



**Statement by HelpAge International to 47th Commission for
Social Development
4th – 13th February 2009**

**Delivered by Dr Tavengwa Nhongo, Africa Policy Director, HelpAge
International**

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman,
Honourable Chairperson,

I speak to you as a representative of HelpAge International, a global network of organisations that helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.

Commitment 4 of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration committed governments to 'promote social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights'¹.

Central to this vision of a society for all is intolerance of all inequalities and discrimination, the promotion of solidarity and the participation of all, including older people.

Everywhere the world is ageing fast: by 2050 one in five of the world's population will be over the age of 60, with over three-quarters in developing countries².

We need to invest in older people, starting now.

Global ageing is a defining stage in history that will change everything from business to finance to society and culture. It is time for ageing to influence, and not be on the margins of, public policy, including social integration policies.

¹ Commitment 4, *Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development*, 1995
<http://www.un.org/documents/qa/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>

² UNDESA, *World Population Prospects: the 2006 Revision*, 2006

Honourable Chairperson,

Older women and men are often the backbone of family and community, the bedrock of socially integrated societies, yet they are still amongst the poorest of the poor.

Recognising and supporting their contributions would result in more socially cohesive, equitable and resilient societies.

We must listen to the voices of older people who consistently call for national policies that address their financial security, healthcare, shelter and well-being.

Older people want national policies that realise their rights in these areas and protect them against abuse and exploitation. And they ask to be involved in the policy making that affects them.

Honourable Chairperson,

Decisive action is needed now. To achieve social integration Member States should fully integrate older people into their development policies and programmes:

- They should support initiatives to promote and protect the rights of older people
- They should include social security entitlements for older people, for example social pensions, in national social protection frameworks and budgets
- They should mainstream ageing into HIV and AIDS policy and programming in order to ensure the needs of older people are met
- And, finally, they should integrate older people into the design and implementation of humanitarian responses.

Thank you.