



NGO Committee on Ageing events **October 2015 – June 2016**

15 October 2015 - 25th annual celebration of the International Day of Older Persons.

Topic:	Sustainability and Age Inclusiveness in the Urban Environment.
Co-Chairs:	Ms. Cynthia Stuen, International Federation on Ageing, and Ms. Frances Zainoeddin, Gray Panthers
Introductions:	Ms. Janet Sigal, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing
Messages from:	H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70 th session of the General Assembly (delivered by H.E. Mr. Diego Morejon, Vice-President of the General Assembly).
Welcome address:	Ms. Laura E. Flores, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Panama to the United Nations
Remarks by:	Ms. Rosemary Lane, Focal Point on Ageing, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, who also drew attention the Message of the Secretar-General delivered on 1 October 2015
Keynote speaker:	Mr. Joan Clos, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT (via video)
Guest speaker:	Mr. Jorge Bravo, Chief, Population and Development Section, Population Division, UN/DESA
Panel discussion:	“Key components for age inclusiveness in urban environments”
Moderator:	Ms. Jan Peterson, Huairou Commission
Panelists:	Dr. Eugenie Birch, Chair, UN-HABITAT’s World Urban Campaign and Nussdorf Professor of Urban Research and Education, University of Pennsylvania, USA. Dr. Toshio Obi, Director, e-Government Research Center, Waseda University, Japan. Ms. Louisette Fomba, Director, National Development Partners, Cameroon Mr. Hirotaka Koike, UN Major Group for Children and Youth

The event was sponsored by the United Nations Group of Friends of Older Persons (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Slovenia, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey and Uruguay), and the Permanent Missions of Japan, Singapore, Spain, Thailand and the United States of America.

Issues covered by the speakers included: increasing numbers of older persons; HABITAT III Conference to be held in October 2016 to develop a “New Urban Agenda”; age-inclusiveness and age-friendly cities, social protection, challenges and opportunities of ageing, the global refugee crisis, the environmental effects on how older persons live; review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing; invaluable contributions of older persons to households and the workplace; need to pay attention to the demographic trends to prepare for young people entering old age at the turn of the mid-century.

The Panelists discussed: “neighborhoods for a lifetime”; good city-planning involves integrating systems and people; importance of partnerships; information and communications technologies (ICT) must be used to counteract urban challenges, particularly in terms of accessibility, availability, affordability, and usability for ageing and disability; the “silver” industries will enable older persons to lead better lives with

dignity. Attention must be given to many urban areas that are currently age-unfriendly with respect to housing, transportation, credit opportunities, absence of side-walks and traffic lights, rest areas. Age-issues are sustainable development issues and older persons should not be viewed only as recipients of services and beneficiaries but also as valuable resources of knowledge, experience and expertise, contributing to a vital and prosperous economy.

The Panel was followed by a Q and A session, with the closing of the event by Mr. Mateo Estrémé, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Argentina, and Chair of the General Assembly's Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) which was discussing the need for a convention to protect the rights of older persons.

At the closing session, Mr. Estrémé introduced a video entitled "Change the way you think about age" that had been prepared by the UN Focal Point on Ageing in collaboration with Mr. Jack Kupferman, President of Gray Panthers. Three of the four centenarians who were interviewed for the video were present as honored guests. They received a standing ovation.

The event was followed by a fundraising luncheon which paid tribute to Ms. Mary Mayer who died earlier in the year. She was a highly respected member of the NGO community that addressed ageing issues. Speakers at the luncheon, whose theme was "Changing how we view older persons", were Mr. Josh Collett, Vice President, Office of International Affairs, AARP, Mr. Michael Hodin, CEO, Global Coalition on Aging, and Dr. Juby Jacob-Nara, Vice President of Global Medicine, Pfizer. They drew attention to: ageing is about living; healthy aging; age-friendly environments; need to change negative behavioral and social norms towards older persons; workforce participation and retirement, and care-giving issues.

Generous contributions were received from AARP, Global Coalition on Aging, Pfizer Corporation, Skanska USA Building Inc. and Laurie Norris, in memory of Clarence Pearson, as well as some other private contributions.

5 November 2015

Topic: **WHO and the Commission for Population and Development**
Moderator: Ms. Erica Dhar, AARP
Panelists: Mr. Jorge Bravo, Chief, Population and Development Section, Population Division, UN/DESA
Mr. Werner Obermeyer, Deputy Executive Director of WHO Liaison Office, NY

- Ageing is major global demographic trend, along with urbanization, in the next 15 years.
- People over age of 60 have already surpassed the number of children under 5 and will soon overtake the number of youth (15-24 years of age).
- Commission on Population and Development will review its methods of work to determine how best to address issues of the International Conference on Population and Development's Programme of Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in terms of providing support to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF).
- All ECOSOC functional commissions will be reviewing methods to support the HLPF in its thematic reviews.
- Ageing population has significant implications for health issues. An important goal is to maximize functional ability of older persons.
- There is no "typical" older person; older persons are often under-counted and under-recognized (e.g. migratory status, older persons in conflict situations, natural disasters).
- Governments need to address issues of employment and retirement age – question is how to adjust labor market to enable people to work longer; some social security systems have mandatory retirement; in most countries there is a statutory age for receipt of pensions.
- Geriatric care needs to be given greater attention.

3 December 2015

Topic: **Strategies and Challenges for Advocacy on behalf of Older Persons**

Moderator: Ms. Cynthia Stuen, International Federation on Ageing

Panelists: Ms. Rosemary Lane, Focal Point on Ageing, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Ms. Catarina Carvalho, Senior Policy Advisory, High Level Task Force for the International Conference on Population and Development

- Many issues being addressed by the United Nations: Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (third review and appraisal to take place in 2017; Open-end Working Group on Ageing (which has held its sixth session to discuss a convention to protect and promote the human rights of older persons; International Day of Older Persons; World Elder Abuse Awareness Day; need to mainstream “ageing” throughout all UN activities; older persons in context of Disaster Risk Reduction, HABITAT III Conference.
- “Ageing” is not a controversial issue, and is therefore mainly ignored, although the current demographic trends should have an impact on governments’ economic and social policies.
- NGOs play a significant role in pushing issues forward in global discussions – e.g. role of NGOs in Convention to Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Efforts must be made to ensure pressure coming from all regions; alliances must be built, not only with entities dealing directly with older persons’ issues, but other areas as well (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, environment, HABITAT, human rights, humanitarian assistance, etc..
- At national levels, Social Development Ministries must be contacted but also Ministries of Foreign Affairs from which representatives are sent to the UN for major negotiations at the global level.
- Must be clear why a convention on rights of older persons is needed; must have evidence to support position.
- African group involvement essential.
- Advocacy efforts must not only address vulnerabilities of older persons, but must also call attention to positive aspects of ageing, e.g. economic benefits at community and national levels, silver economy.
- Ms. Carvalho indicated that she would be happy to provide the CoA with assistance in its efforts towards the adoption of a convention.

21 January 2016

Joint programme with the NGO Committee on the Status of Women

Topic: **Food Insecurity among Older Persons**

Moderators: Ms. Susan O’Malley, Chair of NGO/CSW and Ms. Cynthia Stuen, Vice-Chair, NGO/CoA.

Panelists: Mr. Joel Berg, Executive Director, NY Coalition Against Hunger in New York City
Ms. Bethany Brown, HelpAge USA

Mr. Berg drew attention to the fact that 1.4 million people in the USA do not have enough food, often having to choose between paying rent or buying food. 83% of emergency calls concerning hunger were made by women. He pointed out that hunger disproportionately affected older women. There was a clear link between poverty and food security.

Ms. Brown pointed out that demographic trends show people living much longer and by 2050, almost a quarter of the world population will be over 60. The increase in numbers of older persons should not be referred to as a tsunami, which implies impending disaster. Being old is a cause for celebration. Many older persons are a valuable resource, contributing to their families, their communities and to the national economy. 22% of women are over the age of 49 and many of them are involved in subsistence farming. Older women are the hidden protectors of food security. Yet, most have no retirement plans; they have no social protection. Ms. Brown suggested steps that can be taken: inclusion of older persons in

agricultural extension programs which work with their knowledge and experience; combining disaster risk reduction and sustainable livelihood programs; challenge out-of-date notions that older people are cared for by a middle generation – many, mostly older women, are actually caring for themselves as well as others.

February, 2016

During the 54th session of the Commission for Social Development, the NGO Committee on Ageing co-sponsored the following side events:

- (a) E-Ageing - the ageing society and the role of ICT applications.
- (b) Ensuring health and well-being across the lifespan: indicators, challenges and opportunities.
- (c) Innovations on Inclusion, leave no one behind.
- (d) Ensuring healthy ageing: an under-utilized strategy of vaccinations.

March , 2016

During the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the NGO Committee on Ageing co-sponsored the following side events:

- (a) Ending Elder Abuse: breaking the generational cycle of violence.
- (b) Ageism and widowhood: a focus on the forgotten

7 April 2016

Topic: Migration and Older Persons

Moderator: Ms. Frances Zainoeddin, Gray Panthers

Panelists: Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd, Special Adviser for the General Assembly Summit on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants
Mr. Bela Hovy, Chief, Migration Section, Population Division, UN/DES
Ms. Eva Richter, Poverty Elimination and Community Education (PEACE) Foundation

Ms. AbuZayd called attention to the fact that response to the recent large movements of refugees and migrants (244 million, an increase of 71 million compared to 2000) has fallen short of human rights standards and has been deficient in international cooperation. Nevertheless a consensus was emerging about how to implement a comprehensive approach to addressing these large movements: shared responsibility; investment in prevention, addressing root causes of large movements and creating channels for safe and orderly migration so that people avoid recourse to smugglers and traveling on dangerous routes. More must be done to protect the safety, rights and dignity of people on the move. The Summit to be held on 19 September 2016 will discuss a number of issues, including the involvement of more States to support refugee-hosting States at an early stage of displacement and in a more predictable manner; mitigation of the impact on host communities by allowing refugees to make a greater contribution to their environment; good practices on local integration; resettlement and other pathways for admission to third countries. She urged that older persons speak out about their specific experience of being a refugee or migrant – to counter the use of simplistic narratives that do not distinguish the needs of different groups. She also stressed that civil society can make a vital contribution to the discussions on refugees and migrants.

Mr. Hovy recalled that migration was not mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals but now appears in the Sustainable Development Goals. He provided some demographic information and drew attention to the definition of a refugee who is generally regarded as a person who is compelled to leave his or her country because of generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order. A migrant, on the other hand, is regarded as someone who decides freely to leave his or her home country to move to another country. Governments have different policies with respect to permanent settlement,

employment, family reunification, naturalization, recognition of qualifications, remittances, etc. He acknowledged the work of the NGO Committee on Migration.

Ms. Richter spoke about her visit to Shanxi, China in 2014, where she noted the Government's plan to relocate 250,000 million rural citizens, sometimes forcibly, to the cities. Such relocation is part of a poverty reduction strategy and as a way to consolidate land into more productive, less labor-intensive tracts. Many young people move for the excitement of the cities, the opportunity to make enough money to buy luxury items and to have better living conditions. However, married couples often leave their children behind with the grandparents. As the grandparents age and need assistance, work in the cities may have to be sacrificed to care for them, since care by strangers or in a public facility is considered a severe disgrace for the family. Families that relocate together have the advantage of more emotional support, more available care for the elderly, and greater economy since there would only be one household to maintain. Challenges for the government include fair compensation for land, broad welfare and social services reform for both rural and urban areas, city planning that will avoid the development of slums, equal access to education at all levels.

5 May 2016

The annual event of the Intergenerational Relations Subcommittee addressed the issue of "Myths and Realities of Ageing Across Generations".

Moderator: Ms. Rosa Perla Resnick, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Speakers: Ms. Donna Butts, Executive Director, Generations United, Washington D.C>
Ms. Sara Peller, Associate Executive Director, Dorot, NYC, Generations United.

Special Guest: Ms. Elizabeth Niland, Focal Point on Youth, UN/DESA

[Email sent to Rosa on 22 August, requesting summary of a copy of the report which FZ can summarize]

2 June 2016

Topic: Inclusion of Indigenous Older Peoples in Agenda 2030"

Moderator: Ms. Ranjit Jayanti, Representative at the United nations for the Guild of Service, India

Speakers: Ms. Chanra Roy-Henriksen, Chief of the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Mr. Roberto Borrero, UN Programs & Communications Consultant with the Indian Treaty Council and Global Organizing Partner, Focal Point on Indigenous Peoples Major Group.

Like older persons, indigenous peoples were not mentioned in the MDGs, but are now included in the SDGs. Indigenous peoples are becoming more marginalized, losing much of their land and resources. Indigenous women are particularly discriminated against – they generally do not inherit land rights. However, in most communities, the indigenous women are the most respected; older women are "holders of biodiversity". About 80% of biodiversity is found in indigenous peoples' land. Elders are seen as the gatekeepers and act as the guide book on how indigenous communities are supposed to go forward. However, older indigenous peoples are the most left behind. Asia is home to largest number of indigenous peoples - issues are politically sensitive. Some governments deny existence of indigenous peoples. It was also noted that governments take advantage of the culture of indigenous peoples' art and culture, for the purpose of promoting tourism, but rarely protect their rights. For indigenous peoples to be

visible, disaggregated data are crucial. It was also noted, at the same time, that some elders support practices like FGM and other traditional practices that also violate rights. This is a serious concern and requires education and attention. Efforts are also being made to educate and empower the youth.

The Indigenous Peoples Major Group looks forward to working with NGO Committee on Ageing, particularly with respect to supporting efforts for a convention to protect the rights of older persons.

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