

2020 AARP-DESA Briefing Series

Executive Summary

12 February 2020

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK –During the 58th session of the Commission for Social Development, the United Nations 75th anniversary under the theme “Shaping Our Future Together” and the 25th anniversary of the Global Social Summit, AARP hosted the 13th annual briefing series entitled “*Living, Learning and Earning Longer: A Business Case for An Age Diversified Workforce*” In a world marked by rapid population ageing, where older persons now outnumber children under five years of age, the event aimed at highlighting the imperative to develop new narratives around ageing and living longer. The AARP-United Nations Briefing Series used the key global platform to engage development leaders and stakeholders in a policy dialogue focusing on global ageing and catalyse political momentum to influence action and delivery towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

The briefing series event was well attended with over 100 participants, including heads of delegations from ministries of social development, ambassadors to the United Nations, representatives from the private sector, civil society and UN entities. The President of the 74th General Assembly graced the occasion with his presence and participation.

A moderated dialogue focusing on the preliminary findings on inclusive multigenerational workforce practices and an age diverse workforce conducted by AARP, World Economic Forum, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development was highlighted, enhancing discussions with private sector leaders and knowledge partners. Speakers included senior officials from the UN, private sector, including experts from financial services, manufacturing, technology, and non-profit organisations. The objective was to explore the public sector’s role in creating a policy environment that creates and invests in an age diverse and inclusive workforce ecosystem for all.

The event was highly interactive, consisting of a moderator-driven panel discussion (Davos style) where participants brought together unique perspectives to enrich the discussion.

Dr. Jean Accius, Senior Vice President, AARP Global thought Leadership delivered the welcome remarks, acknowledging all partners involved, he commended the organizers for a great event. Highlighting AARPs membership of nearly 38 million, he emphasized that the organization is dedicated to empowering people, and most importantly enable them to choose how they live as they age. Dr. Accius mentioned the importance of fostering domestic and international ties to shape how the world views and values ageing.

Jo Ann Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer (AARP), and author of the bestselling book *Disrupt Aging: A Bold New Path to Living Your Best Life at Every Age* opened the session. Citing AARP longevity economy outlook report, she mentioned that in the US, those over the age of 50 contributed 8.3 trillion dollars of economic activity in 2018. She stressed that the economic activity of older workers over 50 supports 88.6 million jobs in the US

and will continue to grow as the first millennials start moving into their 50s. The longevity economy outlook is thus a wakeup call to rethink attitudes about ageing, multigenerational workforce, opportunities and challenges especially those brought by new technologies. She highlighted issues of ageism and discrimination and their potential negative impact on the Future of Work and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, she called upon the private sector to provide opportunities for older workers to enable them to remain in their jobs. Additionally, she emphasized the role of government at local, national and international levels to ensure adequate policies and institutional systems to remove barriers that can enhance discrimination against an older worker.

The President of the 74th General Assembly Hon. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande delivered the keynote address, expressing that longevity has become a global reality, noting that by 2030 there will be nearly 1 billion people aged 65 and older around the world. The PGA underscored that the United Nations is determined to work closely with all stakeholders to implement new and aggressive policies aimed at improving the living conditions of older persons all over the world. “We must work for societal and structural changes including adaptive behavior, policies, social inclusion, universal health coverage, and lifelong learning” he said. The PGA called upon forging strong partnerships with different stakeholders including the private sector to achieve a multigenerational workforce and an inclusive and just society.

Peter Rundlet, AARP’s Vice President of International Affairs set the stage for the panel discussion; highlighting the role of the public sector in creating a policy environment that fosters and invests in an age diverse and inclusive workforce for all. He cited the emergence of “disruptive” trends taking place in the world such as artificial intelligence, and other new technologies. He also stressed that while these trends are disruptive, they can be a great opportunity for development. In this regard, he highlighted AARP’s work in bringing the private sector into the conversation, including a learning collaborative initiated in 2019 where 25 significant global companies committed to the venture, collectively garnering 1.3 million employees and over 800 billion dollars’ worth of revenue.

Stakeholder Discussion

The moderator Lauren Young from the Special Projects Editor, Thomson Reuters stimulated the panel discussion by posing the first question “Does age matter”?

One panellist, Dimitra Manis gave her perspective and maintained that age does not matter- stressing that whether you are a millennial or a boomer, age does not matter. She mentioned that a lot of people peak much later in their ages in terms of their skills and the experiences, and that alone should be an enhancement of one’s life. Another panellist, Frank Cooper affirmed her viewpoint, adding that while age does not matter, age still plays a role in terms of one’s experiences in life. For example, today the younger generation is mostly driven by advancements in technologies compared to their older counterparts-stressing that if age is acknowledged, it mattered at some level. What is most important, is to think of ways to unlock the potential of people at different age levels. Another member of the panel, Haig Nalbantian posed the question differently “Does age

matter and should age matter”? Throwing in more light to the discussion, he mentioned that age has a profound impact on the workforce. For instance, studies have shown correlations between retention, success, promotion at the workplace based on age. For example, the older a worker is, the more likely they would receive a lower performance rating or less opportunities for promotion in the workplace, compared to a younger worker. Haig also mentioned that, on the contrary, studies have shown that the more there are older employees in a team, the better the business performance.

The moderator posed a question to one of the panellist Frank Cooper asking his views on the best way to truly create a multigenerational workforce that functions at a high level. The panellist expressed the importance of a multigenerational workforce; mixing younger workers with those with more organization and a career tenure, which always unlocks great potential for many workers. Dimitri Manis underscored that everyone, regardless of age wants to have a meaningful purpose in an organization. While the experienced workforce is growing, there is a huge opportunity for employers to get more out of this reservoir of knowledge, experience, age diversity, cross fertilization of ideas and capability, Haig added.

Using their companies’ experiences, the panellists concluded by discussing other important issues including, gender disparities in the workplace, skills development, technology advancements, continuous learning, pension schemes etc. which will all influence the Future of Work. The all agreed that if all factors are taken into consideration, this can help contribute to an age -resistant and resilient career for workers beyond the ages 50+.

Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief, Programme on Ageing (DESA) concluded the session with closing remarks, thanking the panel and moderator for an excellent and engaging conversation. She expressed her gratitude for the partnership between DESA and AARP and for the successful 13 Annual Briefing Series held so far, she also thanked the PGA for his engagement, commitment and participation in the event. In conclusion she applauded the many governments in attendance, stressing the importance of having the right policies, legislation, practices, and conversations as we move the dialogue on the longevity revolution forward.