africa he has been head of the international department of the German Association for Public and Private Welfare during 25 years where he has cooperated closely with the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United Nations in the areas of social rights, social policy, social development and the promotion of civil dialogue. Furthermore he has frequently served as a civil society advisor to the German delegation to the UN Commission for Social Development.

Dirk Jarré has been president of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and of the Liaison Committee of NGOs enjoying consultative status with the Council of Europe as well as founding president of the European Council for Non-Profit Organisations (CEDAG) and of the European Social Action Network (ESAN). Also he has been strongly involved with the Platform of European Social NGOs in Brussels over many years and served as its treasurer, vice-president and chair of the Social Policy Working Group.

During the last two years he has been an advisor to the president on the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union. After the World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid he has become vice-chair of the Task Force “Monitoring the Regional Implementation Strategy” on ageing in Europe.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>13</sup> Hagestad, Gunhild O. (1988). Towards a society for all ages: new thinking, new language, new conversations. *Bulletin on Ageing*, 2-3, part 4-8.

<sup>14</sup> Mead, Margaret (1970). *Culture and Commitment. A study of the generation gap*. New York: Ladder Editions].

## **Progress in the European Region Towards Achieving the Goals of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing**

First of all I would like to thank the organisers of this important event for their most kind invitation which allows me to be today in New York and to add some European flavour to this celebration.

To start with, let me quote from the UN Secretary General's message on the International Day of Older Persons 2007:

*“Older persons now have many more opportunities to keep contributing to society beyond any set retirement age.”*

and

*“Where older persons were sometimes seen as a burden on society, they are now increasingly recognized as an asset that can and should be tapped.”*

Frankly, I think that the Secretary General's message, very unfortunately, expresses much wishful thinking and that, in a global perspective, we still have a long, long way to go in respect to the recognition of the contribution of older persons to modern society. Ahead of us lies an important pilgrimage with quite some pains and deceptions for this part of the population – even as its numerical importance is steadily growing. At the same time the reintegration of older persons into society represents a big challenge for both, civil society as well as governments.

Thus, in my personal view, the topic of this year's International Day of Older Persons, namely *“Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing: Empowering Older Persons”*, is in itself a real challenge. However, I will gladly try to present to you, from a regional perspective, the European Region of the UN, what possible progress has been made during the last five years in that part of the world towards achieving the objectives of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

I believe that our specific experience in respect to the empowerment of older persons through a better involvement of organized civil society in putting MIPAA into practice is a rather remarkable one. It is based on an exemplary and an even innovative partnership between governments, non-governmental organizations and UN bodies – in this case the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) which brings together 56 Member States stretching from Vladivostok to Vancouver!

Only five months after the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, this UN region organized the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin, in September 2002, as a regional follow-up to examine and agree on a strategy to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Non-governmental organisations representing the concerns and interests of older persons have been closely involved in all important stages of the preparation of this conference. They actively participated in the three expert meetings which identified the major issues to be dealt with by the conference. Two NGO representatives were, in their personal capacity, members of the Drafting Group which conceived the first outline of the Regional Implementation Strategy to be negotiated by the Member States of the UNECE. Five NGO representatives participated in all the sessions of the negotiations between the governments of the Member States on the outcome of the conference and expressed there the views and demands of civil society. During the conference itself a representative of the NGOs spoke in the main ministerial segment. This all expressed a sense of openness of governments to cooperate with civil society – going far beyond the usual traditions in the United Nations.

The Berlin 2002 Conference on Ageing produced a Ministerial Political Declaration recognizing the unprecedented demographic changes with the highest proportion of older persons in this region – posing multiple challenges but also providing numerous opportunities for society. While welcoming the continual growth in longevity as an outstanding achievement of society the Declaration emphasized the importance of enabling older persons to participate **fully** in **all** aspects of life.

The Regional Implementation Strategy, RIS, adopted at this Ministerial Conference in Berlin in September 2002 by the UNECE Member States, contains the following 10 commitments:

1. To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages.

2. To ensure full integration and participation of older persons into society.
3. To promote equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing.
4. To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences.
5. To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing.
6. To promote life-long learning and adapt the educational systems in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions.
7. To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being.
8. To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society.
9. To support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity among their members.

Finally, but very importantly, commitment 10 of the Regional Implementation Strategy deals with promoting the implementation and the follow-up of the RIS through regional cooperation.

The NGO speech during the main segment of the conference, while recognizing the outstandingly positive experience of cooperation with governments in the preparation, concentrated in a very critical manner on the weak follow-up and the total lack of monitoring mechanisms in the Regional Implementation Strategy.

The validity of this argument was widely recognized and finally the representation of Austria took the initiative and proposed a “Memorandum of Understanding” between the UNECE and the government of Austria to provide support to the UNECE-secretariat, which has very limited staff, in order to ensure at least some meaningful monitoring process.

This Memorandum of Understanding was conceived in two parts and suggested the following measures:

1. The creation of a separate unit in the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research to identify priority issues form the Regional Implementation Strategy which require more thorough analysis and the setting up of a documentation system to support the RIS and prepare, together with the UNECE annual reports on progress achieved in the implementation of RIS.
2. The creation of a so-called “Task Force Monitoring RIS” composed of recognized independent experts in different sub-fields of ageing coming from various governmental institutions, from international non-governmental organizations, from academic life and research institutions as well as from agencies of the UN system.

On this basis the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna, which is a UN-affiliated intergovernmental organization concerned with all aspects of social welfare policy and research, has set up a unit and developed a web-page “Monitoring the Regional Implementation Strategy on Ageing” which supports the follow-up process to the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing of 2002 in the UNECE region in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the associated “Task Force Monitoring RIS”.

The aims of this enterprise are in particular:

- to deliver knowledge and information about the follow-up to the RIS
- to promote the exchange of experience in the field of ageing related policies,
- to provide an overview of instruments, activities and resources, such as country facts and figures and this at various levels: local, national, regional and global.

The Task Force Monitoring RIS has advised, over the last 4 years, the Monitoring Unit of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research with regard to its work programme, has given guidance and support in respect to the priorities and the content of the follow-up, and has helped substantially in drawing up the plans for the future work as well as to the preparation of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in León, Spain, in November 2007.

At its meeting in February 2007 in Vienna, the Task Force, acting as an advisory expert group, has formulated a strong opinion addressed to the UNECE Secretariat in Geneva and to the hosting government of Spain requesting that civil society should play an as significant role in the Ministerial Conference on Ageing 2007 in León as it had been provided for in 2002 in respect to the Berlin conference. This message was well received and an agreement

was reached that NGOs representing the opinions and concerns of older persons or working for their well-being would have large possibilities to contribute to the preparatory process and to participate in the conference itself.

In fact, the Spanish government took a first initiative by convening experienced and representative NGOs and representatives from the research community on ageing who had already been active in the Berlin process in 2002 to a coordination meeting in Madrid in June 2007 with the aim to conceive and prepare a one day “NGO and Research Forum” to take place in León in November 2007 right before the Ministerial Conference on Ageing. Such representatives of NGOs and of the research community were also invited to attend the Preparatory Committee meetings to express their expectations in respect to the outcome of the León Ministerial Conference.

Through their coordinators both communities contributed to the consecutive drafts of the Ministerial Declaration to be decided upon by the Member States of the UNECE in León. Furthermore, and this is unique in the history of the United Nations, the two coordinators were asked to attend and advise the Bureau of the PrepCom for the Ministerial Conference and could introduce important elements of concern of their constituencies into the governmental negotiations.

The Ministerial Declaration, the most important outcome of the conference, to be adopted by the governments of the 56 Member States of the UNECE, confirms the governments *“remain committed to the ultimate goal of a society for all ages that relies on respect for human rights, on protection against age discrimination, on social cohesion, and on equal opportunities for men and women of all ages. In pursuing this goal, (they) reaffirm the principles of independent living, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity, as laid out in the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.”*

Furthermore the Declaration states that governments are *“committed to further promote the mainstreaming of ageing across all policy areas at the local, national and international levels. These policies should be based on principles of intergenerational reciprocity, equity and interdependence; they must be comprehensive, properly coordinated, and gender-sensitive, as is the case with the all-inclusive approach of the Regional Implementation Strategy. (Governments) commit (themselves) to protecting the rights of persons of all ages and to preventing age discrimination and social exclusion.”*

During the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in León in November 2007 speakers from the research and NGO communities will contribute, in their personal capacity, to the different thematic panels on, for example, how to mainstream ageing, on care strategies, on intergenerational collaboration, on active ageing, on social protection or on participation and social inclusion. But they will also have the opportunity to voice the consolidated opinion of their communities in official speeches during the High Ministerial Segment of the conference.

Nota bene: The Ministerial Declaration will contain a ground-breaking paragraph on the recognition of the importance of civil society which reads like follows:

*“We recognize that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in representing people and their needs in society and thus can contribute to policymaking. We encourage cooperation with NGOs.”*

This statement has the potential to open doors for new forms of partnership between governmental structures and civil society organizations in the interest of both sides and for the benefit of society at large and should be used by both parties in an innovative manner.

Thus the European Region of the United Nations has so far lived up to the conclusions of a panel discussion in the February 2006 session of the UN Commission for Social Development which stated: *“It is clear that bottom-up, participatory review and appraisal can be a tool of better decision making and improved policies and programmes. (.....) The social perspective they (the NGOs) introduce provides new and essential information to policy makers and increases their understanding of actual conditions for older persons in their country. (.....) Encouraging active involvement (...) in the review and appraisal exercises can help to overcome stereotypes and lead to greater social capital, as people connect, share experiences and resources, organize networks to promote their interests and well-being, and contribute to better policies.”*

Allow me to add some interesting information elements from the European scene to the issue of empowering older people through the enforcement of the principle of anti-discrimination, the equal opportunities approach and the development of participation of people in society – obviously three concepts which are closely interrelated.

At the XVIII International Congress of EURAG – the European Federation of Older Persons – in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in September 2005, the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Union, Vladimir Spidla, put forward the following important message:

*“There is no room for discrimination in the European Union, which, according to the Preamble of its Charter of Fundamental Rights, places the individual in the centre of its actions. I am convinced that when dealing with discrimination ethic and legal arguments must be in the forefront, because they are valid even if the economic consequences of discrimination would be neutral. Equality and dignity of human beings are of higher value than economic considerations.”*

Even though one might think (and reality confirms that unfortunately) that Commissioner Spidla expresses here rather wishful thinking, there are indeed two articles in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which are of particular relevance for older persons:

***On non-discrimination***

*“Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.”*

and

***On the rights of the elderly***

*“The Union recognises and respects the rights of the elderly to lead a life of dignity and to participate in social and cultural life”*

These two articles have a tremendously important political dimension as they combine the dignity of the human being with the fundamental rights of not being discriminated against and the right to participation in society – independently of age.

These rights needs to be seen in combination with totally new provisions on what is called “participatory democracy”, in addition to representative democracy, as spelled out in the coming new Treaty of the European Union – which reads as follows:

1. *“The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.”*
2. *“The institutions maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.”*
3. *The Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that Union’s actions are coherent and transparent.”*

With the aim to give more public visibility to its framework strategy on non-discrimination and equal opportunities, the European Union proclaimed 2007 as the “European Year of Equal Opportunities for All”. The main objective of this project is to emphasize during the year in all the Member States of the Union the notion of **rights** by raising awareness on the right to equity and non-discrimination, the notion of **representation** by stimulating debate on ways to increase participation of all in society, the notion of **recognition** by celebrating an accommodating diversity in European society, and the notion of **respect and tolerance** by promoting a more cohesive society.

Member States of the Union were asked to establish National Implementation Bodies, required to work closely with civil society organisations throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the European Year. There is definitely a lot of good will on the side of the European Union to make it a success. National governments, however, still seem to be somewhat more reluctant to team up with civil society organisations to pursue these goals in a new form of partnership.

Non-governmental organizations, especially social NGOs, stay definitely sceptical as to the achievements of the project because they think that the approach is somewhat too narrow, too much top-down and that there is a lack of commitment and investment from the public side. Consequently the Platform of European Social NGOs, which has 40 European networks and platforms in membership, promoted 4 key messages – the 4 R-messages – to policy makers at National and at European level:

1. On **rights** NGOs say: *“The law is not enough!”* meaning that while the law declares rights it does not automatically deliver them.
2. On **representation** NGOs say: *“Nothing about us without us!”* meaning that policy-making should not only be done for people but with people.
3. On **recognition** NGOs say: *“Don’t talk about diversity – implement it!”* meaning that beyond speeches, public authorities have a crucial role to play in showing what it means in practice to embrace diversity.
4. On **respect and tolerance** NGOs say: *“It is not only legislation – it is also education!”* meaning that education has a key role to play in changing mentalities.

Now, which conclusions can we and should we draw from all this? In my understanding there is remarkable progress in understanding that people are not only to be considered as objects of policies but that they need to be recognized as subjects, as actors of policy making. However, our society has not yet developed a true culture of empowerment of all people which allows them to fully participate in assessing the needs and aspirations of society, in conceiving the appropriate policy responses, in implementing them, and in monitoring the effects.

Politicians have the responsibility to create the enabling environment for this to happen effectively – through legal, structural, educational and economic measures – and by recognising that the ultimate goal of policy-making is the well-being of people which includes that people can play an active and positively recognized role in shaping the nature and quality of society. People, on the other hand, have to fully realise that they themselves have a key responsibility which requires a proactive attitude towards the common good and an acute sense of dedication and cooperation.

So, let’s go on working together in partnership to develop such a culture. And if one side eventually fails or forgets to do so the other side should gently but forcefully remind the partner of the common commitment.

Thank you for your kind attention and patience!



**Nabil A.B. Naja, M.D.** is one of Lebanon’s leading practitioners in geriatrics as well as a leader in developing services and programs for Lebanon’s aging population. Serving as the current head of Geriatrics at Dar Al Islamia Hospital in Beirut, Lebanon, Dr. Naja also conducts research on Alzheimer’s disease in the Middle East.

Graduating from the Universite Bordeaux, with a medical specialty in Geriatrics and Gerontology, Dr. Naja devotes his career in service to the medical needs of an aging population. He is a consultant and coordinator for Al Omar Al Madid, a senior citizens home and club for the elderly and for Ajyalouna, an elderly care program. He also teaches as Assistant Professor of Public Health at Lebanese University. Dr. Naja is founder of both the Lebanese Geriatric Society and the Lebanese Alzheimer’s Association.

Among his areas of professional interest are: Depression and infirmity of seniors, Alzheimer’s research and treatment, furtherance of geriatric issues throughout the Middle East.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DAR ALAJAZA AL ISLAMIA HOSPITAL AND THE MADRID PLAN:  
BRIDGING THE GAP**

(The Powerpoint presentation accompanying this address can be viewed at ....)

**Socio-demographics of Lebanon**

While Lebanon is a small country in terms of size and population (4 Million), it has been at the center of regional conflicts for over 60 years. This unstable political climate has contributed to limited progress in developing sustainable social and economic development.

*Aging in Lebanon:* Since 1970, total fertility rate has decreased, as has crude death rate per 1000, while life expectancy at birth and the proportion of older people in the population has increased. According to the Ministry of Planning, in 1970 total fertility rate was 4.6 births and the crude death rate per 1,000 was 9.1. Life expectancy at birth averaged 66 years, and 5% of the population was age 60 years and older.

By 1996, according to the MOSA Population and Household survey, the fertility rate had declined to 3, and crude death rate per 1,000 had declined to 7, while life expectancy had increased to 72 years, and the proportion of older persons in the population had increased to 7%. By 2005, according to Sibal et al. (2004), Bulletin of the World Health Organization, total fertility rate had further declined to 2.1, while crude death rate per 1,000 increased only slightly to 7.1. Life expectancy rose to 74 years, and the proportion of older adults in the population increased to 7.8%.

Within this national setting, NGOs have played an ever increasing role across several areas, mainly in providing social and humanitarian support to disadvantaged groups such as orphans, the homeless, elderly people and people with disabilities. Since its founding in 1954, Dar al Ajaza al Islamia hospital (DAIH) has played a significant role in caring for vulnerable populations of all ages. These include the disabled, psychiatric patients and the elderly, who represent 50% of its population base.

#### **Who takes care of the health and social needs of the elderly in Lebanon?**

The family continues to be the primary supporter of the elderly, followed by NGOs. Government and the private sector fall short in addressing elders' needs.

#### *Family Challenges*

Lebanese families are challenged to care for their elderly. The decreasing fertility rate means that fewer adult children are available to care for elderly parents and other relatives. Increased female participation in the workforce means that traditional caregivers of older adults are unavailable to provide daily care. Youth migration has left older adults alone or with minimal extended family support. There is a lack of financial and psycho-social support for caregivers, and longevity brings increasingly serious health problems that require specialized and long term institutional care, care needs that families cannot address.

#### *NGOs for Older People in Lebanon*

The first NGO for older people in Lebanon was established in the beginning of the twentieth century. The main role of early NGOs was restricted to securing a place to sleep and eat for homeless elderly people. No medical supervision was provided: these were simple hospices.

My NGO, DAIH, was established in 1954 with the capacity to accommodate 33 patients. This capacity has increased gradually to its current capacity of 700 patients, distributed between two departments: geriatrics (350 elderly patients), and psychiatry (350 patients).DAIH provides all its services free of charge for about 98% of its patients.

#### *Government: the Permanent National Commission for the Elderly (PNCE)*

In compliance with the international strategy and recommendations established by the first World Assembly on Ageing aimed at responding to the challenges and needs of older people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Lebanese government decided to establish a permanent commission for the elderly (PNCE). Its main task is advisory, serving as an implementation arm to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The PNCE officially launched its activities on June 23, 1999. It was established through the collaboration of the public sector and NGOs, including DAIH.

The PNCE responsibility is three-fold:

- Conducting a national needs assessment survey on the status of the elderly. This includes health, social and economic problems and institutions to address them.
- Assisting the MOSA in upgrading its existing service deliver system to this age group.
- Improving the status of the elderly by ensuring access to decision making and taking on responsible, active and accountable roles in society.

### **DAIH Role in the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing**

DAIH has attempted independently and through the PNCE to implement the Madrid Plan. This comes at a time when the Lebanese government has not been able to prepare and adopt a clear action plan due to the unfortunate circumstances that have prevailed for the past 5 years. DAIH has addressed all three priority directions in the following ways.

#### *Priority Direction 1: Older people and development*

DAIH has conducted numerous media events to raise awareness about the situation of the elderly in Lebanon and their needs. In 2006 it participated in over 50 television programs, radio talk shows, and newspaper feature articles highlighting elderly issues.

DAIH has also participated through the PNCE in preparing a national elderly/senior citizen card, which would help older adults access numerous services, in addition to emergency medical care. While this proposed program has not yet been implemented due to lack of funding, DAIH is hopeful that it will draw attention to the unmet health care needs of this population.

To address income security, social protection, social security and poverty prevention, DAIH has participated through PNCE in drafting and proposing a pension and social security plan. This was submitted to a ministerial committee in December 2003 for review and is currently pending with the committee.

DAIH welcomes visits from various youth organizations, schools, universities and scout groups to conduct events and activities to strengthen intergenerational solidarity.

Rural development, including access to knowledge, education and training for the aging labor force, is also addressed by DAIH. It has participated through PNCE in setting up 33 elderly day care centers with the main objectives of reducing elderly isolation and solitude, improving capabilities and involving older adults in local development projects.

#### *Priority Direction 2: Improving the health and welfare of older adults*

DAIH promotes health and well being throughout life by conducting educational sessions for the elderly within and outside DAIH. These seminars are knowledge based and provide information about common diseases affecting this age group, including prevention measures to ensure a healthy aging process.

Universal and equal access to health is another focus of DAIH. Because half of Lebanon's elderly have no form of health coverage, an out-patient geriatric clinic was established within DAIH to provide care for elderly patients free of charge.

DAIH conducts educational and training sessions for health care providers in institutions serving older adults. It also provides free training for caregivers on how to care for disabled older family members.

#### *Priority Direction 3: Securing the environment to enable an active and supportive life*

DAIH addresses housing needs and the living environment for older adults and their families. It participated through PNCE in preparing a national survey of over 160 centers that care for the elderly. The objective of this survey is to

identify the services provided, whether those services meet the needs of this population, and how to improve the existing service delivery system. This survey is scheduled to be published in December 2007.

To address neglect, abuse and violence against the elderly in Lebanon, DAIH participated in a series of events to raise awareness of elder abuse and highlight the various forms of abuse. These include facts about elder abuse and its various forms (physical, psychological, social, financial), signs and symptoms of abuse, residents' rights, and how to take legal action and contact lawyers.

### **Conclusion**

Unfortunately the dramatic events happening in Lebanon since 2005 have slowed the progress of several projects currently underway to improve the health, well being and safety of Lebanon's older adult population. However, DAIH still has the will and hope to achieve its objectives in the near future. Lebanon has a long way to go, but is certainly moving in the right direction.

---

## **IMPLEMENTING THE MADRID PLAN: HOLDING GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE**



**Richard Blewitt**, is the Chief Executive of HelpAge International. HelpAge International is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with, and for, disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives. HelpAge advocates for social protection in the form of a regular non-contributory cash payment from governments because this can make a tremendous difference to the lives of older people, enabling them and their families to access food, water, health and education. Previously Richard was based in Geneva with the International Federation of the Red Cross, first as Director of Movement Co-ordination and subsequently as Acting Director of Communications. Prior to this Richard was at the British Red Cross, where he became Director of Strategy, Planning and Coordination. Between 1991 and 1996 Richard worked with Save the Children on emergency and food security issues in East Africa, and in their Ethiopia and Sudan programmes. Richard has also worked for ActionAid as Emergency Operations Manager and has been on secondment with the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

\* \* \*

### **“AGE DEMANDS ACTION”**

(Speech preceded by a video presentation that can be viewed at <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=ssGbn9ojc6A> .)

It is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce HelpAge International's Age Demands Action Campaign and bring to you the voices of the older people who we work with, but who so rarely have the chance to be heard.

By 2050, one in every five people worldwide will be over the age of 60. Most of the increase will be in developing countries. We must prepare for this radical demographic shift.

The film you have just seen, Age Demands Action, was made as part of an unprecedented global action by older people demanding change on the issues that affect them most. Whether it is a grandmother in South Africa caring for her grandchildren after their parents have died of AIDS, or a grandfather in India continuing to work to support his extended family, the vital role of older people is seriously underestimated by governments and others all around the world.

Currently, an estimated 100 million older people live on less than a US\$1 dollar a day. Older persons are among the poorest and most marginalised in society today, but they offer an enormous potential for development tomorrow. To ensure that this potential is fulfilled requires action.

That is why HelpAge International is launching a worldwide campaign to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by older people, and to ensure Governments meet the goals of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

Over the last week, older people in 25 countries across four continents, from Dominica to Indonesia, Vietnam to Kyrgyzstan, have been taking similar messages to those in the film to their government representatives and leaders, demanding improvements in ageing policies and practices which directly affect them.

Tomorrow an international delegation, made up of some of the panelists here today, will be meeting with the Director of the Division of Social Policy and Development at UNDESA, and representatives at UNFPA to take forward three main messages that reflect what poor older people across the world want: economic security, physical security and the ability to participate in their communities and society.

These universal rights can be realised by introducing a 3 part package of:

- One, universal non-contributory pensions.
- Two, health care focused on the unique needs of older men and women.
- And three, anti-discriminatory legislation for all older people worldwide.

Obviously within these key areas, older people face different challenges in different countries.

For example in Serbia, where people aged 65 and over make up around 25% of those living in poverty, the Age Demands Action campaign delegation is calling for improvements in access to public buildings and transport and to be allowed to continue to work part time without losing their pensions.

In Thailand older people want to see a section of the budget for the National AIDS Plan allocated to support older people affected by HIV and AIDS.

In Uganda, where older people are amongst the poorest in the country, older people want clear statements from the government on how it will financially support the 80% of them who are not in the civil service and therefore do not receive a pension.

And these meetings are having results.

In India the Minister of Finance agreed to changing the eligibility criteria of the means tested old age pension so that all poor older people can claim it. And at state level meetings, the Delhi Government and Government of the State of Andhra Pradesh have agreed to introduce privilege identity cards for older citizens which entitle holders to medical and travel facilities as well as other benefits.

In the Latin America regional meeting the Continental Network of Older People was recognised as a legitimate and effective actor in bringing older people together across the continent, particularly in the process leading up to the region's review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on ageing.

The Age Demands Action campaign is being supported by politicians, celebrities, artists and musicians; including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka. But it is not just people who are familiar with public life that are standing up in front of their elected representatives.

The delegations include a wide range of older people from all walks of life: traditional healers, former nurses, widows, retired civil servants and older people directly affected by HIV and AIDS. Their direct experience of the issues makes their demands for action that much more compelling and builds the links of direct accountability of governments to their citizens.

Change, of course, does not happen overnight or with just one meeting. The Age Demands Action Campaign is not a one off event but will continue with meetings and events planned around the International Day of Older Persons each year. Ensuring older people have a regular opportunity have their voices heard is central to the implementation of MIPAA and can be an incredibly powerful force for change.

With the support of governments, the international community and most importantly you, we can create a society in which all older people fulfill their potential to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. But to realize this vision, we must act now.

Age Demands Action!

**CONGO NGO Committee on Ageing, New York**

**Executive Committee**

Chair: Florence Denmark, International Council of Psychologists  
Vice-Chair: Jessica Frank, AARP International  
Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Nolasco, Instituto Qualivida  
Corresponding Secretary: Anne O'Sullivan, International Association for Volunteer Effort  
Treasurer: Peter R. Walker, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues  
Immediate Past Chair: Helen R. Hamlin, International Federation on Ageing  
Members-at-Large: Patricia Day, League of Women Voters  
Phyllis Gottdiener, International Council of Jewish Women  
Virginia Hazzard, Association of Former International Civil Servants  
William T. Smith, International Association of Homes and Services for the Aged  
Richard Velayo, International Council of Psychologists

**Elder Abuse Committee**

Co-chair: Pat Brownell, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse  
Co-chair: Margo Nadien, American Psychological Association

**Multigenerational Committee**

Co-chair: Norma Levitt, World Union for Progressive Judaism  
Co-chair: Rosa Perla Resnick, International Immigrants Foundation

**NGO Committee on Ageing  
Chrysler Building  
132 E. 43 Street, #503  
New York, NY 10017  
E-mail: [ageingassembly@yahoo.com](mailto:ageingassembly@yahoo.com)**

**International Day of Older Persons Committee, 2007**

Co-chair: James Collins, International Association of Gerontology & Geriatrics  
Co-chair: Helen R. Hamlin, International Federation on Ageing

Members: Toni Antonucci, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues  
Ruth Begun, National Women's Conference Center  
Elaine Bow, International Council of Psychologists  
Pat Brownell, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse  
Genevieve Cervera, Older Adults Technology Services  
Choon Whe Cho, Church Women United  
Mary Covington, International Federation for Home Economics  
Patty Day, League of Women Voters  
Florence Denmark, International Council of Psychologists  
Vernie Ellis, Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.  
Jessica Frank, AARP International  
Virginia Hazzard, AARP  
Maria Klara (Intern), Pace University  
Alischa Kugel, Global Action on Aging  
Jack Kupferman, NYC Department for the Aging  
Judy Lear, Gray Panthers  
Annie Levy, The Portrait Project  
Valerie Levy, International Federation on Ageing  
Mary Mayer, International Federation on Ageing  
Rochelle Mangual, DC 37 Retirees Association  
Elizabeth Nolasco, Institute Qualivida  
Laurie Norris, Communications Consultant  
Suzanne Paul, Global Action on Aging  
Jackie Pope, National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union  
Rosa Perla Resnick, International Immigrants Foundation  
Nancy Ross, United Health Network  
Ed Ryan, AARP  
Janet Sigal, American Psychological Association  
Susan Somers, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse  
Norma Simon, American Psychological Association  
Douglas Stockwell, United Health Network  
Mary Toumayan, Armenian International Women's Association  
Pete Walker, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

**LIST OF ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

**NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING NEW YORK**

(As of September, 2007)

AARP	International Federation for Home Economics
Aging in America/IAHSA	International Federation of Social Workers
Albert Einstein College of Medicine	International Immigrants Foundation
All India Women's Conference	International Longevity Center
American Association of Family & Consumer Services	International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
American Ethical Union/National Service Conference	Isabella Geriatric Center
American Psychological Association	Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.
Armenian International Women's Assoc, Inc..	Japanese & American Institute on Gerontology/Fordham U. Graduate School of Social Services
AFICS/FAFICS (NY)	League of Women Voters
Brookdale Foundation	Loretto Community
Cancer Care	Morningside House/IAHSA
Case Western Reserve University/Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences	National Silver Haired Congress
Catholic International Education Office	National Women's Conference Center
Church Women United	NY Citizen's Committee on Aging
Columbia University School of Public Health	NOVA/Southeastern University/Institute of Peace
Columbia University School of Social Work	Making Elders
Congregation of St. Joseph	Partnership for Global Justice/Center for Gerontological Health
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	Penn State University Intergenerational Program
Eastern Michigan University	Rotary International
Economists for Peace & Security	Sheridan Elder Research Center
Fordham University Graduate School of Social Services	Social Aid of Hellas (Greece)
Global Action on Aging	Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Gray Panthers	South County Senior Services, Inc
Help Old People (HOPE) Africa	Soroptimist International
House Calls Medical Corp.	United Health Network, Inc
Instituto Qualivida (Brazil)	United States Mission to the UN
International Association of Gerontology & Geriatrics	University of Michigan Institute for Social Research
International Association of Housing and Services for the Aging	University of Rhode Island
International Council for Caring Communities	World Council of Churches
International Council of Jewish Women	World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues
International Council of Psychologists	WFUNA
International Council of Women/NOW/USA	World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations
International Federation on Ageing	World Union for Progressive Judaism
	YAD SARAH

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **LIFE: Generations United**

The exhibit you viewed in the “Neck” between the Vienna Café and the Conference Room is the result of an Intergenerational Photography Workshop conducted in New York City at the Carter Burden Center for the Aging. With a grant from the Brookdale Foundation, creative director/photographer Annie Levy worked with Generations United to develop this work. It brought together older adults and students in creating images that depict life themes from different generational perspectives. The workshop and the images provide an opportunity to explore how we “see” at different points in life – what changes, what stays the same. We invite you to visit the exhibit and “meet” some of the participant photographers through their work. A curriculum to do this type of project in other communities will soon be available on the Generations United website at: [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).

### **CONTRIBUTORS**

The NGO Committee on Ageing thanks the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Association of Homes and Services for the Aged (IAHSA) for their generous support for this celebration of the International Day of Older Persons. We also thank AARP International for its valuable in-kind assistance.

If your organization is interested in supporting the work of the Committee, we would like to hear from you.

Florence Denmark, Chairperson  
NGO Committee on Ageing, NY  
c/o CONGO  
777 United Nations Plaza, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: (212) 346 - 1551  
Fax: (212) 346 - 1618  
E-mail: [fdenmark@pace.edu](mailto:fdenmark@pace.edu)