



## Stakeholder Group on Ageing Concept Note for HLPF Side Event

### HLPF2021: Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from COVID-19 pandemic that promotes economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic: A Stress Test of Global Ageing**

Older persons have been among the first and hardest hit by the crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to have a disproportionate impact on them. As of 1 March 2021, 7 out of 10 deaths from COVID-19 occurred in older people aged over 65 years. Of the women who died from this brutal disease, 85 per cent are older women, and 70% older men.

In many respects the pandemic could be viewed as a test of how prepared/or not Member States are for the rapidly ageing society. The virus has no boundaries and has laid bare the uncomfortable truth that older persons have long been subject to patterns of discrimination that are deeply rooted in ageism.

Pandemics disrupt and have the potential to drive change. By definition, they span international borders and present a threat to the health and wellbeing of society. Realizing the need for immediate impactful action, 146 Member States jointly issued a [statement](#) of support to the Secretary-General's policy brief on the [Impact of COVID19 on Older Persons](#).

Only a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach can respond effectively to the dynamic challenges of this time. Mindful of the challenges, older people despite the stereotypical notion of being a burden on society have played crucial roles in their families, communities, economies, environments and political systems. In the face of the pandemic, older retired doctors, nurses and care workers have returned to the front lines of care. Hence, it is important to not only ensure that development gains reach older persons, but that their knowledge, experience and expertise are also harnessed to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

In his [report](#), the Secretary-General presented new research on how longevity has the power to transform labour markets, economies and societies. Reaping the benefits of longevity and technological advances for sustainable development demands re-examination of existing structures. The [Decade of Healthy Ageing](#) and the Secretary-General's [Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#) offer significant opportunities to be intercessional points to mobilize and engage multiple sectors at multiple levels, benefiting both current and future generations of older people.



Meanwhile, the recently released WHO [Global Report on Ageism](#) shows that globally, one in two people hold ageist attitudes towards older people with higher rates in low- and lower middle-income countries. It warns that earlier deaths, denied health care and billions in costs to the economy are linked to ageism and discrimination. Much can be learned from evidence of the underlying discrimination older people face about the increased risks they will face as the world embarks on recovery from COVID-19.

As Member States discuss sustainable and resilient measures to building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, this side event will specifically address: Goals 3, 8, 16, and 17 in the context of ageism.

- **Health and Long-Term Care:** COVID-19 data have shown that underlying conditions (such as diabetes, heart and respiratory diseases) and social factors (such as access to healthcare) are modulating the outcomes of morbidity and mortality among older people living in the community and long term care settings which have been exposed for their inadequacies.
- **Economic Development and Work:** Post pandemic, governments will experience projected losses and need to invest in pro-growth policies to reinforce the weakened economy. Given the growing proportion of older people, it is important to ensure that older persons are represented in economic policies to produce that growth.
- **Technology:** The benefits of digital technology highlighted by the pandemic, also reflect a growing divide between people who are connected and those who are not. Nearly half of the global population cannot connect to the internet and remain unable to fully participate in the digital age. Older persons in less developed countries are least likely to have access to digital technologies. Governments must consider policy frameworks that directly support digital inclusion and support of the private sector to invest in both human capital and infrastructure.

### **Programme and Speakers**

**Sponsored by Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA), Co-sponsors: Sweden and UN DESA**

**Hosted virtually by International Federation on Ageing**

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| 1:00 – 1:03pm | Welcome: Ms. Erica Dhar, Co-Chair, Stakeholder Group on Ageing                           |
| 1:03 – 1:08pm | Panel moderator: Dr. Jane Barratt, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing |

- 1:08 – 1:23pm      Keynote address: Prof. Andrew Scott, Professor of Economics, London Business School
- 1:23 – 1:28pm      Remarks: H.E. Ms. Barbro Westerholm, Member of Parliament, Sweden
- 1:28 – 2:20pm      5-minute lightning round interventions
- Dr. Ad van Berlo, Chief Executive Officer and R&D Manager, Smart Homes
  - Ms. Aura Sevilla, Programme Consultant for South East Asia and Older Workers, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)
  - Ms. Grace Chan, Business Director, Hong Kong Council of Social Service
  - Special respondent: Mr. Steve S. J. Lee, Organizing Partner, Major Group for Children and Youth
- 2:20 – 2:30pm      Closing remarks: Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing Unit, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

### Speaker Biographies

#### Ms. Erica Dhar, Co-Chair, Stakeholder Group on Ageing



Erica Dhar is Director of Global Alliances and Advocacy with AARP’s Office of International Affairs and serves as AARP’s Chief Representative to the United Nations. She has expertise working with the United Nations; advocating on issues of global aging, including the human rights of older persons; and on the sustainable development goals 2030 agenda. Erica manages the AARP Office of International Affairs in New York City, where she is responsible for relationships with international nonprofits, UN agencies and organizations dealing with aging, as well as international visitors. Erica is a board member of the UN NGO Committee on Ageing in NY and serves as the co-chair of the UN Stakeholder Group on Ageing. She spent 18 years in the broadcast and financial services industry. Erica received her bachelor’s degree with honors from Delhi University in India, a master’s degree in corporate political communication from Fairfield University in Connecticut, and a master’s degree from the New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Erica’s thesis on transnational caregiving was published and picked up by the NY Times, see reference below.

In Her Words, “Globalization and the aging of the world’s population are affecting the already complex issue of intergenerational transnational caregiving. Globalization has caused an increase in workforce mobility with large numbers of individuals seeking employment overseas. This,

coupled with increased longevity globally, has resulted in many workers leaving their elderly parents in need of care in their home countries.”

**Prof. Andrew Scott, Professor of Economics, London Business School**



Andrew J. Scott is Professor of Economics at London Business School having previously held positions at Oxford University, London School of Economics and Harvard University. His work focuses on the economics of longevity and he is the co-author of “The 100 Year Life” and “The New Long Life”. He was Managing Editor for the Royal Economic Society’s Economic Journal and Non-Executive Director for the UK’s Financial Services Authority 2009-2013. He is currently on the advisory board of the UK’s Office for Budget Responsibility, the Cabinet Office Honours Committee (Science and Technology), co-founder of The Longevity Forum, a member of the WEF council on Healthy Ageing and Longevity and a consulting scholar at Stanford University’s Center on Longevity. Andrew is also the recipient of an ESRC grant for researching the economic longevity dividend.

**Dr. Jane Barratt, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing**



Jane M Barratt, Ph.D. is the Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing (IFA) an international non-government organisation with general consultative status with the United Nations and its agencies including formal relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Representing over 75 million older people through the membership of the IFA, Jane has direct responsibility for the corporation’s global operational performance, quality and strategic implementation, and business development. This includes leadership at the United Nations Economic and Social Council in New York, Geneva and Vienna and the WHO.

Among her many current positions Jane is a Member of Vision Academy, Director, Baycrest Health Sciences and Chair of the Education Advisory Committee, Associate Scientist, Sinai Health System, Member, Global Committee for the DR Barometer Program, and Member of the International Council for Adult Immunisation.

**H.E. Ms. Barbro Westerholm, Member of Parliament, Sweden**



Ms Barbro Westerholm is a Swedish politician and member of parliament for the Liberal Party. She has been a member of the Riksdag since 2006 having previously served from 1988 to 1999. She is her party’s spokesperson for older people and LGBTQ issues and in 2009 she was awarded the Nordic Public Health Prize for work to fight discrimination against older people.

Outside her parliamentary career, she has worked as a doctor, professor and head of the National Board of Health and Welfare.

**Dr. Ad van Berlo, Chief Executive Officer and R&D Manager, Smart Home**



Ad van Berlo, Ph.D., M.Eng., M.A. is both medical engineer and gerontologist. He is CEO and research manager of the Dutch Expert Centre Smart Homes. From 1991 on he is active in technology for ageing and has been active in many smart home deployments and research projects for older people, in the broad range from healthy to very fragile.

**Ms. Aura Sevilla, Programme Consultant for South East Asia and Older Workers, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)**



Aura Sevilla is a development worker, feminist, older people's rights advocate, and social protection specialist. She works in improving ageing and social protection policies, gathering evidence, providing technical advice to the government, networking, and building the capacity of older people and workers in the informal economy to affect institutional change both at the national and regional levels. She specializes in gender-responsive and life-course approach to social protection, and the intersection of gender, ageing, and informal employment. Currently, Aura is working part-time as the Focal Person in Southeast Asia and Older Workers of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

**Ms. Grace Chan, Business Director, Hong Kong Council of Social Service**



Ms Grace Chan is a social worker by profession with over 24 years' working experience in the social welfare arena in Hong Kong. She is the Business Director of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, and also serves as a member of Board of Directors and the International Vice President of the International Federation on Ageing.

Ms Chan was formally invited as a member of the Strategic Advisory Group for the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities in 2013. She is a former member of the Elderly Commission and also sits on some networks, committees and appeal boards in the statutory bodies of Hong Kong. Her areas of expertise include caregiving, long-term care, age-friendly cities and communities, elderly participation, lifelong learning, and innovation and technology for ageing.

In 2019, she was awarded as Ageing Asia Global Ageing Influencer, in honouring the outstanding achievements of the most influential leader impacting ageing in the Asia Pacific.

**Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing Unit, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)**



Amal Abou Rafeh is Chief of Programme on Ageing at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York. She serves on the Secretariat of the General Assembly's Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons. Amal is a member of the Steering Committee of the Titchfield City Group on Ageing-related Statistics and Age-disaggregated Data. She is also a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Healthy Ageing and Longevity 2020-2021.

Amal joined the United Nations in 2001, working in the areas of social policy, sustainable development and demography, and served on the Secretariats of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) and the High-level Meeting on Youth (2011). She held positions in Beirut and New York. Before joining the United Nations, Amal lectured on analysis of social and demographic data.

Amal was born in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and holds a Master of Science in Population Studies from the American University of Beirut.

**Mr. Steve S. J. Lee, Organizing Partner, Major Group for Children and Youth**



Steve S.J. Lee is the Organizing Partner leading the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) and its 26 constituencies that represent the voice of children and youth in over 120 policy processes at the United Nations. Steve started as a 16-year-old child rights advocate through UNICEF and continued to work on sustainable development, climate change, and meaningful youth engagement.

Before joining MGCY, Steve served as the Executive Director of Foundation for Environmental Stewardship, a youth-led, youth-serving Canadian charity he founded. Steve spent three years listening to the voices of over 100,000 young Canadians in person. He drove 160,000 km to over 500 schools in more than 400 towns and helped students undertake more than a hundred local projects. Steve visited mostly rural and remote communities all across Canada from coast to coast to weave the voices of youth from places most left behind.

Steve is a Certified Fund Raising Executive, a Clean16 and Clean50 winner as Canada's leader in sustainability, a Top 30 Under 30 in Sustainability by Corporate Knights, and a Finalist of UN SDG Action Award. Steve was the Partner of RevIT<sup>2</sup> Solutions, a market research consulting firm for private investment firms, and the CEO of Steve's Guidebook, a publishing company for university-level calculus and biology study guides. Steve has a science degree from the University of Toronto, plays the clarinet.