

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ON AGEING

THE MONTREAL DECLARATION

This document is the result of more than a year of deliberations and input from member groups of the International Federation on Ageing throughout the world. A draft was presented and reviewed at the IFA Fourth Global Conference on Ageing in Montreal, Canada. More than 1200 participants from 68 countries were involved in the final editing of the document. It was officially released and turned over to the United Nations Aging Unit at the closing plenary session of the Conference on Wednesday, September 8, 1999.

Preamble

The world is facing unprecedented demographic change. In the next 30 years the world's population of older persons is expected to triple, with much of this increase taking place in developing countries. All societies are enriched by their older people and demographic change will increase the potential for even greater benefits.

Ageing is a natural process of life. Older persons are a valuable resource. They are the repositories of tradition, culture, knowledge and skills. These attributes are essential in maintaining intergenerational links.

The vast majority of older persons make vital contributions to their societies, families and communities as workers, caregivers, volunteers, mentors and as active citizens.

There is an increase in inequalities between developing and developed countries, between rural and urban environments and within individual countries.

The United Nations and its member states need to develop strategies with realistic goals and measurable objectives so as to ensure that the world's population ages well and that older persons' needs for a secure and productive future are met.

As we assemble in Montreal in September 1999 at the Fourth Global Conference of the International Federation on Ageing, we note with concern that the 1991 UN Principles

for Older Persons are still not universally recognized nor adhered to; neither has the 1982 Vienna International Plan of Action been fully implemented.

Therefore,

We, the older people throughout the world, our families and colleagues, universally call upon the United Nations and its agencies to work with national governments, non-governmental organizations, the corporate, private and voluntary sectors, in addressing the following urgent issues.

Issues

Many older persons throughout the world lack access to the essentials of life as the result of discrimination on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, race, gender or religion, or because of employment practices and legislative barriers.

Women, as the majority of the ageing population, suffer disproportionately from poverty, poor health and isolation.

Older persons with disabilities face cultural and socio-economic barriers which impact on their quality of life.

Developing countries face the most rapid rate of population ageing and the greatest economic difficulties, but lack the necessary financial, social and health infrastructures to address these issues.

The devastating effects of conflict and illnesses such as AIDS have drastically altered the population structure of some countries, exposing older persons to greater vulnerability.

Changes in family patterns, structures and life styles can have a detrimental impact on older persons.

Principles

We reaffirm the 1982 Vienna International Action Plan on Ageing, then the 1990 IFA Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities of Older Persons, and the 1991 UN Principles for the Elderly.

Older persons have the right to self-determination and fulfillment, dignity and respect, personal security, freedom of speech, association, and religious expression.

Older persons have the right of access to work, income, health care and shelter.

The responsibilities of older persons include contributing to the realization of these rights by participating in the political processes of their community in accordance with UN democratic principles.

The empowerment of older persons necessitates their recognition as full participants and equal citizens in society.

Recommendations

We, the older persons of the world:

- Call upon the United Nations General Assembly in this era of rapid ageing of the world's population to declare a Decade of Older Persons;
- Call upon on the United Nations to strongly urge each member state to adopt a National Plan on Ageing (as suggested in the UN National Targets on Ageing) that must include older persons in its development and strategies for implementation. National Plans should pay special attention to issues of gender, ethnicity, and diversity;
- Call upon the United Nations to convene a World Assembly on Ageing in five years to review the progress achieved by individual member states in the adoption and implementation of their National Plan on Ageing;
- Call upon the United Nations to assure that ageing concerns be systematically incorporated into the agendas, products and research of all relevant United Nations commissions, committees, consultations, plans of action, and programs; and that issues of ageing be a major component in the development agenda;
- Call upon the United Nations to expand the human and financial resources for the UN Program on Ageing and for other UN agencies whose programs impact on ageing.

Recommend to the United Nations that all National Plans on Ageing:

- Assure the universal access of older persons to economic security, food, health care, shelter, clothing and transportation.
- Assure the full participation of older persons in the social, cultural and political life of their communities.
- Assure that the dignity and quality of care for older persons are established, maintained and safeguarded, and that older persons are free from exploitation and mental and physical abuse.
- Assure that employment barriers for older persons are eliminated by the provision of training and work opportunities and appropriate work conditions.
- Strengthen the capacity of the family and community to provide basic care and support for older persons.
- Strengthen opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, exchanges, collaboration and mentoring.
- Incorporate Universal Design principles to assure older persons access to all environments.
- Strengthen the ability of the public, private, voluntary, and non-governmental sectors to work together for the benefit of older persons.

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For additional information and membership applications, please contact us at:

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