



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



International  
Federation on  
Ageing



30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
United Nations International Day of Older Persons

**“Pandemics: Do They Change How We Address Age and Ageing?”**

**Closing Remarks**

**Delivered by Masumi Ono**

**Chief of Social Inclusion and Participation Branch, UN DESA**

*(check against delivery)*

I want to thank all the speakers for bringing so many stimulating and enriching ideas to this event and to the participants for their active engagement. I would also like to express my gratitude to our moderator Jane Barratt who did a wonderful job facilitating the session and engaging the audience fully.

We have touched upon many important topics as we work together towards promoting the well-being and human rights of older persons, in particular from the health dimension and with the COVID-19 pandemic as a backdrop.

We hope that this year, when we commemorate both the 75 years of the United Nations and the 30 years of the International Day of Older Persons, is the year where we begin to move more swiftly towards implementing policies that are needed to ensure an inclusive society, in which older persons participate fully, without discrimination and on the basis of equality... some of these policies have been highlighted in our discussions today.

Of course, as our speakers have so persuasively brought up in the discussions, COVID-19 has revealed the many challenges we still need to overcome. We must leverage this opportunity to move forward in a better direction – to renew our ambition, our leadership and our collective action. Speakers have explained how the Decade of Healthy Ageing will support our efforts during the pandemic, but also beyond, and how it will expand our understanding of what it means for health services to be truly responsive to older persons.

It is clear we still need to do much, as a society, to better understand how our health services have to evolve in order to fully integrate the choices, needs and challenges of older persons, in particular long-term care. As brought up by our colleagues from Human Rights, the right to health is a fundamental part of our human rights and of our understanding of a life in dignity.

The role of communities and older persons themselves in being active agents in these changes has been underlined in the discussions, and need to be kept at the center of our future actions. Clearly, it is essential to recognise the ability of older persons to lead, not only in their own betterment, but also in that of society as a whole.



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Today, as we approach 20 years since the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, we should not fall short of its aspiration for “forward thinking [that] calls us to embrace the potential of the ageing population, as a basis for future development.”

We are particularly appreciative to our colleagues at DESA Population Division for recognizing the importance of living arrangements of older persons to their susceptibility to infection with and mortality of COVID-19, and providing us all with a more in-depth analysis of related available data to guide our policy work.

As we approach the end of our programme, please allow me to address our partners, the women and men of the NGO Committee on Ageing in New York. Today, as we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons, we also celebrate you. We are calling today a historic moment, acknowledging that it builds on a long history of your growing commitment and interaction with Member State delegations and UN entities. It was, and continues to be vital to our work, that Governments listen to the voices of older persons themselves, and we are grateful to you for making that happen, year after year.

You have laid down an ethical vision that ensures basic human rights for older people everywhere, and that is anchored around the concept of growing older with dignity, rooted in a rigorous work and networks to help move this new vision forward. From our entire UN family, we thank you. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing in New York Cynthia Stuen, the co-Chairs of today’s event Bette Levy and Martha Bial. Big thanks to Erica Dhar of AARP, Tara Cortes, Mabel Bianco and Yasmin Amini. We look forward to our continued work together.

I thank you for your attention.