



**The Sixteenth Annual Celebration of the
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS**

**Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons:
Advancing UN Global Strategies**



**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
5 October, 2006**





The 16th Annual Celebration of the International Day of Older Persons

Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing United Nations Global Strategies

Thursday, October 5, 2006

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

**United Nations Headquarters
New York**



Presented by:

The UN/NGO Committee on Ageing

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 5, 2006

Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing UN Global Strategies

The 16th Annual United Nations International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) recognizes the global population of 600 million people over 60 years of age and the value of this growing population, its contribution to the foundation and future of society, and the potential impact on the community of nations.

The International Day forum will also recognize the vital need for public and private support to provide nourishing and supportive environments and to enable older persons to elevate their concerns to the forefront of international dialogue.

In support of the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Second World Assembly on Ageing, the International Day of Older Persons will raise awareness about policies and programs to enhance quality of life for older persons and to encourage positive images of ageing.

The OBJECTIVES of the 2006 UN International Day of Older Persons are to:

1. Raise awareness of the UN Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 with special attention to the Plan's Priority Direction on Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments towards promoting positive images of ageing.
2. Emphasize the need for the development and implementation of appropriate ageing policies and programs with consideration given to environmental sustainability and global partnerships.
3. Identify innovative initiatives for enhancing living conditions (e.g., housing, transportation) that are being planned and implemented in developing, transitional, and developed countries.
4. Advocate for older persons to be recognized as valuable resources and to exemplify their contributions to society.

Program

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

***Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons:
Advancing UN Global Strategies***

October 5, 2006
10:00am – 1:00pm
Conference Room 2

Inner Age: A Portrait Project

A slide presentation created by Annie Levy (*see page 39*)

PLENARY

Greeting Message from **Kofi Annan**, Secretary General, UN4
Opening Remarks by **Juan Carlos Brandt**, Chief, Department of Public Information, NGO Section, UN.....5
Greeting Message from **Florence Denmark**, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, UN NY8

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Moderator: **Juan Carlos Brandt**, Chief, Department of Public Information, NGO Section, UN

H. E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the UN General Assembly10
Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), UN12

PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderator: **Alexandre Sidorenko, Ph.D.**, UN Focal Point on Ageing, Department of Economics and Social Affairs, UN16
Astrid Stuckelberger, Ph.D., Gerontologist, Institute for Social & Preventive Medicine, University of Geneva, Switzerland18
Gilda A. Glasinovich, M.D., UN Representative, Technical Adviser, Gender and Immigrant Populations, Economic and Social Council, New York22
Hassan Hammoud, Ph.D., Professor, Education and Sciences Division, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon26
Dr. Tukufu Zuberi, Ph.D., Director, Population Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania29
Rajul Mehta, Founder-Director, Project OutrEACH, Bombay, India and New York, New York32

Question and Answer Period

CULTURAL PERFORMANCE

Music by **Mandolin Orchestra** (*Glen Ridge, New Jersey*)
Gabriel Nevola, Conductor

LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF MRS. NANE ANNAN

(*see page 35*)

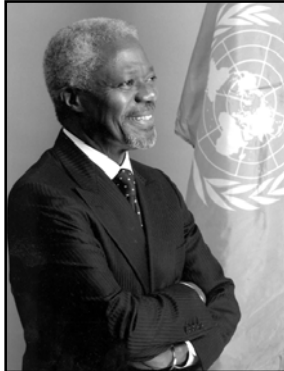
UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS
5 October 2006



In the tenth and final year of my tenure as Secretary-General, after a full career in the service of the United Nations, I have a personal stake in the fate of older persons and the fulfillment of their aspirations. But I am only one of 600 million persons in the world over the age of 60. As people across the globe come to live increasingly longer lives, our entire human family has a stake in encouraging and easing a productive, active, and healthy aging process. The whole world stands to gain from an empowered older generation, with the potential to make tremendous contributions to the development process and to the work of building more productive, peaceful, and sustainable societies.

That is why the theme of this year's International Day of Older Persons is "Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing UN Global Strategies". It is a call to all communities to work for policies and programmes that will enable older persons to live in an environment that enhances their capabilities, fosters their independence, and provides them with adequate support and care as they age.

That means ensuring housing, transportation, and other living conditions that allow people to maintain their independence for as long as possible, and "age in place"-- yet remain active -- within their own communities. Equally important, it means recognizing and respecting the dignity, authority, wisdom, and productivity of older persons in all societies, particularly in their roles as volunteers and multi-generational caregivers. And that, in turn, means promoting a more positive image of ageing.

On this International Day of Older Persons, I call on Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and people everywhere to focus on building a society for all ages -- as envisioned in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and in line with the Millennium Development Goals and wider global development agenda. Together, we can and must ensure that people live not only longer lives, but better, more enriching, rewarding, and fulfilling lives.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan



Mr. **Juan Carlos Brandt**, a national of Venezuela, is the Chief of the Non Governmental Organizations' Section (NGOs) in the Department of Public Information. In this capacity, since April 2006, Mr. Brandt oversees the relationship between approximately 1500 representatives of Civil Society and the Organization's information Department.

Prior to this, Mr. Brandt was the Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Australia and the South Pacific. Based in Sydney, Mr Brandt was appointed in early 1998 by Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN, and assumed his duties in October of the same year. UNIC Australia is also responsible for Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Mr. Brandt joined the United Nations in 1984 as Information Officer in the United Nations Information Centre in Washington, D.C. In 1988, he became Associate Spokesman in the Office of the Spokesman for then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. In January 1992 and for the next five years, he served in the same capacity under former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and, most recently, since January 1997, under the current Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Senior Associate Spokesman and Deputy Spokesman.

In 1989, Mr. Brandt was appointed spokesman for the President of the forty-third session of the General Assembly, Dante Caputo (Argentina).

Before joining the United Nations, Mr. Brandt worked for five years as Director of the New York-based Venezuelan Government Tourist and Information Centre for the United States and Canada, and as Press Counsellor for the Permanent Mission of Venezuela to the United Nations. Prior to that position he worked in his country's communications and advertising industry, both in the private and public sectors.

Mr. Brandt attended the La Salle School, in Caracas, and the San Jose Salesian Institute in Los Teques, also in Venezuela. He graduated from the Catholic University in Caracas, where he earned a degree in Mass Communications and Journalism.

Born in England on 26 November 1952, Mr. Brandt is married and has six children.

Welcoming Remarks

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to the first DPI/NGO briefing of the fall 2006 season. Six months into my new function within the Department of Public Information (DPI), I see many familiar faces, and for those whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting, I am Juan Carlos Brandt, Chief of the NGO Section, Civil Society Service, Outreach Division, DPI.

In addition to hosting this briefing it is also my pleasant duty to introduce today's keynote speaker, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, who has kindly taken time out of her busy schedule to be with us this morning.

I am also very pleased to announce that this briefing is being webcast live, thus enabling a wider, worldwide participation in this event. For future reference, the webcast will be archived on the DPI/NGO Section website at www.un.org/dpi/ngosection. Depending on the availability of resources, all the weekly briefings this fall will be webcast live, a feature started last fall, thanks to our DPI colleagues in UN TV and webcasting services. If you miss a briefing or wish to refer back to a specific speech, you can go back and watch the proceedings online. We will, of course, be providing summaries of the briefings, another well-received feature started a year ago.

I would also like to take this opportunity and refer to the 59th DPI/NGO Conference, which concluded about a month ago. Entitled, “Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development”, it brought together more than 1,500 representatives of nearly 500 NGOs from 62 countries. In addition to representatives of NGOs, the private sector and academia, the Presidents of the Sixtieth and Sixty-First Sessions of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, and United Nations high-level officials addressed the Conference. They shared their first-hand, real-life examples of the work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. One of the main characteristics of this year’s Conference was the high participation of youth, both among participants and speakers.

The DPI/NGO Conference took place a week before the general debate of the 61st session of the General Assembly and it is my great pleasure to announce that the President of the General Assembly, Ms. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, kindly agreed to join us sometime this morning. As you know, two high-level meetings took place during the General Assembly, first, the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development (14-15 September) and the High-level Meeting on the Least Developed Countries (18-19 September). The outcome of all three will be reviewed at our next DPI/NGO briefing next Thursday in the Dag Hamarskjold Library Auditorium.

Let me now move on to the focus of today’s event: the International Day of Older Persons, which was officially observed last Sunday, 1 October. As is customary, Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued a message on the day itself.

[His message appears on page 4 of these proceedings of the 16th Annual Celebration of the International Day of Older Persons.]

For this morning’s briefing, the theme mirrors one of the main themes of the Secretary-General’s message – the need to empower the older generation, with the potential to make tremendous contributions to the development process and to the work of building more productive, peaceful, and sustainable societies. For this reason, our briefing this morning is titled, “Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing United Nations Global Strategies”.

The first of October has been observed by the United Nations as the International Day of Older Persons since 1990 with a briefing celebrating this day on the first Thursday of October. This year’s 16th Annual United Nations International Day of Older Persons aims to:

1. Raise awareness of the UN Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, with special attention to the Plan’s Priority Direction on Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments towards promoting positive images of ageing.
2. Emphasize the need for the development and implementation of appropriate ageing policies and programs with consideration given to environmental sustainability and global partnerships.
3. Identify innovative initiatives for enhancing living conditions, such as housing and transportation that are being planned and implemented around the world.
4. Advocate for older persons to be recognized as valuable resources and to exemplify their contributions to society.

The International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the First World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna, has guided the course of thinking and action on ageing over the past 20 years. Subsequently, at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, the concept of a “society for all ages” emerged. Such a society would require generations to invest in one another and work together to ensure shared benefits. In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing met and devised the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, a plan with a particular emphasis on older persons and development.

The statistics tell us that one out of every ten persons is now 60 years or above and by 2050, one out of every five persons will be over the age of 60. Over the last half of the 20th century, 20 years have been added to the average life span. However, along with the divide that exists among older persons living in more and less developed regions, perceptions of the ageing populations differ from one geographical area to another and with it the challenges that governments face when dealing with their aging populations.

During the panel discussion, our guest speakers will offer their insights into how we may better understand the processes by which the quality of life for older persons may be improved. They will furthermore discuss their experience with regard to the potential impact the growing population of older persons may have on the community of nations.

This DPI/NGO Briefing will take place in two parts. I will moderate the Plenary Session, which will take us through 11:00 a.m., and my colleague Dr. Alexandre Sidorenko, United Nations Focal Point on Ageing, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, will moderate the Panel Discussion from 11:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. A performance by a mandolin orchestra from Glen Ridge, New Jersey, will conclude the programme.

First I would like to introduce Ms. Florence Denmark from the NGO Committee on Ageing, my co-host of today's event. Ms. Denmark, the Chairperson of the NGO Committee on Ageing, is an internationally recognized scholar, researcher and policy maker, with a particular expertise on the ageing of women. Last year, Ms. Denmark received the Ernest Hilgard Award for Distinguished Sustained Contribution to General Psychology. Ms. Denmark, the floor is yours.



Florence L. Denmark, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, UN NY, has represented both the American Psychological Association and the International Council of Psychologists 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. In 2007, she will receive the Raymond D. Fowler Award or Outstanding Contributions to the American Psychological Association.

Welcoming Remarks

Good morning. On behalf of the NGO Committee on Ageing, I'd like to welcome you to the 15th annual celebration of the International Day of Older Persons. It's wonderful to see all of you here. As you came into the room, I hope you noticed the slide presentation created by Anie Levy which features older persons. Thank you, Anie, for preparing such a wonderful presentation entitled, "Inner Age: A Portrait Project."

Today's programme, "Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing United Nations Global Strategies," is an important topic which resulted from the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing developed by the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002.

As Kofi Annan noted, when addressing the Second World Assembly in spring 2002: "The world is undergoing an unprecedented demographic transformation. Between now and 2050, the number of older persons will rise from about 600 million to almost two billion. In less than 50 years from now – for the first time in history – the world will contain more people over 60 than under 15." Building a society for all ages makes it imperative that we improve the quality of life for older persons. Improving the quality of life not only deals with housing and living arrangements but also includes dealing with appropriate care, reducing elder abuse, and improving the images of ageing. We need to strengthen lifelong development and independence and recognize that older persons need policies that empower them and support their contribution to society. As a psychologist, I am aware that an enabling environment and quality of life has a positive effect on older people's behavioral, emotional and mental health. Improving the quality of life for older persons will also help advance UN global strategies.

In keeping with today's theme, there will be a plenary moderated by Mr. Juan Carlos Brandt, the Chief of the NGO Section of the United Nations Department of Public Information. Mr. Brandt will deliver a message from Secretary General, Kofi Annan. We are also fortunate to have Ambassador Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain, the new President of the General Assembly who will address the group. This plenary will feature a keynote speaker, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid. Ms. Obaid is the Under Secretary General and Executive Director for the United Nations Population Fund. I would like to thank Ms. Obaid on behalf of the Committee on Ageing as well as the IDOP Committee for providing a generous grant to make this meeting a reality. Following this plenary, a panel discussion will take place moderated by Mr. Alexandre Sidorenko, the Chief of the Programme on Ageing of the Department of Economics and Social Affairs. Mr. Sidorenko will also speak about his own perspectives on implementing the 2002

Madrid Plan of Action. The regional panel consists of experts representing various regions of the world. I believe we can look forward to 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, the World Health Organization, and, as noted earlier, the UN Population Fund, who are co-sponsoring this day. Many thanks are also due to this International Day of Older Persons Committee Chairs, Mr. Edward Ryan and Dr. Richard Velayo, Associate Chair, Phyllis Gottdiener, and their committee. A listing of the IDOP committee and the executive committee of the NGO Committee on Ageing can be found in these proceedings.

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

Thank you.



H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa was elected President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly on 8 June 2006. At the time, she was serving as Legal Adviser to the Royal Court in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Sheikha Haya brings to the post a long and distinguished legal career at both the national and international levels, spanning three decades. One of the first two women to practise law in her country, she has held many senior positions with leading legal organizations of the world including the International Bar Association, where from 1997 to 1999 she was vice-chairwoman of the arbitration and dispute resolution committee, the first woman from the Middle East to serve in this capacity. Her pioneering role in the legal sphere has been coupled more recently with prestigious diplomatic assignments as her country's Ambassador to France, from 2000 to 2004, and as non-resident Ambassador to Belgium, Switzerland and Spain. Over the same period she was the Kingdom's permanent representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). She also was a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization's Arbitration Centre Consultative Committee and became Bahrain's representative on the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, an appointment that she still holds today.

A champion of women's rights, particularly in the legal sphere, Sheikha Haya has been an active participant in the movement to elevate the position of women in Bahrain before the Islamic sharia courts and is an advocate of a progressive interpretation of Islamic texts as they apply to women. She was a vice-president of the Bahrain Bar Society as well as a member of the Supreme Council of Culture, Art and Literature, and is currently a member of her country's Child Development Society and the Arab Women's Legal Network.

Sheikha Haya, who is trilingual in Arabic, English and French, has presented numerous papers at legal conferences across the United States, Europe and Asia, on diplomacy, international arbitration, dispute resolution and the status of women in the Middle East. She holds an LLB from the University of Kuwait and studied international public law at the University of Paris I: Panthéon-Sorbonne. She also holds postgraduate degrees in civil private law from Alexandria University and in comparative law from Ain Shams University in Egypt. She is only the third woman to serve as President of the United Nations General Assembly, and the first since the twenty-fourth session in 1969.

MESSAGE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing United Nations Global Strategies

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Warmest greetings to you all,

Your presence here today in so many numbers is proof of the strength and determination that older persons represent around the world. It is thanks to your dedicated hard work that this important day is receiving the attention it deserves.

This meeting is extremely relevant, at a time when societies globally are favoring material economic growth, sometimes at the expense of their cultural traditions and values. In many cultures, elders are revered as central figures in the family and in the community. They pass on history and language thereby maintaining cultural identity. They also play a significant role in education and caretaking. Increasingly, older persons are the primary caretakers of their grandchildren who have been orphaned by AIDS or conflict.

The contributions of older persons are still essential today and we must ensure that all societies continue to recognize this. In practical terms, we must cater to the needs of the ageing with adequate medical care, appropriate legal frameworks, transportation facilities and other necessary infrastructure.

We must create the conditions for older persons to engage in mentoring, volunteer work and other areas where their skills and insights are needed.

We must also focus on encouraging positive images of and positive attitudes towards older persons. I am pleased that this is one of the priorities of this year's Conference.

A society that empowers its elders is a society that values wisdom and experience. This is crucial for shaping the mindsets of both current and future generations of decision-makers.

Policies that enhance the quality of life of older persons benefit not only them, but all generations.

It is inspiring to be with you who are leading these efforts at the United Nations.

Finally, I would like to mention that we cannot distinguish between old age and the other stages of life. Old age represents a link in the chain of life. Older persons are a part of the wisdom of life itself. They are a living memory and a blessing to their environment.

This has been a subject for many poets and philosophers in various cultures throughout history. In sacred texts, in particular in the Old Testament, it is said that "old age is revered not for the accumulation of years, but for its wisdom, which, in principle, longevity helps to achieve."

I wish you continued great success.

Thank you.



Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, the world's largest multilateral source of population assistance. Ms. Obaid was appointed head of UNFPA, effective 1 January 2001, with the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. She is the first Saudi Arabian to head a United Nations agency.

From 1998 to 2001, Ms. Obaid was Director, Division for Arab States and Europe, UNFPA. Before joining UNFPA, Ms. Obaid was Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) from 1993 to 1998. She was the Chief of the Social Development and Population Division, ESCWA, from 1992 to 1993, and Social Affairs Officer, responsible for the advancement of women, from 1975 to 1992. A central focus of Ms. Obaid's work at ESCWA and UNFPA has been to cooperate with governments to establish programmes to empower women and develop their capacities as citizens with rights and responsibilities. She has also worked with women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to advocate for women's equality.

In 1975, Ms. Obaid established the first women's development programme in Western Asia. The programme helped build partnerships on women's issues between the United Nations and regional NGOs. Ms. Obaid chaired the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender in Amman, Jordan, in 1996. In November 1997, she was a member of the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan. Between 1984 and 1985, she was a member of the League of Arab States Working Group for Formulating the Arab Strategy for Social Development.

In 1963, Ms. Obaid became the first Saudi Arabian woman to receive a government scholarship to study at a university in the United States. She has a doctorate degree in English Literature and Cultural Anthropology from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. She is a member of the Middle East Studies Association and of Al-Nahdha Women's Philanthropic Association, a Saudi NGO.

Throughout her career, Ms. Obaid has emphasized the importance of development that emerges from the context of each society, taking into consideration the cultural values and religious beliefs that shape people and affect their actions. As UNFPA Executive Director, she has introduced a special focus on culture and religion in the Fund's development work, thereby linking universal values of human rights to values of the human worth promoted by all religions and found in all cultures.

Ms. Obaid has received many awards and honours. She is married and has two daughters.

Keynote Speech

Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted and honoured to deliver the keynote statement today.

As we commemorate the International Day of Older Persons, I would like to pay tribute to older persons around the world.

Although each one of us is different, we share at least one thing in common. We can remember a world that was vastly different from the world in which we live today.

For one thing, those of us who are older can remember a world without televisions, without computers, without the Internet, and without cell phones, not to mention i-Pods.

The communication revolution has transformed our world.

Another transformation that will have manifold consequences is population ageing. Today one person in ten is 60 years or older and it is projected that by mid-century, the figure will be one person in five globally. At the same time, our world has the largest youth generation ever.

The main point that I would like to stress today is that all generations contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of their societies. And it is important for policymakers to understand demographics and age structures and dependency ratios so that they can plan accordingly and ensure that the needs of individuals are met and their human rights are protected. Changing demographics require commensurate and responsive changes in social and economic policies and programmes.

The other main point that I would like to stress today is that we need more dialogue between the generations because this will bring us greater hope for the future.

Government officials, who tend to be older, need to listen to young people and provide them with leadership opportunities. And young people, who have the energy of youth and new ideas, need to stay in touch with older persons. We need to stay connected to each other. For those of us who live apart, communication technology is important. Equally important is being together and talking to each other, debating the news and burning issues of the day, taking joint decisions, and sharing the joys and sorrows of life together.

The real challenge is to build a society for all ages.

And this is precisely where the role of the United Nations is important. For building a society for all—where people can live free from fear and free from want—is consistent with the United Nations mandate: to eliminate the “scourge of war,” and ensure human rights, the rule of law and economic and social advancement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today the elderly are the world's fastest-growing population group.

Population ageing is a trend that will continue during the 21st century and it affects all aspects of human life.

In the economic area, population ageing will have a huge impact on economic growth, savings, investment and consumption, labour markets, pensions, and taxation.

In the social sphere, population ageing affects health and health care, family composition and living arrangements, housing and migration.

In the political arena, population ageing can influence voting patterns and representation.

As I see it, there are three major areas, which deserve greater attention in our collaborative efforts:

- One: we must support the human rights and freedoms of older persons;
- Two: we must enable their full participation in society; and
- Three: we must ensure that the elderly benefit from care and protection.

Human rights

Allow me first to address the issue of human rights. Like everyone else, older persons have the right to live in dignity, free from fear and free from want.

Human rights apply everywhere and to all human beings by virtue of their humanity. Human rights can be, and are, a powerful tool for mobilization and empowerment.

Core rights such as the right to life, liberty and physical integrity, and civic freedoms such as freedom of thought, opinion and expression; religious belief and practice are important to persons of all ages.

So too are political rights such as the right to participate in public affairs and to vote in free and fair elections.

And there are women's rights, including the right to equality and to non-discrimination and protection from gender-specific forms of harassment, violence, and exploitation.

There are also economic, social and cultural rights guaranteeing the right to health, and to an adequate standard of living, including food and housing.

There is also the right to justice, which includes the right to redress for victims of human rights abuses, punishment for perpetrators, and access to courts and other procedures. This area of law is particularly important to address cases of elderly abuse, which are of growing concern.

Today we also see the scourge of poverty threatening the well-being of many elderly people, especially women.

Meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 requires that ageing issues be mainstreamed in national development agendas and poverty reduction strategies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Older persons have the right to live in security, free from fear. Yet today in too many places, when there is war or scarcity of food and land, it is often the elderly who suffer first.

Today, the elderly, especially women, are increasingly at risk of violence, including sexual violence, and other serious human rights abuses. We have seen the images of such elderly persons in various conflict zones around the world. They have seen the cruelty that human beings can inflict on each other and the sorrow shows on their tired faces.

As the head of the United Nations Population Fund, I would like to stress that older persons must be actively protected during emergency situations and humanitarian interventions. Together as a UN system working with NGO partners, we must make sure that the elderly have equal access to emergency relief services that are needed for their survival.

Participation

At all times, but especially as we commemorate the International Day of Older Persons, we must pay tribute to the elderly and the qualities of wisdom that come with a lifetime of experience.

We should work to ensure that older persons continue to feel part of the community, and have opportunities to realize their full potential. Promoting active ageing, through lifelong education and training, can enable older persons to enjoy happy lives with opportunities for individual development and self-fulfillment. The elderly should be encouraged to participate in the widest possible range of activities including employment and community volunteer work.

At this juncture, I would like to pay tribute to countries around the globe that have introduced laws to ban age discrimination in the workplace and have introduced measures to address the ageist attitudes of some employers who deny protection benefits, including adequate pension schemes to older staff. Such rules are just as important to social justice and equity as the laws outlawing discrimination on grounds of gender, creed, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status.

It is also very important that the voices of older persons are heard. By promoting dialogue between the generations, chances for social cohesion and solidarity are increased.

For individual families and communities, this means giving older persons an option of living and working in their own society for as long as they are able and wish to do so. Overall, there is a need to dispel stereotypes and negative attitudes about older persons and replace them with positive images of ageing.

For Governments, this means ensuring that older persons participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their lives.

Care and protection

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the family still constitutes the main support system of older persons in most cultures, traditional family support mechanisms are being eroded due to declining family size, rural to urban migration and declining co-residence and, in some countries, because younger family members are dying of AIDS.

Yes, we must build on the positive values in cultures to encourage the protection and respect of older persons. But the efforts of families and communities to take care of elderly members are not sufficient to meet the challenge.

Countries and communities need to establish and strengthen mechanisms for the support of older people. This is particularly true for older women, who outnumber men of their age but who are often victims of discrimination under the property laws of many countries and thus increasingly vulnerable to poverty as they grow older.

Due to the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, older persons and, particularly older women, are increasingly acting as caregivers for their family members affected by HIV/AIDS. This is despite the fact that their own situations are characterized by extreme poverty, and they themselves often need help and support.

Today I call on communities and Governments to join hands and recognize and support the care-giving services provided by older persons.

Another issue of concern is healthcare for the elderly. To prevent a high incidence of poor health among older people, governments need to improve access to basic social and health services throughout the life cycle, including sexual and reproductive health as well as preventive and curative care and rehabilitation.

I would also like to stress that, as human beings, older persons need love and affection. We will never outgrow our need for affection, emotional closeness, tenderness and love.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all concerned actors, Governments, local communities, national and international NGOs, and the United Nations system to intensify efforts to formulate and implement human rights based policies and programmes that address the challenges of population ageing.

I see the upcoming five-year review of progress towards the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as an opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in dialogue to increase understanding of the situation and needs of older persons. Together we must take action guided by the vision of a society for all ages.

As we meet here today and as we meet in other venues, I urge each and every one of you to acknowledge the many positive contributions older persons have made and can make in society. With the unprecedented revolution in longevity now irreversibly underway, the world must look at population ageing as a cause for celebration, not a problem, as a blessing, not a burden.

I thank you.



Dr. **Alexandre Sidorenko**, 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). Currently serves as Senior Social Affairs Officer and the UN Focal Point on Ageing.

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.

Remarks

The Second World Assembly on Ageing, which was held in Madrid in April 2002, was a turning point in international policy debate, and hopefully also, action on ageing. The Assembly has recognized ageing as a global *developmental* phenomenon and supported the inclusion of ageing onto the international development agenda. This means that the ageing of society is recognized as an opportunity for societal development, and older persons are embraced as a resource for development. In the Political Declaration, which was adopted by the Madrid Assembly along with the new International Plan of Action, we read: "The potential of older persons is a powerful basis for future development. This enables society to rely increasingly on the skills, experience and wisdom of older persons, not only to take the lead in their own betterment but also to participate actively in that of society as a whole".

Next year, the international community will start the first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action. The review and appraisal exercise intends to assess the progress as well as obstacles in national and international efforts to implement the Plan. What should we be looking at while reviewing and appraising the Madrid Plan of Action?

The Plan is designed to guide policy formulation and implementation towards the specific goal of successful adjustment to an ageing world. The success in this adjustment, as stated in the Plan, is measured in terms of social development, the improvement for older persons in quality of life and in the sustainability of the various systems, formal and informal, that underpin the quality of well-being throughout the life course [paragraph 14].

Thus, in reviewing the implementation of the Plan we will need to find out whether there has been progress in all three dimensions of our adjustment to an ageing world and moving towards a society for all ages. These dimensions are:

- Social development
- Quality of life, and
- Social microenvironment to support the individual development into older age.

The UN Commission for Social Development decided on the principal modalities of the review and appraisal. They include:

- Review and appraisal will be undertaken every five years;
- Each review and appraisal cycle will focus on a theme based on the priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action;
- A specific theme emanating from the Madrid Plan of Action will be identified by the UN Secretary-General for the first cycle;

- Review and appraisal will include two dimensions: ageing-specific policies and ageing-mainstreaming efforts; and
- The bottom-up and flexible approach will be the major format of the review and appraisal exercise.

The bottom-up participatory approach aims at directly involving older persons in actions on their behalf thus promoting their participation in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. The immediate purpose of the participatory approach is to ensure that older persons have an opportunity to express their views on the *impact* of national policy actions affecting their lives.

The participatory approach strives to promote qualitative and participatory content of the review and appraisal exercise. At the same time, the quantitative monitoring of social situations, such as through censuses, surveys and civil registration, can play a very important role by helping to identify local and national priorities on ageing for more targeted participatory inquiry.

To conduct bottom-up participatory assessment of the implementation of the Madrid Plan, it is important to have a catalyst and a facilitator. Government should be seen as the principal catalyst and end-user of policy-relevant information, while facilitators with sufficient experience in conducting participatory research will provide substantive professional support for the exercise. Such facilitators should be looked for among community workers or members of non-governmental organizations active at the local level, as well as academia and research institutions.

The bottom-up participatory approach is a novel way to review the implementation of international policy documents such as the Madrid Plan of Action. In order to help national governments with all stages of bottom-up review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action the Secretariat of the UN programme on ageing is preparing Guidelines for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing using the Bottom-up Participatory Approach.

The first global cycle of review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action will start in 2007 at the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development and will conclude in 2008 at its forty-sixth session. The format of the concluding event (in 2008) of the first cycle of review and appraisal will include, along with plenary debate, a series of panel discussions and events related to the theme of the first review and appraisal cycle: “Addressing the challenges and opportunities of ageing”.

[Introduction of the panelists]



Dr. **Astrid Stuckelberger** is a gerontologist and internationally recognized expert in aging. She is currently a lecturer and researcher at Geneva School of Public Health of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva. She holds a doctorate in psychology from the University of Geneva and has published more than 100 articles, reports and several books.

As a representative to the UN in Geneva of both, the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) and the Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), she was nominated as a chair of the NGO Committee on Aging where she advocates in particular for a human rights framework for older persons. She conducted several scientific expertises and reports for the Swiss government, the European Commission and several United Nations specialized agencies and programmes. She is a permanent member of the WHO Ethical Review Committee (ERC).

During the last decade, as Deputy-Director of the Swiss National Research Programme on Aging, she created with WHO and AARP, the Geneva International Network on Ageing (GINA). After organising numerous events for the 1999 UN International Year of Older Persons for the UN in Geneva and the Swiss authorities (i.e. the UN Open House Day), she received an Award from the UN Secretary-General. She also contributed to the UN 'Research Agenda on Aging for the XXIst Century', the Plan of Action and the NGO Forum declaration at the 2nd UN Assembly on Aging in Madrid in 2002.

Dr. Astrid Stuckelberger, PhD Gerontologist, Researcher at the Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine,
Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva (Switzerland),
Chair of the NGO committee on Aging at the UN in Geneva
International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics representative to the UN

Europe and UN Global Strategies

Europe is facing unprecedented demographic changes that are challenging social and economic policies. Adapting policies to new structures of an ageing society with 4 to 5 generations and growing migration rates has led the European Commission to continuously modernize social protection systems, especially pensions, in order to ensure their social and economic sustainability. The following are some of the key factors of this social and structural change:

- *Growing rates:* Projections show that Europe will hold the world record for the next decade but that by 2020¹. The average growth rates of older age groups, (octogenarians, nonagenarians and centenarians), are increasing in all regions of Europe and the World.
- *Raising live expectancy:* People are living longer and older people are enjoying better health. By 2030, the number of "older workers" (aged 55 to 64) will have risen by 24 million as the baby-boomer generation becomes senior citizens. The EU will have 34.7 million citizens over age 80 (compared to 18.8 million today). The number of people 80+ will grow by 180% by 2050.
- *Fertility rate:* The EU's fertility rate fell to 1.48 in 2003, below the level needed to replace the population, (e.g., 2.1 children per woman).
- *Ageing work force:* From 2005 to 2030 the number of people 65+ will rise by 52.3%, while the age group of 15-64 will decrease by 6.8%. The ratio of dependent young and old people to people of working age will increase from 49 per cent in 2005 to 66 per cent in 2030.

From Global to European Strategies:

How the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIIPA) is implemented in Europe?

Given the demographic and socio-economic situation of older persons in Europe, ageing policies are becoming a priority for most European states. Despite the existence of policies for older persons, much remains to be done to

reach a comprehensive and sustainable policy. Furthermore, stronger emphasis needs to be given to the contribution of older persons to society to achieve, as the leading theme of the International Year of Older persons stated “A Society for All Ages”.

In September 2002, following the Madrid World Assembly on Ageing, UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) organized with Germany the 1st European Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin and came up with the Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPA which includes the following: 1. Mainstream ageing in all policy fields; 2. Ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society; 3. Promote equitable and sustainable economic growth; 4. Adjust social protection systems ; 5. Enable labour markets to respond ; 6. Promote life-long learning ; 7. Ensure quality of life at all ages; 8. Mainstream gender approach ; 9. Support families that provide care for older persons; and 10. Promote Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS)² through regional co-operation.

From a Global to a European Research Agenda on Ageing

From Vienna to Madrid, research has always been closely linked to the International Plan of Action on Ageing and its implementation. Prior to the 2002 World Assembly on Ageing and the NGO Forum in Madrid, an international meeting of scientists specialized in ageing took place at the Valencia Forum and adopted a “Research Agenda on Ageing for the XXIst Century³.”

The “Research Agenda on Ageing for the XXIst Century” is designed to support the implementation of the Madrid International Plan for Action on Ageing 2002, adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing. The Research Agenda on Ageing consists of four sections: (i) major priorities, (ii) critical research arenas, (iii) key methodological issues; and (iv) implementation.

For Europe, the priorities for research on ageing are linked to the RIS for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted by UNECE Regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing. The RIS for Europe includes ten commitments, namely: 1. To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with the demographic change to achieve a society for all ages; 2. To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in 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 system 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; and 10. To promote the implementation and follow-up of the regional implementation strategy through regional cooperation.

Illustration of European Innovative Initiatives

Besides research, numerous innovative initiatives and good practices have taken place in Europe with new ways of improving quality of life and adapting to today’s realities. Let us briefly mention some of the most striking ones responding to the UN Agenda on Ageing:

- *Design for All* : this concept is spreading through all of Europe and aims at enhancing the quality of life of everyone, of all ages, through design, urbanism, housing and everyday devices. For example the European Institute for Design and Disability’s (EIDD) motto is “Good design enables, bad design disables”.
- *Age-friendly cities*: the aim of the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities project is to engage cities in several countries to make their communities more age-friendly, which is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic ageing.
- *Long life learning (LLL)*: the University of the 3rd Age, created by a European Prof. Vellas, has for a long time been advocating long life learning. On 21 November 2001, the Commission adopted a Communication on Making European Area of Lifelong Learning a reality.
- *Housing – Smart Home*: a platform for European household appliances was launched in late-2003 by

CECED (the European Committee of Manufacturers of Domestic Equipment). CHAIN (CECED Home Appliance Interoperating Network) aims at integrating all household appliances in a virtual network fully open to any communication protocol and proprietary control system embedded in the appliance.

- *Mobility*: in order to increase mobility of older persons, many incentives are created such as a network of restaurants with the ‘age mobility label’, which not only gives discount to retirees but can also arrange for company during the meal or allow half menus for older citizens.
- *Migration Bus*² : In Switzerland, Curaviva, with the support of the government, has launched a “Migration Bus” touring around Switzerland organizing conferences and providing information for the migrants on their rights and addressing their problems.

Innovative images – media

- *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Seniors: Seniorweb*, a website which targets those aged 50+ in Europe. The main aim of Seniorweb is to encourage older people to use information and communication technology by offering both online and offline services. It includes information on: medicare, investment plans, legal aspects, shopping, travel, timetables for events, TV tips, book reviews etc.
- *Religions and faith-based organisations for older persons*: A European initiative has launched an international network called Crescendo⁴ that brings together all international catholic organisations to address specifically the promotion of a more humane and spiritual perspective of ageing.
- *Older persons serving humanity*: A new trend is taking place among volunteer organisations besides the frequent help Seniors are bringing to youth or to older persons themselves. Today, volunteers can serve in a short or longer humanitarian mission where their skills and knowledge would be useful (ie: teaching, building houses, bridges, providing medical and health care, environment, natural disasters, peace actions, etc.).

Innovative Policies

- *Improving quality of life of older workers*: Today, in Europe, there are four people of working age for every person over 65. Falling birth rates, rising life expectancy and the retirement of the baby-boom generation mean that, by 2050, this ratio will have dropped to two workers paying for one pensioner. The European Union sets out five areas for concrete action to help Member States adapt to demographic change in their own national context: 1. Helping people to balance work, family and private life so that potential parents can have the number of children they desire; 2. Improving work opportunities for older people; 3. Increasing productivity and competitiveness by valuing the contributions of both older and younger employees; 4. Harnessing the positive impact of migration for the job market; 5. Ensuring sustainable public finances to help guarantee social protection in the long-term.
- *Rights of Older Persons*: Some important new directives or policies on ageing have taken place in Europe, especially in terms of the protection of rights of older persons. Although some laws and rights of older persons exist in countries or cities in the world, the age discrimination framework to eliminate discrimination, exclusion and abuse or unequal treatment due to age has not yet been addressed at the international but also at the national level. If age discrimination has not been seriously addressed until the last decade is symptomatic of the fact that ageing of the population went unseen for many decades.
- Europe has made a clear step in this direction through the *EU Anti-discrimination Directives*: All discrimination on the basis of nationality is banned by the European Union (EU) Treaties. The EU is also empowered by treaty to promote equality between men and women and to combat many other forms of discrimination. The most recent reinforcement of fundamental rights and non-discrimination in the EU came with the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union at the Nice European Council on 7 December 2000. Article 21 of the charter prohibits discrimination 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 and also discrimination on the grounds of nationality.

Conclusion

Europe's ageing population is an unprecedented challenge for the whole of society, The European Commission has underlined its concerns over the demographic time-bomb and its will to translate it into action and reform, knowing that the next 10 years will be crucial. The innovative initiatives from civil society and new policies in member states are encouraging and show that Europe is responding to the challenge. Quality of life has improved, but much remains to be done, such as including older persons in all aspects of society or further developing the rights and protection of older persons. In a world of rapid change with the technological revolution touching all sectors of society, not only do we need an ongoing process of adaptation, but more so we need to anticipate and prevent any possible deterioration of the older person's situation for the quality of life and future of all generations.

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Dr. **Gilda A. Glasinovich** has extensive education and training in epidemiology, demography, psychology and public health. She is a graduate from Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (Peru), London University (Great Britain) and Columbia University (United States) among other academic institutions.

For near two decades, Dr. Glasinovich has focused her work on immigrant women's health and advancing women's agendas. At the core of her social involvement is her continuous effort to bring awareness to gender-based violence among this at-risk population. She works closely with government, private and non-governmental organizations to operationalise and implement effective public health actions and to foster effective partnerships at community levels.

Dr. Glasinovich's is a United Nations Representative with the Economic and Social Council, and her expertise on women's health and immigrant populations makes her a valuable contributor. As a Technical Adviser on Gender and Immigrant Populations, she works closely with UN Permanent State Member Missions and partakes on special assignments. Her contributions range from technical assistance to project design and implementation to being a world speaker on behalf of various organisations.

Dr. Glasinovich is the recipient of Congressional Recognitions for her work to forward immigrant women's agenda, and the State and City of New York have honoured her with "Outstanding Public Service" recognitions. The Women's Media Consortium recognized her efforts in changing the stereotypical portrayal of Latin women with the "New Voices, New Vision Prize" and the Women's Federation for World Peace named her "Remarkable Woman of the Year", being the first Latin American to receive this prestigious award. Her dedication to community-capacity building, cultural understanding, and social empowerment for all women and their families along with a pleasant and warm personality, and strong spiritual values, makes Dr. Gilda Glasinovich a truly inspiring and fascinating woman of our times.

AGEING IN LATIN AMERICA -A Glimpse to Action-

Good day to all. I want to start my presentation by publicly acknowledging my appreciation to Professor Florence Denmark for her invitation to be part of this celebratory day and to Mr. Edward Ryan for some of the most delightful conversations, as of yet, on issues related to this very important population group.

The focus of my presentation will be the region I know the best and love the most: Latin America. Many identify Latin America with the Inca, Maya and Aztec empires and archeological ruins, its diverse, rich and delectable cuisine, colorful national dresses, and rhythmic music. We are also people who like closeness...we touch, hug and embrace...we are affectionate people. But Latin American is a region of extremes; of hope and desperation; of extreme riches and extreme poverty. It encompasses some of the greatest income disparities in the world, where a fully one-quarter of all national income going to a mere 5 per cent of the population.

The aging of the world's population is having ripple effects throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2000, one of every 12 people in the region was over 60. By 2025, the ratio is expected to rise to one in seven as the elderly population grows to 100 million and to 184 million older persons by the year 2050. Within 20 years, 10 percent or more of the elderly in every country of the region will be over 80. Today people over age 85 make up the fastest growing population in the Americas, increasing at a rate of 3 to 5 percent per year in some countries. Not only are more people old now, but more will get older. At the start of the 21st century, the average life expectancy in the region is up to 72.4 years.

Medical advances and preventive health measures have meant significant progress against communicable diseases but at the same time, the number of people with chronic and degenerative conditions has gone up. Cardiovascular disease, cancer, injuries and physical disability are now more prominent health problems. Equally, neuropsychiatric disorders, such as depression, anxiety, somatization disorder, bipolar disorder are increasingly higher particularly

among older women. In addition, many older people report discrimination and abuse, still largely a silent and regretful situation. The majority of older people are not congregated in pro-rights associations nor represented in existing ones; they become unseen faces and unheard voices. This profile mirrors a situation that is not uncommon around the world where older people have turned into activists instead of relying in a society that should spontaneously look after them.

In Latin America the challenges faced by governments to accommodate the growing demands of older people to their health, social, economic systems are enormous. The economic and social environment is ill-equipped to manage the rapid demographic changes that are occurring in the region with many countries troubled by political corruption and uncertain stability. In addition, a steady drain of trained professionals and other skilled workers perpetuates the status of social neglect. Some laws, public policies and national plans on ageing have been developed, but for the most part their provisions are under-funded or not implemented. Public policies on older people vary from country to country. Cuba and Chile are the most advanced in this respect, with other countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, and Mexico making some headway over recent years.

Ethnicity and cultural exclusion

Culture and ethnicity, central variables to our lives, unjustifiably have become the basis to older person's exclusion and poverty. Large proportions of the region's population stem from Quechua, Aymara or Mapuche origin in Andean countries, with remainders of the Maya and Aztec civilisations in Central America and numerous tribal communities in the Amazon basin of Brazil, Peru and highlands of Colombia.

While these cultures provide a major base for today's tourist industry in the daily lives of most of the region's indigenous people, this cultural distinction is played out in the form of harsh and painful discrimination. This has particular repercussions for older people whose first language is not Spanish/Castellano or Portuguese, who often wear traditional dress and still retain many of their indigenous habits. The situation becomes more painful for older indigenous migrants, who must go together with their children to the region's major cities, such as Quito, La Paz, Lima and Santiago de Chile, where their ability to adapt is limited. In a bizarre twist of fate, these civilizations, sources of national pride and revenues, play against its own people and create an atmosphere of insecurity and poverty for older indigenous persons. National identities are threatened by ways of consumer marketing, and its effects are tangible.

Rural privation

While today the overwhelming proportion of older persons in developed countries live in areas classified as urban, the majority of older persons in LAC live in rural areas in mountainous topography. Most rural workers work for themselves in agriculture, at subsistence levels, with techniques as old as their cultures. Nonetheless, this mode of livelihood is seriously impacted by international treaties –such as Plan Colombia- and by urban development forcing large numbers of young workers to immigrate or face poverty. Retirement takes place only when the person is physically unable to work, and very few receive a social pension or are able to access government services.

The phenomenon of rural to urban migration is also an important factor in the poverty of older people in rural areas, as many are left in their communities without their family, often with the responsibility of caring for grandchildren. Though picturesque in postcards, the Highland/Sierra communities in Bolivia, for instance, can be comprised of mainly older women and children. Problems of migration are compounded by environmental degradation, climate change and poor agricultural technology leaving older people farming ever less productive land. However, development policies and programmes for rural areas rarely recognise the needs of older members of the community, nor do they see them as active agents in the rural economy.

Access to healthcare

Access to health services is a particular issue for older people in rural areas, many of whom are older women. As health services are increasingly transferred to the private sector, coverage is limited to those who are able to pay for insurance during their working lives. Access to health services is therefore dependent on capacity to pay –which excludes the majority of older people who have lived in poverty during their working lives and are ageing in extreme poverty.

Other factors that limit access to healthcare are closely linked to cultural health practices and professional training. Many older people still prefer to use folkloric remedies, which are cheaper, more accessible and familiar than conventional health services. As a result, doctors and nurses working in rural hospitals –who usually come from urban cities-, face a host of challenges providing updated treatments. In addition, similar to international immigrants, language barriers and overall lack of knowledge about indigenous practices and behaviours hinders, and frustrates, appropriate service delivery and access. This particular situation has created room for innovative health care initiatives. Older people in Bolivia and Peru have pioneered the development and commercialisation of traditional remedies through alliances with bio-medical research institutes generating new sources of revenues for the people. Schools of medicine and nursing have included courses on Traditional Medicine and health allied schools have incorporated cultural orientation seminars in its curricula.

But one fact should alert us to remain attentive. The situation of older women everywhere must be a priority for policy action since older women outnumber older men in urban zones and even more in rural areas. Recognizing the differential impact of ageing on women and men is integral to ensuring comprehensive health services. It is therefore critical to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into all policies, programmes and legislation.

Recommendations

Though many recommendations at various levels are suggested in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, let me have your attention to 2 aspects:

A. Nursing Industry

- To the extent that nursing homes will become “international centres of well-being” the challenges for these healthcare facilities is to recreate friendly and culturally adequate environments.
- Enhance the competence of primary health care providers by incorporating cultural competence trainings. This very simple action will improve the accuracy of diagnosis and proper course of treatment. In many countries communication between health workers and women patients is extremely authoritarian, making a woman's disclosure of psychological and emotional distress difficult, and often stigmatized.
- Increase specific psychological and social interventions. Older adults also need adequate social care to increase their independence and improve their quality of life but more specifically to prevent mental illness.
- Foster partnerships with community-based organizations. Besides your own advertisement, and referrals from health facilities, CBOs are wonderful points of reference for information on what is happening in the community.

B. Research

- Increase gender-based research. Gender acquired risks are multiple and interconnected. Many arise from women's overwhelmingly exposure to discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantage. Gender differences are also seen in healthcare deliverance. It is particularly evident in patterns of help seeking and gender stereotyping in diagnosis. When women dare to disclose their problems, many health workers tend to have gender biases which lead them to either over-treat or under-treat women. Some studies report that even when presenting with identical symptoms, women are more likely to be diagnosed as depressed than men and less likely to be diagnosed as having problems with alcohol.
- Increase epidemiological surveillance measures. It should be obvious that older persons have specific and more complex health needs. Yet, in general, epidemiological surveillance has not sufficiently documented these needs nor the incidence and prevalence of the serious health problems of this stage of life.
- Identify best cultural practices and develop general guidelines for quality assurance particularly in settings with large immigrant populations.

We are a privilege group. We probably enjoy the blessings of good physical health and mental well-being. Most of the participants present today have the benefit of a higher education –and this is a powerful variable-, most enjoy work stability, social benefits and a life free of violence. Let's not forget these blessings and privileges. We should not turn our heads to the millions of older persons, a vast number being women, for they represent the images of what lays ahead. A society that neglects attention to its elderly is like an unthankful child neglecting its parents. I cannot endure the idea of being call ungrateful...hopefully neither can you.

Thank you.



Dr. **Hassan R. Hammoud** holds a Ph.D. in Social Welfare from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio-USA, 1980. He is currently a professor of Social Welfare and Social Work at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, Lebanon, which he joined in 1995. Prior to this date, he had taught Social Policy and Social Work at the Kuwait University for 16 years.

His publications include “*Social Services in Kuwait*” in *Social Welfare in the Middle East*. John Dixon (ed.), London. Croom Helm, (1987); *The Impact of Technology on Social Welfare in Kuwait*, *Social Services Review*, Vol. 12,N.3 (1986); *The Emergence of the Oil Welfare State: The Case of Kuwait* (Co-author, Khalaf), *Dialectical Anthropology*, 12:343-357 (1988); *Social Work Education in Developing Countries: Issues and Problems in Undergraduate Curriculum*, *International Social Work*, Vol.31:195-210 (1988).

His research and consultancy work for several local and international firms and organizations, such as the UNESCO, the UNESCWA, the World Bank, and the Lebanese Government produced the following professional reports: *The National Plan for the Eradication of Illiteracy in Lebanon, 2002-2004*; *The Poverty Alleviation Strategy Paper for Lebanon*, February 2005; *Non-Formal Education in the Arab World*, UNESCO, November 2004; *Illiteracy in the Arab World February 2005* (background paper for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006); *The Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012*, UNESCWA, 2002; *Globalization and Social Protection in the Arab Region*, UNESCWA, December 2005; *The Arab Illiteracy Strategy*, UNESCO, December 2005.

Dr. Hammoud participated in several international Social Welfare/Social Work conferences, in Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait, Finland, Indonesia, Canada and Japan.

His areas of interest include illiteracy and poverty eradication, health, education, social protection, social security, and other welfare areas as well as social work education and research, social development, social policy and international comparative social welfare.

The Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012: Prospects and Challenges (Speech read by **Ms. Maya Hammoud**, daughter of Dr. Hassan Hammoud)



Maya Hammoud

In the context of a growing globalization and its ever expanding advantages and opportunities, the Arab world is facing great challenges in modernizing its economic, social and political structures. Despite the concerted efforts that have been taken by the Arab governments to face such challenges during the second half of the twentieth century, the demographic factor seems to have been underestimated, although its role is primordial in affecting all types of changes.

The Arab world is a region representing 22 countries with a population reaching almost 300 millions, and which had witnessed during the last 25 years an increase in life expectancy from 55 years in 1975 to 67 years in 2000, and is expected to reach 76 years in 2050. As to the fertility rate, it had drastically dropped to 3.5% in 2000, and is expected to reach 3.2% in the year 2025 after being in the range of 6.8% in 1975.

Along the same line, the normal rate of population growth dropped from 3.1% in 1975 to 2.3% in 2000, and is expected to reach 1.4% in the year 2025. As a result, the Arab world has witnessed a tremendous shift in its population pyramid with children below 15 years of age dropping from 42% in 1975 to 38% in 2000 and is expected to reach 29% in 2025. This change has been accompanied by a fast increase in the rate of the elderly population above 60 years of age from 5.4% in 1975 to 5.6% in 2000 and is expected to reach 8.9% in the year 2025. This is reflected in the increase in the absolute numbers of the elderly population from 7.8 million in 1975 to 15.8 million in 2000, and is expected to reach 41.6 million in the year 2025.

Hence, this increase in the elderly population of 3.9% during the next twenty years, will by far exceed the expected general rate of the population growth of 2%.

ARAB ACHIEVEMENTS

For more than three decades, the Arab countries have been addressing the issue of the elderly population following the guidelines of international conferences held by the United Nations. More recently, and on the occasion of the International Year of the Elderly 2002, the ESCWA office in Beirut had prepared an Arab Regional Plan of Action on Ageing to the year 2012 which had been adopted by representatives of the Arab countries.

Since then several achievements were reached, chief among them are:

- Formulated plans of action and established National Committees on ageing
- Adopted policies, took measures, made arrangements, and designed special programs on ageing
- Created governmental departments to deal with ageing issues and to undertake ageing-related studies and research
- Issued identification cards for older persons
- Provided incentives and financial subsidies to families, especially poor families, who are taking care of older persons
- Reduced tariffs imposed on NGOs dealing with the rights of older persons
- Launched media campaigns to raise awareness for ageing issues
- Amended social security and protection systems (safety nets) for older persons
- Provided free health and medical services as well as social, educational and housing services for older persons

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

The Arab Plan of Action on Ageing is:

- Premised on the fundamental principles of
 - Improving the quality of life
 - Building a society for all ages
 - Ensuring the right of all individuals to development
- Based on religious convictions, Arab values and traditions and family cohesion
- Guided by the UN principles relating to strengthening of participation, provision of care, upholding of dignity and independence of older persons.

PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

The Arab Plan of Action on Ageing has been based on the following three priority directions of The Internal Plan of Action on Ageing:

- Pursuit of development goals for an ageing world
- Advancing health and well-being into old age
- Ensuring an enabling and supportive environment for all ages

OBSTACLES

The Arab countries have been facing several obstacles in their attempt in implementing the “Arab Plan of Action on Ageing”:

1. At the level of policies and plans, the followings were among the challenges faced by the Arab countries:

- Failure to accord priority to implementation of the national plan of action on ageing
- Failure to mainstream ageing issues into social and economic policies
- Lack of qualified and trained personnel to formulate comprehensive policies on ageing

- Failure and inadequacy of laws and legislations to keep abreast of developments, such as insurance, health, and social security systems.
- Paucity of funding and failure to allocate requisite budgets to execute programs and plans of action
- Deterioration in the security situation, and political instability

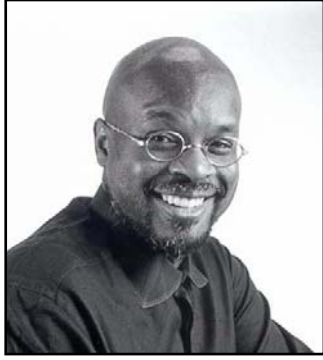
2. At the level of programs and services, the followings are few of the challenges that Arab countries are facing:

- Deficiency in rehabilitation, training and retraining programs for older persons
- Limited financial support to older persons in order to guarantee them adequate income to live a life of dignity
- Limited capacity to meet the increasing demand on social and health services being provided to older persons
- Limited capacity of civil society institutions to share the burden of taking care of older persons
- Failure to accord importance to poor older persons, especially older women
- Discrimination on the basis of age in providing employment opportunities to older persons
- Increase in illiteracy among older persons, particularly older women

PRIORITIES

In order to overcome the above mentioned challenges, the Arab countries have adopted, several priority actions:

- Begin work on implementation of the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012 and the International plan of Action on Ageing 2002, and make the necessary budgetary allocations for that purpose
- Review and update legislation and ageing-related policies, formulate a comprehensive plan on ageing issues and mainstream them into social policies
- Raise awareness in Arab countries of the issue on the ageing population and, in particular of the increase in the proportion of older women or “feminization of ageing”, and make preparations to deal with the issue before it becomes a problem
- Coordinate between the various national parties, with a view to dealing with ageing-related issues and creating the necessary mechanisms; and focus on the integration of the role of the family, civil society and Governments in caring for older persons
- Encourage older persons, as human capital, to continue their contributions to productive work; and guarantee them employment opportunities
- Review and restructure social security and protection schemes and security programs, design them to meet the actual needs of older persons and introduce health insurance for such persons
- Provide additional Government support in order to enable families to take care of older persons and provide older persons with housing
- Empower older women and, in particular, poor older women, and formulate socio-economic empowerment programs for that purpose
- Put in place legally authoritative measures with a view to alleviating poverty and addressing the negative impact of armed conflicts, violence and displacement on older persons, in particular older women
- Support activities of civil society institutions including NGOs as a basic partner in the process of development



"Born Antonio McDaniel and raised in the housing projects of Oakland, CA, in the 1970s he embraced the name Tukufu Zuberi, Swahili for "beyond praise" and "strength," he said. "I took the name because of a desire to make and have a connection with an important period where people were challenging what it means to be a human being," Zuberi said.

Dr. **Tukufu Zuberi** is a Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Center for Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He received his B.A. from San Jose State in 1981, his M.A. from Cal State Sacramento in 1985, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1989. At the University of Pennsylvania since 1988, he has served as chair of the Graduate Group in Demography (1995-1998), and as Director of African Studies (1999-2000). He has also been a visiting professor at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

He is the author of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth-Century*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1995; and *Thicker Than Blood: How Racial Statistics Lie*, published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2001. He has just completed a manuscript on the history of Timbuktu, entitled *Timbuktu: Pearl of the African Sea*. He is the series editor of the *General Demography of Africa* (a multi-volume series). He has written more than 40 scholarly articles and co-edited three volumes, he also co-edited a special issue of the December 2000 *Black Scholar* on "Transcending Traditions: African, African Diaspora, and African American Studies in the 21st Century;" and a special issue of March 2000 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* on "The Study of African American Problems: Papers In Honor Of W.E.B. Du Bois," and he is the special editor of a volume of *Race and Society* on Racial Statistics. He is co-editor of the recently published *The Demography of South Africa*, published by New York: M.E. Sharpe. He currently directs the African Census Analysis Project (ACAP), an international collaboration with 30 African nations. And, he is the director of the Center for Africana Studies.

As an internationally-known social scientist, Professor Zuberi has made important contributions in the study of sociology, population studies, and Africana studies. He has received awards for his academic work from the National Institutes of Health, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, and William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Professor Zuberi is a host of the hit PBS series *History Detectives* (currently airing for its fourth season). He has appeared in several documentaries on Africa and African American issues, and on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and FOX, WHYY, MSNBC, and on syndicated programs such as Donahue, and America's Black Forum. He is a guest lecturer at colleges and universities across the country and internationally. <www.tukufuzuberi.com>

AGING IN AFRICA

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen, Organizers of the International Day of Older Persons, distinguished guests, and my fellow panelists. I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to speak on this very important topic of how we improve the quality of life for older persons.

Africa's population is the oldest population on planet Earth, yet population aging in Africa is recent. This travesty is in part a result of Africa's historic relationship with the rest of the world, in part a result of the persistent inequality which exists on the African continent as a consequence of those relationships, and in part a result of the domestic, political, economic, and social problems which have not fostered the most ideal circumstance for transforming this situation. The health revolution, which is one of the prime movers of the increase in the elderly population around the world, arrived in Africa late. In fact, the full impact of this revolution in medical care arrived in Africa at the same time as the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. As a consequence several African nations have experienced reversals in their life expectancy.

The performance and prospects of African nations have generated considerable interest in how population dynamics might interact and influence social change in Africa. As a demographer I'd like to think I have something to say

about that situation; however, I am not sure how much we know. And while data for research on aging in Africa has increased, this research is still in its infancy. I am simply not good at saying a lot where I don't know a lot. I think that knowledge of a problem is not all that is needed to solve the problem; however, implementing solutions without knowledge often leads to solutions that do not solve the problem. It seems to me that it is very important we come to grips with the true nature of what the problem of aging in Africa is before we prescribe solutions or advance what we should do next. In essence, we need more research.

At least generally I know some things about Africa: There are fifty-three different countries, there are eight hundred million people, there are two thousand language and dialects, and in 2050 Africa's population will grow from 1.6 billion to about 2.3 billion. That is double its current size. That represents a growth from thirteen percent of the world's population which is what Africa represents now, to about twenty-one percent of the human population. We have heard how in Europe and the United States old persons receive support from large public or private pensions and health systems. The number of persons aged 60 years or over world-wide will more than triple, increasing from 606 million today to nearly 2 billion by 2050, at which time over 70 percent of them will be living in the developing world. This trend suggests far-reaching consequences that may influence the social and economic structures of societies. In response, many countries are adapting their social and economic policies to the aging structure of their populations, especially with respect to social security. Authors emphasize the dearth of aging research and research materials in Africa and other developing regions. The longitudinal studies that are providing so much detail on health, labor force, and family processes in the United States and other Western countries are rare in Africa. In most of the industrial world older population health is stable or improving, and this is a true advantage and a great accomplishment of humanity. On the other hand, in Africa national support for older persons is primarily a family responsibility. In Africa the family's support for older persons has traditionally been augmented by other informal relationships such as kinship networks or the extended family and social and religious institutions.

With the exceptions like Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa, and the countries in North Africa, African countries often have no other social welfare system because none exists, and when they do exist the benefits they provide are quite minimal. In a typical African nation it would cost about two percent of their GDP to provide universal pension programs; the same amount that is typically spent on the entire health care system of that country. Therefore, in imagining what these social systems might look like in the future, we might consider the current conditions that exist on the continent for the typical country.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, Africa's population is the oldest human population on Earth, yet population aging is only beginning in Africa. Older persons make up a relatively small fraction of the total population, and this proportion will increase. Although that will happen slowly in the foreseeable future the numbers will go up dramatically. Five percent of Africa's population is sixty plus years old. To give you a sense of what this means, the median age of the population of Europe is about 37.7 years. The median age of the population in Africa is about 18.4 years.

While we know very little about the health and the disability of older persons in Africa, we do know that the continent's health gains and life expectancy achieved in the latter half of the twentieth century, when the medical revolution did arrive to Africa, have been eroded substantially by disease and war and economic stagnation all over the continent. In Africa older people have traditionally been viewed in a positive light because of the information and wisdom they possess. Their contributions to society have been respected very much. The family has been resilient and is still intact, but the situation is changing. Some of the situation is changing because of things that are positive. Increased education also means a transformation in relationships which did not have that education before. Migration and urbanization have transformed the relationship of a population which is primarily based in the rural area, and where many of its children, especially the smartest children, are moving to urban areas. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been devastating for many countries in Africa, and the prevalence of malaria as a significant problem continues. Changing sources of information and technology have meant a transformation in many of the traditional relationships that exist throughout the continent. These not only affect how elections occur, they affect how people communicate with each other.

At least three dimensions of the burden on the elderly population have changed in dramatic ways as a consequence of this situation. (1) The burden on the elderly population increases because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and regional conflicts. (2) The extended family has become overburdened and in some situations ineffective. (3) Increasingly the elderly are becoming the principal caretakers and caregivers for children as the impact of the

HIV/AIDS pandemic is felt even more so. These changing circumstances have had a profound impact on the living arrangements of the elderly themselves.

These changes have been quite different for men and women. For example, one of the findings that is beginning to consistently be found in several African nations where the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been most dramatic, is that when children are orphaned or when the father dies, the children continue to live with their mother. When the mother dies, the children tend to go and live with their grandparents. What that ultimately means is there is a burden on grandparents. In Africa, more than likely the only grandparent that is alive is the grandmother given the mortality differences which exist and the low life expectancy of the overall population as it is. Hence, the aging process has this other dimension of being a gendered process on the African continent as a consequence of some of the demographic pressures on the very state of the population currently. The changing nature of family support and social networks, especially in nations hard hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, really beg for solutions which address them specifically.

It is very important to distinguish between those problems of aging and the problems that confront older persons; that is, there are definitely some issues of aging and even in my young 47 years I know about some of them very personally. However, those problems are quite different than some of the issues which elderly populations are confronted with which have to do with the social conditions they exist in and the ability of the society to respond to the changing social circumstances. If you exist in circumstances where the family had a responsibility which it can no longer continue to assume, then it must be the responsibility of the state to step up to the plate. I mentioned briefly that most African countries do not have a noncontributory social pension program for the elderly population. It seems quite logical, given the circumstances of the increased responsibility of this segment of the population for taking care of grandchildren, and even adult children, that noncontributory social pensions for the extremely poor is part of a process of nationalizing or creating such programs for the general population.

Demographers think of a burden on a population as coming from two sources, the children who are not productive and the elderly who have ceased producing. Now that's not all of the elderly, and we heard today how this age is pushed further and further up and how many people who are part of the older population want to continue to be productive in the population. However, in Africa in places where the HIV/AIDS epidemic has hit, it has removed a substantial and significant portion of the population which normally would be taking care of these dependent populations. Now children have not and do not have the capability of assuming these responsibilities; however, the elderly population does and has.

In Africa, this situation is quite interesting. One doesn't get a clear sense of what it means to be part of the elderly population, because understanding the elderly really requires a social definition. Demographically, from my point of view, you might define it as sixty to sixty-five years of age simply for the fact of understanding that these numbers are very low on the African continent. By the time you get up to seventy or seventy-five you are talking about a very, very small fraction of the entire population. However, being a member of the older persons in African society entails many political, cultural, and social responsibilities, and is not only due to a person being between the ages of sixty and sixty-five.

As I end let me say that, in addition to the provision of noncontributory social pension programs for the extremely poor, especially extremely poor grandparents taking care of children, there needs to be some way of providing child welfare benefits for older persons caring for orphaned children. One of the biggest growing segments of living arrangements in Africa are those arrangements where children are living with their grandparents, and where their grandparents are their primary caretakers.

I'll just end with one more note. It seems to me that the aging of the African population is occurring, although it is occurring at a much slower rate than it is in the rest of the world. However, one thing that is growing is the social responsibilities of the elderly population in Africa. It appears that the social circumstances, the medical climate, the political climate has created conditions which put an ever increasing burden on the elderly population. It would be good if national organizations were in place in African countries which sought to represent the interests of the elderly population, and sought to advocate their well-being and social development and to protect their rights and freedoms as they increase their social responsibilities.

Thank you very much.



Rajul Mehta is the Founder-Director of Bombay-based NGO, outrEACH (Outreach Trust), and its main representative at the United Nations.

Ms. Mehta is a visual communications professional who started her career with advertising and graphic design followed by a stint in filmmaking. Her documentary “Kumbharwada, Bombay (Potters’ Colony)” celebrates the spirit of life in the largest slums in Asia, and has won 13 awards at 35 international film festivals.

In order to put these skills to purposeful use, Ms. Mehta founded outrEACH in 1999, with a mission to communicate and impact positive social change. Her first major cause and project was to raise awareness about Elder Abuse. This concept was executed in partnership with the Times of India, in the form of a participatory press campaign in 2000. Since then, Ms. Mehta has presented the outcome of this initiative at various UN conferences, including the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in 2002.

Ms. Mehta’s future projects include documentaries and training modules on Elder Abuse. Another ambitious project Ms. Mehta is excited about is Product Design for the Elderly and the Disabled, to help improve the quality of life. This would stimulate design thinking to integrate and include older persons more fully, as productive members of the community.

Ms. Mehta has also represented International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) at the UN, and is closely associated with the NGO Committee on Ageing.

Remarks

Thank you so much. It is such a privilege to be here and a privilege to talk to all of you, many of whom I come to listen to, here, at the UN.

I have a feeling I have to zoom through this presentation, so I’m going to rattle off a few numbers. I think you are aware that right now, the population of India is over a billion. About 81 million, or 8% of these people are older and a very large number—around 80% of older people live in rural India. But I’m going to talk more about Bombay, the city that I come from.

Bombay is a city of about 14 million people, where 45–48%, or nearly half the population lives in slums. In a discussion about improving the quality of life, even if we provide just the basic necessities like water, electricity, sanitation, and medical services to people who live in these slums, that itself will be a huge step towards achieving our goal. If infrastructure is improved, life will be easier for everybody, and more so for older people because they find it doubly difficult to deal with these issues while ageing.

With housing, I’m going to quickly step up from the lowest income group to the middle class—from slums to *chawls*. *Chawls* are typically 4–5 storey buildings, with about 10–20 tenements on each floor. Families living in each of these one or two-room tenements have their own bathrooms, but share a common block of 4–5 latrines on their floor. There is increased interaction between neighbours, who are more like an extended family. It’s an open house, open-door system, where you say hello to aunty next door, and without hesitation, walk in for a taste of what she’s cooking. In a *chawl*, companionship comes at no extra cost and mutual support is always available in emergencies. This was a way of life some years ago, but it’s less popular now.

Things changed, and now the flat system—or the apartment system—is more in demand, where there is definitely more privacy, but privacy has come at the expense of security. It has also brought in some other issues like loneliness and isolation. With this lack of companionship and lack of space in small flats (as real estate values are very high in Bombay), sometimes, older people feel unwanted in their own house.

But Indians are resilient and we find ways around everything. A very positive new outcome of this situation—it's not so new anymore—this happened in 1999, in the year of older persons. The first park, affectionately called *Nana-Nani Park*, opened up in Bombay. "Nana-Nani" means Grandfather-Grandmother. It's a park for senior citizens, open from 5a.m. to 10p.m., and this was just the beginning. There are, now, over 30 *Nana-Nani Parks* in Bombay, where free tea is served with a smile, free yoga classes are offered, and even some medical check-ups take place in these parks. Bombay speaks many languages, so free newspapers in various languages are available to read in the park. It would be nice if mobile libraries with books in large print were also introduced, primarily keeping older people in mind. This is a need that has yet to be recognized in India. Also, in a park like this and in the rest of Bombay, facilities like public toilets would certainly help.

Turning now to the lighter side, Laughter Clubs have opened up, bringing the young and old together. A Laughter Club is where people get together in a park, stand not too far away, not too close—at a comfortable distance from each other—they hold up their hands and just laugh. This goes on for something like 20 minutes. These are popular clubs!

The person who started with this concept in 1995, believes that laughter is the best medicine. It releases stress, it lifts your spirits—it affects your lungs, your mood, everything. At this point, I believe there are over a hundred Laughter Clubs all over the country, probably about fifty in the city of Bombay itself. Religion is, of course, another thing senior citizens find comforting.

The minister who initiated *Nana-Nani Parks* also had a brilliant idea—it's an idea, and I hope it will be implemented sometime soon. In every new building, if it's mandatory for building owners to allot one apartment to senior citizens, then they could go and relax there for a few hours anytime. But this is a city where we have issues like landlords who don't allow the use of the elevator to go down. This makes it harder for senior citizens to continue to stay active.

But if a place is built taking older people into consideration, it would be helpful. There are retirement communities coming up, mostly for non-resident Indian (NRI)'s parents. These are new design initiatives, where buildings are being designed with non-slip tiles, grab-bars, and other basic essentials that are easier for younger people to take for granted, e.g., chairs with arm-rests. When older people want to get up, it's more practical to have chairs with arm-rests. It would also be good to have phones with larger buttons, calling bells and other important items.

One of outREACH's future projects is Universal Design especially with respect to the elderly and the disabled. Currently, there are no products like reachers and grabbers, although a few mobility aids are available.

It's important for the younger generation to be sensitized, and if these things are introduced at the curriculum level—specifically in Design curriculum and in the medical community—that would undoubtedly help integrate and include the senior citizen in everyday life.

In terms of mobility, it is intimidating to take public transportation in a city like Bombay, which is so overcrowded. If roads were more pedestrian-friendly, it would be less challenging for a senior citizen to venture out. My mother prefers to go out less now, because roads are dug up almost everywhere.

I believe curb cuts found on sidewalks here (originally intended for the disabled) took a lot of struggle to be implemented. I truly hope that something like that comes to India, but first we need pavements (sidewalks) that are non-threatening; foot-bridges that are not uneven. Each step is equal to the next, and these stairs are not chipped after torrential monsoon rains. This means keeping pace and coping with disaster on an ongoing basis. There are situations that even younger people find difficult to maneuver, and these are that much more difficult for older people.

Some solutions that don't require additional financial resources, can be based on lessons learned from success stories. Our local train service, the lifeline of Bombay, is one to talk about. It transports around 6 million commuters on a daily basis. It's quite a sight to see—women wrapping up their *saris* tight when a train is about to arrive at the station, tension written all over their faces, in a race to hop onto the ladies' compartment. But in 1992, "Ladies Special" trains were introduced to alleviate this problem. This peak-hour train, which is only for women, runs once in the morning and once in the evening. "Ladies Special" has made a considerable difference to female commuters.

For senior citizens, it would be a good start to reserve a compartment. At present, there are totally only about 10–15 seats for senior citizens scattered throughout the train, which means they have to compete with aggressive young commuters. After “7/11”, or Bombay train bomb blasts last July, you may have seen recent pictures; and noticed how trains are brimming over with people. These traveling conditions are even more terrifying for older people.

In New York, it’s good to see buses that are designed to accommodate the disabled person with a wheelchair, buses that bend down for older people, so they don’t have to step too high. This level of accessibility and user-friendliness is out of question with our present infrastructure in India. But even with our existing buses, it is possible to address this issue. Many senior citizens in Bombay now carry a senior citizen’s ID card. It would be a good idea to have a separate queue regulated by BEST (Bombay Electrical Supply & Transport) or traffic police, which allows only senior citizens to travel by “Senior Special” buses. These buses can be run at certain fixed, off-peak hours, so that older people don’t have to worry about being pushed around or falling off a jam-packed bus.

This would increase mobility which, in turn, would increase freedom and visibility for senior citizens, and that would certainly increase participation and inclusion in every way.

I’m very pleased that recently, Bollywood movies have taken up some issues of older people, and these have been really well-received by Indian audiences. This means that India is very open to the idea of continuing to treat senior citizens with respect. At the same time, on our over a hundred cable channels, even if one or two minutes of television time is allotted to raise awareness and promote positive images of senior citizens on a daily basis, it would go a long way. This way, we will not forget lifelong contributions of senior citizens, who have made contributions in the past, and who are perfectly capable of making further contributions, even in future.

Thank you.

LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF MRS. NANE ANNAN

Remarks by Mrs. Nane Annan
(At the 1:00pm Luncheon in Her honor)



*Left to right: Dr. Florence Denmark (Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing)
with Mrs. Nane Annan and Mr Kofi Annan*

Dr. Florence Denmark (Introduction)

It is my pleasure to introduce Mrs. Nane Annan, who is an honorary member of the Committee on Ageing. Today, we were also fortunate and honored to hear from Secretary General Kofi Annan who paid us a surprise visit and addressed the group.

Nane Annan, a strong supporter of our Committee and an artist in her own right, opened the “Ageless” art exhibit”, which followed the 2003 IDOP. She also attended several of our other events.

The Committee on Ageing is pleased to present this gift to you, Mrs. Annan, and to wish you and the Secretary General many happy and productive years after you leave the UN. We hope you will visit the New York Committee on Ageing whenever your travels permit.

Mrs. Nane Annan

Thank you, Florence, for your very kind words, Excellencies, Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today to celebrate the International Day for Older Persons. It is always a delight to attend your events, and this is my last time to join you in this role, so it is especially meaningful.

I am touched to receive this honour, although I feel I have no special claim to it, other than being a person, a woman, growing old myself. But this is something I share with an ever-growing number of people around the world, and a sufficient reason for becoming involved, arguing for society to reckon with us, to protect and care for us when needed, but also for us to remain active, mentally and physically, for our own sake and as the best preventive health care. Because how can we judge people by age only, when there are so many other more interesting qualities to note, like being caring, fun, knowledgeable or full of interesting experiences? Growing old is not just a passive passing of time, and I think it is curiosity that makes the difference, that provides that extra spice.

I am going through my papers now and I found again this delightful memory of an 87-year-old woman in a *hutong* in China who sent me beautiful cut-outs she made, as greetings for the International Women’s Day. We had met two years earlier in Beijing.

During the last year’s Summit here in New York, I met the world’s oldest primary school student, Kimani [Ng’ang’a]. He was from a village in Kenya. At 83, he had decided to take advantage of the opportunity to go to school for the first time when the government removed school fees for primary school. He was full of beans and absolutely delightful. My husband and I were privileged to attend the 2002 World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid.

This time it was his birthday, his 64th and the headlines were his quote by the Beatles: “Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I’m 64?”

He grew up in a society in which old age was revered. When talking about his childhood, he would invariably refer to his elders as a source of wisdom and inspiration. I am telling you this because I firmly believe that we have to start with appreciating our elders and we have to regard ourselves as useful members of society. I think this is crucial, especially for women, as we grow older.

I have so often spoken about the importance of girls’ education as a way of empowering them to become full participants in society. We should not forget that educated women probably also become healthier, older women. Because the feminization of poverty and the feminization of elderly poor is, of course, due to the fact that women have not been part of the economy that gives income, pension, health benefits, or self-esteem.

Women have too often been seen as part of the informal sector, caring for the family – the domestic workers. From being invisible without self-esteem they easily fall prey to abuse and violence as they grow old and frail. From having been caregivers, they would not dare to ask for care. In fact, they may rise again to new demands of care, this time for their grandchildren, especially if their children die prematurely of AIDS.

I have also spoken about violence against women, an issue which has been undercover for so long but which, thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, has squarely been put on the agenda. And I believe we have to make an extra effort for the most vulnerable group, older women.

What is particularly haunting is that many older persons are being abused or neglected by the very people who are supposedly caring for them, both at home and in institutions. Should the frailty of a person, who has lived a long life, invite violence and abuse? Let’s think again.

And so I do want to thank the AARP for your kindness and generosity in helping to sponsor this event and for your steadfast support to the NGO Committee on Ageing. And to all of you, thank you for everything that you are doing to support and encourage older persons and to advocate on their behalf. Above all, thank you for being such marvelous role models for how life can be lived in the “third age”.

Thank you very much.

[Mrs. Annan presented Florence Denmark with a personal note, a picture, and some artwork after the luncheon.]

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NGO Committee on Ageing
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International Day of Older Persons Committee, 2006

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Aging in America
All India Women's Conference
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Armenian International Women's Assoc., Inc.
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Global Action on Aging
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South County Senior Services, Inc
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U.S. Conference of Religions for Peace
United Health Network, Inc
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Women's Association for Better-Aging Society, NY
World Council of Conservative Synagogues
WFUNA
World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations
World Union for Progressive Judaism
World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations
Zonta International

Acknowledgements

The presentation you viewed as you entered today's conference is the beginning of

Inner Age: A Portrait Project

by Annie Levy

The project will be expanded to ask/answer questions about aging from a variety of perspectives, cultures and segments of society through the lives of different people.

“How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?”

This is the question posed to those depicted in this portion of the project – a visual celebration of older people.



About Annie Levy:

Annie Levy documents and brings to life, the experience and stories of ordinary people through the art of portraiture in its variety of forms – image/text, exhibit/installation, presentation/performance. With a special focus on the lives of older adults, she is committed to creating works for both innovative and traditional venues that inspire, educate and influence public opinion and perception.

Her current projects include working with Strategic Communications & Planning of Wayne, PA to develop an image bank related to older adults and health, as well as associated training, for the grantees of the John A. Hartford Foundation in New York City. Additionally, she is working on the development of an intergenerational photo workshop curriculum.

Examples of Ms. Levy's work include her exhibit, AGELESS which was the featured show at the United Nations for the 2003 International Celebration of Aging as well as work commissioned by The Frick Collection for their "Art of Observation" program. With an additional interest in enlivening non-traditional settings with exhibits, her projects of this nature include a permanent installation at Roosevelt Hospital, a 100-portrait project for the Hebrew Home for the Aged, and an installation for the 30th anniversary of Covenant House.

Mandolin Orchestra

Glen Ridge, New Jersey

Gabriel Nevola, *Conductor*

Arthur Coppola

John Elliot

Olympia Fiedler

Carol Franz

Russ Kelner

Peter Longo

Annamaria Menconi

Jay Posipanko

Amiable Ross Ybasco



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to the 2006 Celebration of the International Day of Older Persons*