

United Nations (UN) 57th Commission for Social Development (CSocD57)
Side Event: Fostering Resilience across the Life Course through Universal Health Coverage

All United Nations (UN) Member States have committed to achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030. Target 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is focused on the achievement of UHC including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

Urgent action is required to re-orient health systems to accommodate the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases concurrent with population ageing, with an emphasis on enabling healthy ageing (developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age). As older age is often associated with increased likelihood of chronic comorbidities and increased healthcare utilization, older persons are therefore more likely to face financial barriers to maintaining their health including the potential of ‘financial catastrophe’ due to extensive amounts of out-of-pocket spending.¹

UHC also serves to build resiliency in response to natural and manmade disasters, especially for those who experience added vulnerability such as older persons. Resilience, “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties”, buffers the impact of disasters on health to enable healthy ageing. Increased vulnerability is compounded with the increasing risk of natural and manmade disasters, particularly in small-island developing states. Implementing UHC, especially if well integrated, can help strengthen health systems and protect populations that experience health inequities by promoting safe recovery and prevent disaster-related illnesses.²

The priority theme for the 57th Commission for Social Development is “Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies”, which the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) and co-sponsors see as an opportunity to highlight the ways that UHC can be implemented as a policy measure to address inequality and social exclusion across the life course. Although Target 3.8 is complex and ambitious for governments and other stakeholders to deliver on, there are existing guidelines and promising practices that health systems can and should uptake if we are to leave no one behind in sustainable development.

The objective of this side event is to showcase UHC as a policy measure for equitable promotion of health and resilience across the life course. Expert presentations and discussions will illustrate how aligning health systems to the needs of older persons can help support sustainable development, including disaster risk reduction. The underpinning concepts of universal health coverage, integrated care, and healthy ageing will first be introduced by the IFA. Case studies of universal health schemes as well as the perspective of the WHO and civil Society will then be highlighted.

¹ International Labour Organization. World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. 2017. Geneva.

² Overseas Development Institute. Shocks, stresses and universal health coverage: Pathways to address resilience and health. 2017. London.

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Date and Time	Location
Tuesday, 12 February 13:15 – 14:30	Conference Room A United Nations Headquarters, New York
Organizers	Co-Sponsors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International Federation on Ageing (IFA) ▪ NGO Committee on Ageing New York 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN ▪ Permanent Mission of Thailand to the UN ▪ Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN ▪ World Health Organization (WHO) ▪ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) ▪ International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) ▪ Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Alliance
Side Event Schedule	
Introduction and Overview of Side Event Dr. Jane Barratt, Secretary General, IFA	
Welcoming Remarks H.E. Mr. Vitavas Srivihok, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Thailand	
Keynote Presentation H.E. Mr. Koro Bessho, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Japan	
Presentation Mrs. Nasly Bernal, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Chile	
Presentation Mr. Werner Obermeyer, Deputy Executive Director, WHO Office at the UN	
Moderated Q&A – questions from moderator and floor Conclusion by Moderator	