



**REMARKS BY H.E. TIJJANI MUHAMMAD-BANDE,
PRESIDENT OF THE 74TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Excellencies,

Esteemed Panellists,

Distinguished Delegates,

I thank the organisers of today's important event, including the NGO Committee on Ageing, DESA, the Permanent Mission of Argentina, and the Group of Friends of Older Persons.

The International Day of Older Persons offers us a moment to reflect upon the role of older persons as active contributors

to society and not merely as passive recipients of care and assistance.

Inclusion is a foundational priority for the Seventy-Fourth Session, which weaves through every element of our work. We will not have a UN that excludes.

We must ensure that older persons are recognised as stakeholders in every element of our work. The number of people aged 60 and older is set to outnumber youth by 2030.

We must therefore enable this section of society to engage in every facet of our work here at the United Nations, and beyond.

How can we achieve our goals if we exclude this demographic? If we are to make progress, we must ensure age-inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; not just today, but every day.

Excellencies,

“The Journey to Age Equality” requires collective action to remove barriers that exclude and discriminate against older persons, to enable all people to age with security and dignity, while fully participating in society.

I encourage Member States to adopt and implement non-discriminatory policies, legislation and regulations to empower older persons and ensure their full participation in societies.

Today, panellists addressed key issues, which will facilitate progress in this area; most notably societal and structural changes. These include adaptive labour policies, social protection, universal health coverage and life-long learning.

Lifelong education is essential to ensure the full and active participation of older persons in society. We have, therefore, prioritised quality education during the 74th Session.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by calling on all Member States to seize this opportunity to take into account issues of relevance to older persons in their efforts to promote the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

I plan to engage older persons to help elevate the profile of ageing and ensure that we properly situate their interests within the global development agenda.

I look forward to hearing of the outcomes of the *Human Rights Situation of Aged People in Africa* conference, which will take place in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 2019.

I hope that we maintain the momentum of this International Day, as we work toward the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing taking place in April 2020.

Excellencies,

I am sure you know I am also part of this demographic being over 60. Therefore, I am talking about myself.

I also leave you with a Nigerian proverb, which says

*“What an elder can see while sitting down,
A child cannot see even when he climbs a tree.”*

I thank you.
