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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 HelpAge International, AARP,
International Federation on Ageing, International Longevity
Center Global Alliance, Ltd. and International Network for the
Prevention of Elder Abuse, non-governmental organizations in
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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Leaving No One Behind in a Rapidly Ageing World

Ageing cuts across the three pillars of sustainable development. Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world means including people of all ages in all programmes and all policies. The focus of this inclusion should be on strengthening opportunities and capabilities in older age, eliminating age discrimination and addressing other current and future challenges with age inclusive policies, programmes and budgets. This is a pre-requisite for responding to issues of age in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and “leaving no one behind.” As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said in April 2015, “I want to tell the world that I count, that older people everywhere count, that people of all ages should be included in the Sustainable Development Goals.”

The Commission for Social Development, in its efforts to rethink and strengthen social development in the contemporary world, must find ways to respond effectively to the 2030 Agenda, by making recommendations for appropriate action on ageing at the local, national, regional and international levels. We have no time to waste. Today two people reach the age of 60 every second and by 2030, 16% of the world’s population will be over 60. Two thirds of older people are already living in developing countries; this will increase to three quarters by 2030.

The cosignatories to this statement worked together to bring issues of older persons and ageing into the negotiations for the Sustainable Development Goals. We have a history of collaboration on ageing issues at a country level and within the United Nations system, including at the first Vienna Assembly on Ageing (1982); the Copenhagen Social Summit (1995); the 2002 Madrid World Assembly on Ageing and subsequent dissemination of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA); periodic global, regional and national reviews of the implementation of MIPAA; successive meetings of CSocD; promoting the rights of older persons globally and within the UN through the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing; raising the profile of ageing and development within the United Nations and its specialized agencies on an ongoing basis, collaboration through the International Day of Older Persons and through global campaigns to raise visibility of ageing and of older people.

Working as the Stakeholder Group on Ageing within the SDG negotiation process, we brought the voice, presence, evidence and visibility of ageing and older people to the negotiations taking place in many countries across the world and within the United Nations. We are pleased that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is explicit about including age with relevant references to age and older people. We welcome the agreement that the success of goals and targets be assessed with data that is disaggregated by age as well as by gender, and that no goal or target be considered met unless all social and economic groups are included. High quality, disaggregated data is critical for this task.

Disaggregation is more than just a technical discussion. It goes to the heart of the human rights approach to achieve universality and leave no one behind. So while older women and men across the world are celebrating progress to embed social issues into the development agenda and are happy that commitments have

been made by world leaders to include people of all ages in the Sustainable Development Goal framework, there is concern that there is still persistent discrimination on the basis of age which if not tackled will impede success of the agenda.

In other words the speed and scale of ageing is not yet matched by specific and measureable actions to counter age discrimination at national as well as regional and global levels.

Data sets are not yet fit for purpose in our ageing world. For example, although women over 50 already make up a quarter of the world's women, they are largely invisible in the data sets used to measure violence against women.

Another example concerns health, wellbeing, and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Affordable and effective measures to reduce the risk of stroke are still not in place in many countries. Even though those over 65 account for three-quarters of deaths from NCDs, and every 3 seconds somewhere in the world a person is diagnosed with dementia, the proposed age cut off to measure incidence and death from NCDs is 70 years.

Yet another example concerns poverty in old age. Older women and men are often amongst the poorest in the developing world. Only 1 in 4 persons over 65 receive a pension in lower and middle income countries. The Global AgeWatch Index produced by HelpAge International to measure wellbeing in older age using international data currently lacks international data on poverty on old age in 93 countries. For this reason only 11 countries of Africa could be included in the 2015 Index.

The Commission for Social Development in its report of the 53rd session highlighted core areas for action, including a life-course approach to the post-2015 development agenda, action to improve the lack of data on older persons and the call to member States to 'protect the rights of older persons by complementing existing national and regional frameworks with multilateral initiatives such as the elaboration of an international legal instrument on older persons.' The protection and enhancement of human rights is at the core of rethinking social development. The movement toward a binding instrument to protect the human rights of older persons is an important step forward.

The report also highlighted the opportunities of the third review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (MIPAA). This instrument is a vital tool as it recognizes the valuable contributions made by older people to social and economic development and their catalytic role in helping to build stronger and resilient societies.

Older women and men and their organisations are ready to participate in the bottom up review and appraisal process for the MIPAA, which will strengthen social development in the contemporary world. MIPAA implementation and the 2030 Agenda must be built on the conscious and intentional inclusion of older women and men, persons who are workers, entrepreneurs, unpaid carers, educators, farmers, mentors, and who build and strengthen resilience in times of humanitarian crisis. As societies age they will need to adapt consciously to include and support contributions and capacities of their older citizens.

Examples of good practice exist in many countries and can be emulated and scaled up. They include the extension of pensions to all, putting in place age friendly infrastructure, health systems and health training which are adapting to their older populations, age inclusive humanitarian responses and needs assessments, data systems that are fit for purpose for our ageing world and including older women and men in accountability mechanisms, monitoring and appraisal.

Clear measures to combat age discrimination and ensuring older women and men are active participants in developing and measuring programmes and policies that affect them are core to successful change. The global campaign Age Demands Action, which brings older people together to combat age discrimination and to promote dialogue with governments and service providers on practical issues and deliverable solutions, now active in 61 countries involving over 200,000 older activists and civil society groups of all ages and walks of life, demonstrates that supporting older women and men who are active participants in finding solutions brings positive results.

Our recommendations to Member States, UN and multilateral agencies and civil society to guide successful action on ageing, including through the MIPPA review process, are:

- recognise that population ageing is a success, not a burden. It is a triumph of humanity and of development. Celebrate ageing, do not fear it.
- ensure that all national planning processes analyse, prepare for and invest in population ageing and that older people are involved in their monitoring and assessment.
- create and finance programmes that address the needs and human rights of older persons. This means ending age discrimination, eradicating poverty in old age, ensuring decent health care, pensions, opportunities for jobs, life-long learning, humanitarian programmes and inclusion in policies and planning at all levels.
- integrate older persons as essential stakeholders in the national, regional and global mechanisms set up to implement Agenda 2030.
- invest now and build statistical and evidence capacity at national regional and international level to fill the gaps on missing age data.
- incorporate ageing actively in the programmes and research of the United Nations system agencies while publishing data and evidence on ageing systematically and working proactively with government and civil society to promote a 'society of all ages' in all countries.

The Commission for Social Development should include from now on a permanent item on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on leaving no one behind. This will support adequate linkage to implementation, monitoring and of social programmes under its current purview.

Finally we pledge full engagement and participation of our organisations and networks in this historic effort to ensure that our collaboration to rethink and strengthen social development in the contemporary world leaves no one behind and fully embraces the opportunities and challenges of our ageing world.