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NGO Committee on Ageing events October 2018 – September 2019

10 October 2018 * Celebration of International Day of Older Persons

Topic: **We are the Champions: celebrating Human Rights of Older Persons**

Welcome remarks: Ms. Janet Sigal, Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing, New York
Mr. James O'Neal, Chair, UNIDOP Programme Sub-Committee, NGO Committee on Ageing in New York

General remarks: H.E. Mr. Martín García Moritán, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Argentina to the United Nations.
H.E. Mr. Milenko Skoknic, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Chile to the United Nations on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons.

Video: **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Moderator: **Mr. Craig Mokhiber**, Director, New York Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights

Panelists: **Mr. Jose Alejandro Luchsinger**, Director, Center on Aging and Health Disparities, Columbia University Medical Center, USA
Ms. Helen Codd, Professor of Social Justice and Law, University of Central Lancashire, England
Ms. Miroslava Matic, Volunteer Member, Red Cross Kragujevac Branch, Serbia.
Mr. Jeffrey Gardere, Psychologist and Talk Show Host, USA

Closing session: **Ms. Lahya Itedhimbwa Shikongo**, Rapporteur of the General Assembly's ninth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing
Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief, Programme on Ageing Unit, UNDESA

The 2018 UNIDOP celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and aimed to enshrine and promote, engage and mobilize advocates for the human rights of older persons. The 2018 celebration explored new directions in celebrating the human rights of older persons by honoring individual champions of human rights worldwide, in addition to exploring other efforts to fight ageism, understanding the sexuality of older adults, and urging the need to adopt a human rights approach for incarcerated older persons.

Video and report can be accessed on the NGO CoA website: ngocoa-ny.org.

1 November 2018

Topic: Addressing Inequalities Experienced by LGBTIQ Older Persons

Speakers: Patrick Aitcheson, Chief of Staff, SAGE: Advocacy and Services for LGBTI Elders
Siri May, UN Coordinator, Outright Action International
Moderator: Vincent Taccetta, Intern at the Unitarian Universalist Association and graduate student at Columbia University School of Social Work.

Discrimination against LGBTI older persons, at national and international levels, was addressed. Mr. Aitcheson spoke about the work of the SAGE organization which advocates for the right of LGBT elders to live with dignity and respect. LGBT older adults are less likely than their heterosexual peers to reach out to care providers, senior centers, meal programs and other entitlement programs because of discriminatory practices against them.

Ms. Siri May spoke about her work on behalf of OutRight Action International, which is the only LGBTI organization that has gained consultative status with ECOSOC. Currently 71 countries criminalize LGBTI – 8 of them have the death penalty. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights addresses LGBTIQ issues; there is an Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Topic United Nations World Data Forum

Ms. Erica Dhar (AARP) presented a report on the work of the UN World Data Forum (first held in Dubai in Cape Town, South African from 15-18 January 2017; the second in the United Arab Emirates from 22-24 October 2018 in Dubai). The Forum was established following the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's Independent Expert and Advisory Group on Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, in order to intensify cooperation with various professional groups, such as information technology, geospatial information managers, data scientists, and users, as well as civil society stakeholders.

6 December 2018

Topic: Social Protection and Older Persons

Speakers: Ms. Winifred Doherty, Main NGO Representative to the United Nations, The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.
Mr. Barry Herman, Social Justice in Global Development
Ms. Wendl Kornfeld, Gray Panthers and the Radical Age Movement

Ms. Doherty drew attention to the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women at its 63rd session in February 2019, will be discussion social protection issues in the context of women and girls. She pointed out that current economic, social and political climate gives much cause for concern. Pension coverage is still lower among older women than among older men primarily because women generally live longer and because of the life-long disadvantages women experience, including in the labor market.

Mr. Herman discussed macroeconomic policy requirements that set constraints on public sector spending frameworks and annual budgets. However, he pointed out that options exist to internationally guarantee that requisite funds would be mobilized for the certified social protection floors regardless of crisis or austerity imperatives.

Ms. Kornfeld focused on the local level and discussed her work with older adults who do not have close family and are "ageing solo", either by design, location or situation. Her "Community as Family" project helps those who want to know how to age independently with better

knowledge of and access to critical resources, and to deepen their community ties and create a virtual family.

10 January 2019

Topic: Highlights of work from two members of the NGO Committee on Ageing

Speakers: **Dr. Toni Antonucci**, Secretary-General, International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, and Douvan Collegiate Professor of Psychology, Research Professor, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan
Dr. Michael Splaine, Principal of Splaine Consulting, and member, Alzheimer's Disease International

Dr. Antonucci explained that the mission of IAGG is to promote the highest levels of achievement in gerontological research and training worldwide, and to interact with other international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the promotion of gerontological interests globally. IAGG's members are national or multi-national gerontological and/or geriatrics organizations (societies). The IAGG holds a World Congress every four years, to exchange experience and knowledge. The 22nd Congress will be held in 2021 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Dr. Splaine gave a briefing on advocacy: immediate and long-term goals; resources; constituents and allies; decision-makers and opponents; tactics. He stressed the need for facts (evidence, data etc), faces (diversity necessary), and champions (to help push the cause).

Briefings were also given by members of the NGO COA Executive Committee on upcoming intergovernmental meetings: Commission for Social Development (11-12 February 2019); Commission on the Status of Women (11-22 March 2019; and the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (15-18 April 2019, as well as the pre meeting workshop on 14 April 2019).

11-18 February 2019, Commission for Social Development

The NGO COA sponsored a side event organized by the International Federation on Ageing on the topic of "Fostering Resilience across the Life Course through Universal Health Coverage", held on 12 February 2019.

11-22 March 2019, 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The NGO COA co-sponsored side events organized by:

- a. HelpAge International and Age International on "Every woman matters" held on 14 March;
- b. the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse on "Social Protection: Preventing Violence and Exploitation of Older Women/Widows" held on 15 March.
- c. The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues on "Women Leaders and Decision Makers Across Cultures: Lessons from Psychology, held on 19 March.

The NGO COA also prepared Talking Points for members attending meetings and side events, to ensure inclusion of references to older women.

14 April 2019 Pre-OEWGA meeting

The NGO COA co-organized with the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) a pre-OEWGA workshop to prepare NGOs for their participation in the 10th session of the OEWGA.

For the workshop, the NGO COA distributed brief background notes on ageing issues leading up to the establishment of the OEWGA and its work.

15-18 April 2019. Open-ended Working group on Ageing

The NGO COA co-sponsored side events organized by:

- a. the World Health Organization on “UN Decade of Healthy Ageing”, held on 15 April.
- b. The Stakeholder Group on Ageing/Africa on “Independence, autonomy and rights of older persons in the African context”, held on 17 April.
- c. The International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics on “Global Progress through Education, Training, and Life-long Learning: education does not end with childhood”, held on 18 April.

2 May 2019

Topic: **Education and Lifelong Learning: furthering the Global Agenda so Older People are not left behind.**

Speakers: Katrina Popovic, Secretary-General,
Ruth Finkelstein, Executive Director, Brookdale Center on Aging, Hunter College.
Jan Hively, Co-Founder and USA Liaison, The Pass It On Network

Ms. Popovic, who spoke via video link, drew attention to the lack of attention given to life-long learning or to informal learning. Education is a cross-cutting issue across all SDGs to ensure reduction in inequalities and eradication of poverty, in order to leave no one behind, including older persons.

Ms. Finkelstein drew attention to the fact that in addition to Third Age universities, of which there are many around the world, there are now “age-friendly universities” that are not relying on “one-dose” of education, but on providing new knowledge to all, throughout their life-course. Led by Dublin University, the aims include promoting intergenerational learning, promoting personal and career development in the second half of life, supporting those who wish to pursue second careers, and increasing the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.. .

Ms. Jan Hively spoke about building on older adult strengths in order to combat ageism and complementing the needs-based system of medical and social services. She stressed that digital knowledge and access are essential to ensure no one is left behind.

Members were also briefed on the results of the elections for the term 2019-2021; results of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing held 15-18 April 2019; preparations for the High-Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals in July; and preparations for the International Day of Older Persons to be held on 12 October.

6 June 2019 - Celebration of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Topic: **Access to Justice: Legal, social and economic services for older victims of sexual, physical and financial crimes.**

Speakers: **Mr. René Ruidiaz Pérez**, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons;
Ms. Susan Somers, President of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse;

Dr. Ruthy Lowenstein Lazar, Professor of law at the College of Management Academic Studies, Israel, via video;
Ms. Ranjit Jayanti, Guild for Service, India;
Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief, Programme on Ageing Unit, DESA;
Ms. Denise Hauser, OHCHR in New York.

The discussions addressed the alarming fact that elder abuse is a global and growing phenomenon, although its true magnitude is still unknown, due to lack of data, awareness and under-reporting. While both older men and older women face age-based discrimination and abuse, older women also face the additional cumulative effects of gender-based discrimination throughout their lives.

In India, for example, there are still physical assaults on older women, especially older widows, accused of witchcraft. Widows and single older women may still be considered as “ill luck” because of ills that may befall the community - bad harvests, failed rains and conflicts. Witch hunters, usually men, make it their responsibility to identify these women as witches and initiate their abuse emotionally, physically and financially taking over whatever property they own. Education is a huge factor in eliminating cultural superstitions and practices.

It was noted that there is still no explicit prohibition, in international human rights law, of age discrimination and explicit protection against violence, abuse and neglect of older persons. Challenges on access to justice include: invisibility of older persons in the justice system, lack of awareness of their legal rights; lack of effective mechanisms; shame and fear to report abuses; lack of legal aid.

Attention was called to the 9th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing at which normative elements (different components that derive from a human right, the content of the right, and the detail under each right in a new convention) were submitted by Member states, National Human Rights Institutions and NGOs on violence, neglect and abuse.

9-19 July 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

The NGO-COA is a member of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA) which was established to address issues related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The SGA is represented on the Steering Committee of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders that are allowed to participate in official meetings of the HLPF and in this connection, three representatives of members of the SGA were selected to attend and participate at the panel discussions at the 2019 HLPF. The SGA also organized, on 9 July *, a side event on “**Confronting ageism and empowering older people to ensure social, economic and political inclusion of all**”.

The event was moderated by Mr. Paul Ladd, Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Development. Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing Unit/DESA opened the meeting, at which the speakers were:

- **Ambassador Martin Garcia Moritan**, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations
- **Ms. Nasly Bernal Prada**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations
- **Ms. Ashton Applewhite**, author of *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism*
- **Mr. Elie Mugabowishema**, Executive Director and founder of NSINDAGIZA in Rwanda
- **Ms. Karoline Schmid**, Chief of the Fertility and Family Planning Section, UNDESA Population Division
- **Ms. Moana Genevey**, Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies
- **Ms. Katarina Popovic**, Secretary-General, International Council for Adult Education.

12 September 2019

Topic **Protection of older persons' rights and access to justice and remedies**

Speakers **Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh**, Chief, Programme on Ageing Unit, DESA
Ms. Denise Hauser, Equality, Non-discrimination and Rule of Law Section,
OHCHR, NY

Briefings were given by Members of the newly elected Executive Committee of the NGO-COA on plans for the program year beginning September 2019.

NGO Committee on Ageing/NY Executive Committee (2019-2021)

Chair:	Ms. Cynthia Stuen
Vice Chair	Ms. Frances Zainoeddin
Treasurer	Ms. Katie Weiss
Recording Secretary	Ms. Sandra Timmermann
Corresponding Secretary	Ms. Maud Bruce-About
Members at Large	Ms. Erica Dhar, Ms. Ranjit Jayanti, Ms. Nelida Quintero, Ms. Rebecca Tsurumi, Mr. William Smith

NGO Committee on Ageing, Executive Committee (2017-2019):

Chair:	Ms. Janet Sigal
Vice Chair:	Ms. Cynthia Stuen
Treasurer:	Ms. Katie Weiss
Recording Secretary:	Ms. Sandra Timmermann
Corresponding Secretary:	Ms. Martha Bial
Members-at-Large	Ms. Erica Dhar, Ms. Ranjit Jayanti, Ms. Nelida Quintero, Ms. Rebecca Tsurumi, Ms. Frances Zainoeddin

The NGO Committee on Ageing usually meets the first Thursday of the month. Join us by checking out our website and calendar of events. We welcome new members anytime!
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***NOTE:** All official meetings of the United Nations can be seen on UN WebTV, as well as those meetings above marked with *.