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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by Alzheimer's Disease International — International Federation of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Societies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Alzheimer's Disease International — International Federation of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Societies is a global federation of over 85 national Alzheimer's associations from every part of the world. The Federation believes that the key to winning the fight against dementia lies in a unique association of global solutions and local knowledge. As such, it works locally, by empowering national Alzheimer's associations to promote and offer care and support for people with dementia and their caregivers, while working globally to focus attention on the epidemic and campaign for policy change by Governments and the World Health Organization (WHO). These are the pillars of the Federation's mission.

Personal and family impact of dementia

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. It is closely associated with old age, and our world is ageing. Dementia is a collective name for progressive degenerative brain syndromes that affect memory, thinking, behaviour and emotion. Symptoms may include:

- (a) Loss of memory;
- (b) Difficulty with finding the right words or understanding what people are saying;
- (c) Difficulty with performing previously routine tasks;
- (d) Personality and mood changes.

Dementia knows no social, economic, ethnic or geographical boundaries. Although each person experiences dementia in his or her own way, eventually those affected are unable to care for themselves and need help with all aspects of daily life. They are persons with progressive problems with thinking who need support.

Dementia as a global development issue

Alzheimer's disease and dementia are growing concerns for the international development and public health communities. It is estimated that, in 2013, at least 44 million people were living with dementia worldwide. Of those, two thirds lived in developing countries.

As the world continues to develop and grow, its population is beginning to age drastically. By 2050, it is expected that the number of people over the age of 60 will have increased by 224 per cent. The prevalence of dementia is expected to increase accordingly. The cost of dementia worldwide was estimated to be \$604 billion in 2010, accounting for 1 per cent of the world's aggregated gross domestic product.

This cost reflects numerous undocumented factors, including the unofficial cost of caregivers leaving the job market and taking care of friends and family who have dementia. This global impact, along with the current and growing numbers of people affected by dementia in low- and middle-income countries, leads us to conclude that civil society and Governments must begin to see that if we are to rethink and strengthen social development in the contemporary world, we must factor in the rapid increase in the number of persons globally who have progressively impaired thinking, an increase driven by ageing, as well as the impact of this increase.

The possibilities for increased economic risks are growing as low- and middle-income countries continue to develop. Since wages in those countries are extremely low, the current economic loss is not as great as in high-income countries.

Accomplishments and limitations

The Federation has begun to mobilize a civil society response globally, through our leadership level membership in the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance and our engagement with a number of unique opportunities that have come about because of a Group of Eight summit on dementia. One key follow-on action will be the first-ever ministerial conference on global action against dementia, to be hosted by WHO on 3 and 4 March 2015, where we will continue to advocate that it is crucial that all countries participate in all possible global actions relating to dementia, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

The Federation has established the Global Alzheimer's and Dementia Action Alliance, a broad alliance of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on raising concern about and awareness of dementia, and on moving forward to support persons living with dementia, as well as their families. We appeal to any NGO to consider joining this effort.

Proposed development initiatives

The following initiatives are proposed:

(a) Additional research to assist policymakers in designing effective prevention and treatment plans for dementia is vital. According to the World Federation of Neurology, understanding the burden and costs of dementia is crucial to guide future health-care and socioeconomic policy; policymakers need evidence to prioritize and plan appropriately for the rapidly growing numbers of older people with dementia and other chronic diseases. The majority of research and current expenditures on dementia and Alzheimer's care come from high-income nations, demonstrating a critical need for continued research in low- and middle-income countries;

(b) WHO has established the principal goals of dementia care. These include early diagnosis; optimizing physical health, cognition, activity and well-being; detecting and treating behavioural and psychological symptoms; and providing information and long-term support for caregivers. The tools for attaining these goals exist for countries at all levels of development, but support for their implementation is lagging. Since we have observed that action towards these principal goals is greatly accelerated in countries that have created national or subnational dementia plans, we will offer our support to any country that wishes to develop its own plan. We note also that the newest national plans, launched in September 2014, were in Cuba, Costa Rica and Mexico;

(c) International aid and development should focus on working with national Governments in low- and middle-income countries to develop viable plans that include action on ageing and age-related frailty. In order to address these goals and to make the greatest impact, development must be carried out in tandem with policymakers and civil society, starting on a small scale to test initiatives, and then disseminating best practices through development agencies and civil society;

(d) As a result of the Millennium Development Goals renewal process, health is better understood as a development issue. We recommend that health issues not stop at infectious or curable diseases or those for which we have a theory of prevention. We must broaden our knowledge and understanding to include the age-related issue of dementia so as to not lose some of the amazing benefits of the rapid advances in public health of the twentieth century that have brought us to this point;

(e) We now know that dementia shares some of the same modifiable risk factors as cardiovascular disease, cancer, lung disease and diabetes. Over time, existing policies aimed at these diseases may assist in slowing the increase in dementia, and we strongly recommend that brain health promotion messaging be integrated into the health promotion and policy efforts of the National Council on Disability, especially its anti-tobacco programmes;

(f) Policy and social engagement around the world is sometimes crippled because most national health systems do not collect data on persons over the age of 60. The Federation believes that every citizen has a basic human right to at least be a point of data in national and global data sets that drive resource allocation, civil society and government action. Agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and WHO need to address this injustice seriously, and we pledge to share the knowledge we have gained through sponsoring the Global Observatory for Ageing and Dementia Care, of the 10/66 Dementia Research Group, which operates exclusively in 35 low- and middle-income countries to test solutions.

Improving brain health will contribute to strengthening social development, as we live and move forward in the new undiscovered territory of global ageing, the demographic storyline that will shape the next 50 years.
