Summit of the Future - General Assembly, 6th plenary meeting, 79th session

Statement by the Universal Postal Union on behalf of the UN Inter-Agency Group on Ageing

(Check against delivery)

Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing, I am honored as a representative of the Universal Postal Union, a member of the Group, to deliver this statement. The postal sector, represented by the Universal Postal Union, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, plays a vital role in the development of universal postal services that meet the needs of all citizens, including in supporting older persons. The postal sector, has also long been an indispensable bridge between generations, facilitating intergenerational solidarity and strengthening community ties. With its extensive network of approximately 700,000 post offices and a growing digital and social infrastructure, the postal system reaches even the most remote communities, providing essential services to billions of people worldwide.

As we convene at this Summit, often referred to as "a once-in-a-generation opportunity" to shape our collective future, it is imperative that we adopt a people-centered, rights-based, life-course approach - one that fully includes all generations, including older persons. Demographic changes are not a distant challenge, they are already transforming our world and will define the future.

Population ageing is a global phenomenon that is accelerating, with Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand currently leading in terms of the highest proportion of persons aged 65 years or over. However, regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa, Western Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa are projected to experience the fastest growth in their older populations in the coming decades. Within the next 30 years, the majority of older persons will reside in developing countries. This demographic shift, where people are living longer and increasingly healthier lives is a human success story not a crisis. It is a testament to advances in health, living conditions and technology.

However, whether this transformation unfolds as an opportunity, or a challenge, depends on the policy choices we make today. The dominant narrative often frames population ageing and increased longevity as inevitable burdens on national economies, health and social care and increasing fiscal pressures. This perspective is both limiting and inaccurate. The outcomes will depend on how we craft our policies and whether we seize the opportunity to invest in inclusive, age-responsive systems that benefit everyone.

In reviewing the **Pact for the Future**, the Group recognizes its bold and ambitious vision for a sustainable and equitable future. Nevertheless, we are disheartened to see only one mention of older persons compared to 30 references to youth. This stark imbalance ignores both the needs and contributions of today's older populations and the fact that today's youth are tomorrow's older generations.

The Pact addresses critical global issues such as climate change, social protection, and economic opportunities but overlooks how these intersect with an ageing population. While some older persons face vulnerabilities that need specific protection and tailored support, the majority are active contributors to the economy, key players in climate action and essential to humanitarian efforts.

The Group commends the Pact's emphasis on youth participation in decision-making, recognizing the vital role young people play in shaping the future. However, the lack of recognition of older persons' significant contributions and need to be meaningfully engaged in decisions that affect them is deeply concerning. This oversight risks undermining older persons human rights, deepening existing generational divides and undermining our collective efforts. By not fully embracing a life-course approach the Pact misses the opportunity to recognize that youth will grow into older persons. A rights-based approach must affirm that age does not diminish a person's value and dignity. Without this perspective, the Pact risks reinforcing ageism and widening division, rather than fostering the inclusivity it seeks to promote.

Furthermore, we note with concern that the Global Digital Compact, while rightly recognizing groups experiencing vulnerabilities such as children, women, and persons with disabilities, fails to specifically mention older persons. This omission is particularly troubling given that older persons are among the groups most affected by the digital divide.

Older persons play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity, key pillars of sustainable development. Their experience and lifelong contributions strengthen the fabric of societies and build bridges between generations. They must not be left behind.

The Group welcomes the recent inclusion of a reference to the "substantial contributions of older persons to sustainable development efforts" in the **Declaration on Future Generations**. Promoting and protecting the human rights of older persons is essential to ensuring that future generations inherit a world grounded in equality, justice, and respect for human dignity. Safeguarding these human rights today helps dismantle systemic inequalities, including intergenerational poverty and social exclusion.

Distinguished delegates,

Members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing stand ready to support Member States in this endeavor, and we look forward to continuing our work in partnership with all stakeholders.

Thank you.