IFA Representation to the United Nations in Geneva

Periodic Activities Report | 1 July – 30 October 2026

Alejandro Bonilla García | IFA Main Representative to the United Nations in Geneva

Introduction

This report presents the main activities undertaken by Alejandro Bonilla García, IFA Main Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, during the period 1 July to 30 October 2026.

This was a particularly active period, marked by significant progress towards a legally binding United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons and opportunities to strengthen IFA's engagement with Member States, UN entities, civil society and academic institutions.

To facilitate reading, activities are organized into four sections: Major UN Engagement and Advocacy Activities; Publications, Advocacy and International Outreach; Academic Engagement and Knowledge Sharing; and Other Work, Institutional Relations and Partnerships. Within each section, activities are ordered by institutional relevance rather than strictly by date.

Particular attention is given to the first and second substantive sessions of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Human Rights of Older Persons (IGWG-HROP) and the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) 2026.

A separate comprehensive report on IGWG2 (26–30 October 2026), including detailed negotiations, IFA contributions, outcomes and next steps, has been prepared. It is not attached to this report but is available upon request.

Top-Level Highlights

- IFA's active contribution to the UN Convention process: IFA participated in both substantive IGWG sessions in July and October, contributing to all main discussions on the future Convention. IGWG2 established a proposed roadmap for consultations and drafting in 2027.
- Successful organization of IDOP 2026: IFA contributed to an official HRC63 side event on 1 October, co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Argentina and Slovenia and the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva), with ambassadors, OHCHR, experts, civil society and an older person's voice.
- Strengthening IFA's visibility, partnerships and outreach: IFA contributed to wider Human Rights Council debates, including a recorded statement by Secretary General Gregor Sneddon, engaged with the Group of Friends and Independent Expert, and reached ILO, HLPF, academic and civil society audiences.

A. Major UN Engagement and Advocacy Activities

1. IGWG2 – Second Substantive Session

Date: 26–30 October 2026 | Venue: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Organizer / framework: UN Human Rights Council, Resolution 58/13

IFA actively participated in IGWG2, which moved from the general principles discussed in July towards concrete elements of a future legally binding Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

The delegation comprised Sue Hendy (IFA Board Member), Alejandro Bonilla García (IFA Main Representative to the UN in Geneva), Dr Helen Meenan (IFA Representative to the UN in Geneva) and Craig Gear OAM (CEO, Older Persons Advocacy Network, Australia). IFA delivered seven official statements:

- General Debate — Alejandro Bonilla García: moving from identified gaps to concrete standards, respecting diversity and life-course inequalities.
- Preamble — Helen Meenan: dignity, autonomy, ageism, intersecting discrimination and a life-course approach.
- Definitions — Sue Hendy: inclusive definitions without exclusive reliance on chronological age.
- State Obligations — Craig Gear: practical obligations, remedies and meaningful participation.
- Catalogue of Rights — Alejandro Bonilla García: social security, income security, ILO standards and distinguishing rights from policies.
- Implementation, Monitoring and International Cooperation — Helen Meenan: reporting, accountability and consideration of a dedicated treaty committee.
- Response to Facilitators — Craig Gear: readiness to support consultations and meaningful participation across regions.

Civil society preparation: On 26 October I delivered opening remarks at the NGO briefing jointly organized by GAROP and the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva), and facilitated a working group for newcomers. IFA worked with GAROP, Member States, OHCHR, the IGWG Secretariat and civil society partners throughout the week.

Informal exchanges: I participated in two working breakfasts convened and hosted by AARP. The 27 October breakfast, jointly organized with HelpAge International, brought together diplomats and older rights advocates from Africa and Latin America. I also attended a 28 October reception at the Permanent Mission of Canada connected to “Celebrating the Contributions of Older Persons and Civil Society Towards a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons”.

Outcomes and follow-up: Ten countries were appointed as co-facilitators. The proposed 2027 roadmap includes consultations, draft elements for IGWG3 and a zero draft at IGWG4 in November. Brazil will chair the process in 2027, succeeding Argentina. Differences remain on definitions, obligations and monitoring, while IFA is ready to support further consultations.

Note: A separate comprehensive IGWG2 report, with detailed analysis and full statements, is available upon request and is not attached.

2. International Day of Older Persons 2026 – Older Persons at the Centre: Towards a Legally Binding Instrument

Date: 1 October 2026 | Venue: Room V, Palais des Nations, Geneva (hybrid)

Organizer / framework: Permanent Missions of Argentina and Slovenia; NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva)

This official side event of HRC63 was supported by other Permanent Missions, IFA and numerous civil society organizations. As Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva) and IFA Main Representative, I played a central role in its preparation, coordination and moderation.

Speakers included Ambassadors Carlos Mario Foradori (Argentina), Carlos D. Sorreta (Philippines) and Božena Forštnarič Boroje (Slovenia); Dimiter Chalev (OHCHR); Veronica Filippeschi (Association for the Prevention of Torture); Dr Adebisi Adebayo (Bridging Development Gaps); and a recorded message from Dr Asha Vijai Rao (India).

The event emphasized older persons' meaningful participation in drafting, implementation and monitoring; the rights of older persons deprived of liberty; and barriers facing older women in Africa. My opening remarks emphasized progress towards a binding instrument, not commemoration alone, and recognized GAROP's capacity-building tool.

Additional supporting missions included Mexico, the Philippines, Montenegro, Portugal and Spain. The event strengthened diplomatic and civil society cooperation and helped maintain momentum ahead of IGWG2.

Reference: Recording: https://bit.ly/IDOP_2026_NGOCOAGVA | Concept note: https://bit.ly/NGOCOAGVA_IDOP_2026_CONCEPT_NOTE_AND_PROGRAM

3. IGWG1 – First Substantive Session

Date: 13–17 July 2026 | Venue: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Organizer / framework: UN Human Rights Council, Resolution 58/13

IFA participated throughout IGWG1, marking the transition from advocating for a Convention to discussing its guiding principles, structure, monitoring and future implementation. The delegation comprised Sue Hendy, Alejandro Bonilla García, Xenia Scheil-Adlung and Helen Meenan.

IFA delivered six statements covering all principal thematic discussions:

- General Debate — universal rights, dignity, autonomy and equality.
- Not Building from Scratch — strengthening existing human rights mechanisms.
- Outcome of the Call for Submissions — convergence, ageism and a life-course perspective.
- Guiding Principles and Structure — accessibility, legal capacity and meaningful participation.
- Treaty Monitoring Arrangements — independent monitoring and a possible dedicated Committee on the Rights of Older Persons.
- Dialogue with UN Human Rights Mechanisms — coherence with treaty bodies, Special Procedures and the Independent Expert.

On 13 July I delivered opening remarks at the GAROP NGO preparatory briefing, emphasizing the transition from advocacy to negotiation, clear State obligations and constructive civil society coordination. IFA collaborated with GAROP, the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva), UN partners and Member States throughout the week.

Note: Full texts of IFA's six official statements are available upon request.

4. IFA Participation in the 63rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Date: September–October 2026 | Venue: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Organizer / framework: UN Human Rights Council

I coordinated several interventions to maintain IFA's visibility beyond the formal IGWG negotiations, including a recorded statement by IFA Secretary General Gregor Sneddon for the Council's engagement with the UN Independent Expert. I also prepared and delivered three statements:

- Agenda Item 3, General Debate: longevity, ageism, social protection and participation.
- Agenda Item 3, High-Level Panel on the 60th Anniversary of the International Covenants: universal human rights do not expire with age.

- Agenda Item 10, Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building: mainstreaming older persons' rights and recognizing GAROP's capacity-building work.

Reference: Full texts available upon request.

5. Group of Friends – Meeting with the UN Independent Expert

Date: 9 September 2026 | Venue: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Organizer / framework: Permanent Missions of Slovenia and Argentina

At the invitation of Slovenia and Argentina, I joined a meeting of the Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons with Professor Zvezdan Pirtošek, the new UN Independent Expert. I was the only invited civil society representative.

The meeting marked the Group's tenth anniversary and offered dialogue with diplomatic representatives. I informed IFA leadership and proposed an IFA Global Café after IGWG2 to brief members and support their engagement. The proposal was not yet a confirmed event.

6. International Day of Care and Support 2026 – Building Sustainable Care and Support Systems through Decent Work

Date: 29 October 2026 | Venue: ILO Headquarters, Geneva (hybrid)

Organizer / framework: International Labour Organization

Following an ILO invitation, I facilitated the participation of Craig Gear OAM, CEO of the Older Persons Advocacy Network, as IFA's representative and speaker. This was made possible through IFA's recognition on the ILO Special List of NGOs.

Craig emphasized that the rights of older persons receiving care and those of care workers are mutually dependent. He drew on Australian aged care reforms and highlighted decent wages, safe conditions, training, choice and investment in the care workforce. This strengthened IFA's engagement with the ILO.

Reference: Full intervention available upon request.

B. Publications, Advocacy and International Outreach

7. No Sustainable Development Without Older Persons – UN Today

Date: September 2026 | Venue: UN Today, Issue 862, pp. 16–18

Organizer / framework: Joint article by Jack Kupferman and Alejandro Bonilla García

Together with Jack Kupferman, Co-Chair of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing, I co-authored an article on including older persons in the 2030 Agenda, especially water, energy, sustainable cities and partnerships.

The article called for mainstreaming ageing across the SDGs, stronger age-disaggregated data and international cooperation. It welcomed the HLPF Ministerial Declaration's references to population ageing and intergenerational solidarity, and gave visibility to IFA.

Reference: https://untoday.org/no-sustainable-development-without-older-persons/

8. Treasure What You Measure: Older Persons and Data – HLPF Side Event

Date: 9 July 2026 | Venue: Virtual event linked to HLPF 2026, New York

Organizer / framework: Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA)

I joined preparatory SGA meetings and contributed to the concept note, event image, organization and invitations. In particular, I secured the participation of Rafael Diez de Medina, Chief Statistician and Director of the ILO Department of Statistics.

The event examined the importance of reliable age-disaggregated statistics for SDG implementation and lessons from the Titchfield Group. Its relevance was reinforced by the 2026 HLPF Ministerial Declaration, notably paragraph 23 on population ageing and intergenerational solidarity and paragraph 62(p) on statistical capacity and age-disaggregated data.

Reference: HLPF Ministerial Declaration: E/2026/L.16–E/HLPF/2026/L.1.

9. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons: What Comes Next?

Date: 21 July 2026 | Venue: Virtual webinar

Organizer / framework: Global Ageing Network

I was an invited speaker alongside Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of the Programme on Ageing Section at UN DESA; Ellen Graham, Secretariat Coordinator of GAROP; and William (Bill) Smith, Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing (New York).

The webinar reviewed the July IGWG negotiations, emerging directions for the Convention, next steps and opportunities for care providers and civil society to contribute. It strengthened dialogue among IFA, UN DESA, GAROP, the NGO Committee on Ageing (New York) and the Global Ageing Network.

10. IGWG1 Informal Debrief for Civil Society and NHRIs

Date: 26 August 2026 | Venue: Virtual meeting

Organizer / framework: Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP)

I participated as an invited speaker in an informal debrief with NGOs, National Human Rights Institutions, organizations of older persons and civil society partners.

My presentation reviewed the experience of IGWG1, its main developments, lessons learned and perspectives for IGWG2. The discussion supported shared learning and improved coordination for the next negotiations.

11. Meeting with the UN Independent Expert – Civil Society Preparation

Date: 10 July 2026 | Venue: Virtual meeting

Organizer / framework: GAROP and NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva)

I participated in a virtual preparatory meeting with Professor Zvezdan Pirtošek, the newly appointed UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, ahead of IGWG1. It offered dialogue between the Independent Expert and civil society on the forthcoming negotiations.

C. Academic Engagement and Knowledge Sharing

12. University of Washington – Gender, Disability and Age Inclusion in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

Date: 31 August 2026 | Venue: ITU Headquarters, Geneva

Organizer / framework: University of Washington Geneva Study Abroad Programme

I delivered a presentation to visiting American university students on longevity as a major achievement of humanity and the need for societies and international human rights frameworks to adapt to longer lives.

The presentation addressed dignity, autonomy, ageism, discrimination and participation throughout the life course, and introduced the UN Convention process and the IGWG. It helped connect IFA's advocacy with younger audiences interested in international law and human rights.

13. The Emergence and Significance of the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

Date: 21 August 2026 | Venue: John Knox Centre, Conference Room Flory, Geneva

Organizer / framework: Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development (CSEND) Summer School

At the invitation of Professor Lichia Saner-Yiu and Raymond Saner, I delivered a lecture to visiting students from Asia at the CSEND Summer School.

The lecture explained the development of a legally binding UN instrument, the importance of protecting rights in older age, the IGWG's first substantive session and the roles of Member States and civil society. It promoted awareness and intergenerational understanding.

14. From Retirement to Re-engagement: How Mentorship Programs Can Sustain Workforce Knowledge in the Age of AI

Date: 7 July 2026 | Venue: ITU Headquarters, Geneva

Organizer / framework: CSEND | World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2026

I participated in a session on the contribution of retired professionals through intergenerational mentorship in an age of artificial intelligence and digital transformation.

My contribution emphasized older persons' knowledge and experience, digital literacy, transfer of skills and opportunities for younger and older generations to learn from each other. The discussion connected inclusion, lifelong learning and technological change.

15. Advancing Women's Financial Health and Pension Security

Date: 1 July 2026 | Venue: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Organizer / framework: Soroptimist International; co-sponsors including NGO CSW Geneva

I participated as a panellist, representing IFA and the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva), focusing on financial insecurity among older women, particularly widows.

I explained how unequal education, earnings, interrupted careers and unpaid care accumulate throughout life, and advocated gender-responsive pensions, universal social protection, recognition of unpaid care and access to information about rights. I also referred to the UN Convention negotiations and a life-course human rights approach.

D. Other Work, Institutional Relations and Partnerships

16. Meeting with the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church

Date: 22 September 2026 | Venue: Geneva, Switzerland

Organizer / framework: General Board of Church and Society (GBCS)

At the invitation of Rev. Dr. Liberato (Levi) Bautista, I met with senior representatives of GBCS, an organization with ECOSOC consultative status. I presented the UN Convention process and explored possible cooperation with IFA.

Following the meeting, I informed IFA Secretary General Gregor Sneddon and Caitlin Wald and invited Levi to consider introducing IFA to colleagues at the World Council of Churches. The purpose was to explore common interests in older persons' rights, health, care and age-friendly cities.

17. External Evaluation of AGE Platform Europe (2026–2028)

Date: 16 September 2026 | Venue: Virtual interview

Organizer / framework: AGE Platform Europe; evaluator Dominique Danau, SAGO Research

I participated in an online interview as part of AGE Platform Europe's external evaluation, which considers its policy and advocacy performance, impact on age and gender equality and alignment with members' priorities.

The interview provided an opportunity to contribute an external perspective on ageing advocacy and international cooperation. The evaluation process treats individual contributions confidentially.

18. CoNGO – Periodic Meetings of Geneva Substantive Committee Chairs

Date: 20 July 2026 | Venue: Not specified

Organizer / framework: Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO)

As Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva) and IFA Representative, I participated in CoNGO coordination meetings for Chairs of Geneva Substantive Committees. These meetings support exchange of information, common priorities, cooperation among committees and engagement with the UN.

Forthcoming UN Meetings and Follow-up Actions

- IGWG: Monitor the new call for inputs expected in November 2026 and consultations led by the co-facilitators from December 2026 to April 2027; prepare substantive contributions and support meaningful participation of older persons.
- IGWG3 and IGWG4: Follow the proposed presentation of draft elements in 2027 and the zero draft envisaged for November 2027, in coordination with IFA, GAROP and civil society partners.
- Institutional relationships: Explore possible contacts with the World Council of Churches and further engagement with the ILO, the Group of Friends and the Independent Expert, where appropriate.

IFA 18th Global Conference Activities

No specific activities related to the IFA 18th Global Conference were reported for this period.