



THE NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING

BUILDING A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES



Welcome to the June 2024 Issue of the UN NGO Committee on Ageing/NY Newsletter

What's in this issue?

Our newsletter begins with a message on the result of the eagerly awaited meeting of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), which took place in May 2024. William Smith, our Chairperson, and Dr. Martha Bial, our Committee Chair, summarize the result and the work to come.

The OEWGA will pass the report to the General Assembly with the options that can be selected to push forward the rights of older persons. One of those options is the Convention or Treaty we have been championing. There is work ahead to make sure the process is turned over to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva for further investigation and action.

Martha Bial states, "As we await word that the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing consensus document has arrived at the General Assembly, hopefully, in the current GA session that ends in September, we hope for progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Watch for national reports at the High-Level political forum in July). (HLPF)

The HLPF will be followed by The Summit of the Future (September 23rd and 24th). We will be reporting on issues related to older persons and intergenerational issues as they are addressed at The Summit.

In an era of fraying multinationalism, the Summit hopes to rekindle multilateral cooperation to solve the key social, economic, and political challenges of our time and the foreseeable future. Adriane Berg (Words that are Trending) and Maud Bruce About (Deeper Dive) explore what that means for current and future older persons.

Yours,

Martha Bial, Editor, Chair of Communications for NGOCOA-NY

Dear Members and All Stakeholders in Ageing,

It is with much pleasure that we celebrate the work of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWGA), which, after 14 years, resulted in member states in a consensus vote, acknowledging the completion of the OEWGA mandate and the referral of this work with recommendations back to the General Assembly with a request for next steps.

Our work, however, is not done. We must double our efforts once we know when this matter is taken up by the General Assembly.

It was gratifying to see the many NGOs present for the OEWGA. Civil society indeed made a difference and must continue its advocacy through to completion of a legally binding instrument. For additional information, please refer to the summary of the outcome distributed by the NGO CoA.

Now, our focus is on the HLPF and the September Summit on the Future, which is receiving a lot of attention globally. Thank you for your continued support.

Thank you.

William T. Smith, Ph.D.

Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing/NY



A Deeper Dive: The High Level Political Forum and the Summit of the Future

By Maud Bruce-About, UN Representative, International Federation of the Association of Older People (FIAPA)

This article focuses on both the July 8-17, 2024, High Level Political Forum (HLPF) - the UN's main platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the September Summit of the Future. It is intended to be a background on how these events impact the future of ageing and our advocacy platform.

This year's HLPF takes place at a critical point in time.

The HLPF:

- follows the **2023 SDG Summit**, where Heads of State and Governments not only reaffirmed commitment to the 2030 SDG Agenda but also recognized "[*the urgent need to take the actions necessary to reverse declines and*](#)

accelerate progress.." Summit leaders emphasized the commitment to leave nobody behind - amongst them the presently older persons, children, youth, and women, those who, in effect, constitute the future older persons.

- follows the **2023 review of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)** - which highlighted disparities in implementation within and across regions and the need to ensure meaningful participation of older persons, in general, and in digital literacy, crisis recovery; reinforcement of social protection, access to health and long term care, poverty alleviation, and the fulfillment of the **Open Ended Working Group of Ageing (OEWGA) mandate** to: *"present to the General Assembly, at the earliest possible date, a proposal containing, inter alia, the main elements that should be included in an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, which are not currently addressed sufficiently by existing mechanisms and therefore require further international protection."*
- precedes both the **September 2024 Summit of the Future (SoF)** - aimed *"to forge an international consensus on how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future"* and the [2025 World Social Summit](#).

From our ageing stakeholder perspective, expectations on the Pact for the Future include that it focuses on and promotes "societies for all ages" and that intergenerational solidarity is understood as cohesion between generations.

We have an advocacy opportunity to strengthen the implementation of existing global and regional commitments for older people, including the human rights dimensions of Agenda 2030, to ensure that policies support and forward principles of independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment, and dignity.

The Focus of the HLPF

Hence, in this context, the July HLPF - with the overarching theme *"Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions"*, will focus on SDG 1 - End poverty; SDG 2 - End hunger; Goal 13 - Combat climate change and its impact; Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for Sustainable development and Goal 17 - Strengthen means of implementation and partnerships; and also provide the opportunity for a number of countries to report their advancement towards the SDGs.

As you know from our [January 2024 Newsletter](#), which focused on poverty in general and among older persons - the world has recently seen years of progress in poverty and hunger eradication vanish, and meanwhile - although inequalities between countries might have decreased - inequalities within most countries have increased since the 1980s.

As a consequence, inequality now risks *"widening disparities in both health and life expectancy among future cohorts of older persons."* as bases for discrimination and exclusion intersect and accumulate throughout life.

As we also point out in our [January 2024 Newsletter](#), there is sadly, the idea that future generations should not pay the consequences of actions by present generations - fair and appropriate in the climate context - has spilled over into the field of ageing, making discussions not only ageist but also diverting attention from economic, social, cultural and environmental inequalities and other barriers that need to be addressed to avoid multidimensional poverty throughout the lifespan and an increased number of poor older persons in the future.

Currently, over the last 40 years, governments - due to previous choices - have found themselves with less money in their hands for distribution and must make tough choices. In fact, while the net worth of most nations' private citizens has grown, governments have become poorer, and the share of wealth held by public actors is now close to zero or negative in rich countries, with the totality of wealth held in private hands, [a trend aggravated during COVID](#).

In this context, ageism - in minds, statistics, data, algorithms, and political choices - pits age groups against each other and, because of focus on the cost side - health care and pensions - hides the contribution of older persons to Sustainable Development and disregards the potential positive income and outcomes of a Longevity Economy.

As reported in our [April 2022 Newsletter](#), the reality is that - however we bend it and whatever we choose to see - we all live or will be living in ageing societies. Overall, the number of persons aged 65 years or more will reach 1.6 billion and account for 16 percent of the world population in 2050, meaning that by one in six people you meet will be aged sixty-five or older, compared to one in 11 today.



One can claim that societies age at different paces, but one cannot disregard the fact that all societies' populations will age.

Indeed, currently, longevity is the furthest advanced in Europe, Northern America, Australia, New Zealand, and most of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia,

with the proportion of older persons exceeding 10 to 20 % of the total population.

Most other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania are still in an early stage of this transition, while most countries in Central and Southern Asia, Western Asia and Northern Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean are at an intermediate stage.

However, according to the [World Social Report](#). The geography of the world's oldest countries will shift from Europe towards Eastern and South-Eastern Asia between now and 2050, when the latter is expected to include five of the ten oldest populations. Among regions, Northern Africa, Western Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to experience the fastest growth in the number of older people over the next three decades.

Hence, to manage in the context of celebrating and enjoying longevity, the time is now to include life-course and ageing considerations in political choices and policies. ...and this must be done together, inter-generationally!!!

As pointed out in our [March 2023 Newsletter](#) on social inclusion, nobody is better placed than older persons to share the lived experience of their conditions and their view on how they wish to live and be cared for.

Again, as the young of today are the older persons of tomorrow, it is also vital that the young of today integrate "old age" when planning and politicizing the society that will be their future, as pointed out in our [September 2023 Newsletter](#).

Coming back to the upcoming HLPF, if references to older persons are scarce in the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs), some relevant targets - health, nutrition, education, and combatting poverty - refer to people of all ages with the intention of leaving nobody behind.

Our hope is that countries presenting their progress towards the SDGs will include life-course and ageing in political choices and policies. We ask YOU to strongly object and advocate with every tool at your disposal, including oral statements and questions if they don't!! We are here to support your advocacy efforts.

Words That Are Trending: "Future"-What Policy Relevance Does the Word Future Have for Older Persons?

By Adriane Berg, a Representative to the United Nations from the International Federation on Ageing, Board Member of The UN Global NGO Executive Committee (GNEC), Host of On The Ground, the podcast of GNEC.



The word Future must be examined in the context of the September 2024 Summit of the Future. We have a unique opportunity to shape a world where age does not limit one's potential. Let's ensure our vision of the Future includes everyone, from the youngest to the oldest.

Background

In a landmark move on September 8, 2022, the UN General Assembly announced The Summit of the Future, set for September 22-23, 2024. The [Summit](#) aims to arrive at a forward-thinking document, "A Pact for the Future," shaped by intergovernmental consensus. The Pact will be "agreed in advance by consensus through intergovernmental negotiations."

Germany and Namibia, The Summit's co-facilitators, have already fueled the dialogue with a preliminary draft. This draft aims to lay the groundwork for ambitious and actionable commitments from nations worldwide.

As part of decision 77/568, the General Assembly has pledged to adopt a Declaration on Future Generations, potentially annexed to the Pact for the Future. The Summit promises to be inclusive, welcoming voices from civil society, member states, businesses, and diverse organizations. Check out Maud Bruce About's detailed article in this newsletter for an in-depth look.

Goals For The Summit Of The Future Does Not Mention Older Persons

The Summit draws inspiration from the UN Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report, urging a unified effort toward the Declaration on Future Generations. This initiative echoes the UN75 Declaration (RES/75/1), where world leaders committed to bolstering global governance for the benefit of both present and future generations. **Older persons are never mentioned in the variety of goals set.**

Although the omission of any consideration of older persons does not come as a surprise, it is alarming when looking at a Summit designed to craft a new and better future for all.

The agenda shows a complete lack of vision and recognition that we all live on an age continuum. The crucial voices of younger people, particularly women, are likely to be snuffed out as they age. Most egregious is the separation of

any thought process from the science of aging, which now opens the possibility of 115-year life presently being examined in such places as Stanford University, attempting to map the life course for the Future of Ageing.

Here again, we see a trending word, Future, as a culprit standing in the way of a better life for all as we enter the untapped country of modern older age.

In an ageist society, your chronological birth date is a large dictator of your fate in the Future. Why bother including us in this Summit for the Future if we don't have one? Fortunately, there is a semantic solution to this word problem. It emerges from three ways of seeing the Future as it relates to older people, including those in very advanced years.

Bridging Generations for a Shared Future by Redefining Future

A Vision for Aging: Three Futures

Basic Human Needs Model: The Disney-created Carousel of Progress introduced at the 1964 New York World's Fair was epitomized by the catchy tune "It's a Great Big, Beautiful Tomorrow." It imagined a future where technology enhances every aspect of life, including for older adults. As we plan for the Future, we must ensure that advancements in health, housing, longevity medicine, food, clothing, healthcare, and digital literacy are accessible to all, especially older adults who may struggle financially.

We must look at the work of this Summit of the Future, including policies for basic human needs as we age. Therefore, at the Summit of the Future, it is essential to address aging issues not just for those today but for tomorrow. If policies regarding the basic needs of older people are not met today, they will not be met for generations to come. Young people do not stay younger forever.

Social Justice Model: This model envisions a future with systemic changes in public policies, laws, and regulations, fostering sustainable social justice for all generations. Implementing this framework now ensures a just and equitable future for all. To realize a future defined by social justice, a human rights convention is needed that assures older adults' voices are heard. Governments have the obligation and must be required to protect rights, all leading to greater social justice to create a viable place in society for older persons.

Advocates for the rights of older persons envision Future policy-making free of the current systemic ageism that permeates public policies, laws, regulations, and their implementation. Once the ageist framework in decision-making is transformed for today's older adults, it will become sustainable for future generations.

Transformative Vision: Envisioning a transformative Future means imagining a world where age does not dictate a person's values or rights. In this ideal Future, systemic ageism disappears, and policies naturally include all ages without specific mention. This transformative approach could lead to a society where everyone is equally valued and integrated regardless of age.

Imagine the Future of Ageing where age itself is not essential. In today's rubric, this is hard to imagine. What if all rights, all policies, all social attitudes, and all the ways that we personally, politically, and culturally see the world were age-agnostic? In a transforming future, all people, regardless of age, would be free of assumptions about their age, and how many years one still has on the planet would be irrelevant to their importance in the social structure.

Call to Action

To secure a future that truly benefits all generations, The Summit of the Future must address the needs and rights of older adults today. We can advocate for a more inclusive and equitable world by highlighting this gap. Let's use The Summit as a platform to ensure that the Future we build is one where everyone, regardless of age, has a place and a voice.

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