

3. Palabras de bienvenida

1. I would like to welcome everyone to this celebration of the International Day of Older Persons. We know the organizations of older persons are busy working towards the human rights, wellbeing and equality of older men and women every day of the year, and this is a well-deserved day in which we celebrate all of you and what you are accomplishing.

2. December 2013 marked the 65th year since the first proposal at the United Nations of a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, which was presented by Argentina. Due to the opposition of other Member States at the time, who alleged they were “not ready” to engage in the discussion of a binding legal instrument, the initiative resulted in a Declaration on the rights of older persons presented to ECOSOC by resolution 213(III) of December 4, 1948.

3. That was over 65 years ago, which means that all over the world, the men and women who were born that day are now “older persons” by most standards, and have been

waiting for a decision by the United Nations, literally, their whole life.

4. Individuals, groups and communities grow old in complex and diverse ways. Not only genetics, but also social determinants and environmental circumstances are part of this process. The complexity of ageing is often misperceived by society, which does not necessarily understand the changes in terms of health, of political participation, of life expectancy that keep redefining what it actually means to be an “older adult”. The current circumstances are very different from the context in which social protection schemes and most human rights conventions were developed fifty years ago. And they keep evolving.

5. We should differentiate the chronological aspects of the definition of older age from its social construction. According to the chronological criteria, established in most national legislations and UN instruments, old age begins at 60 or, for developing countries, at 65. This conventional limit has experienced a greater change, over the past Century, than it had in the previous two thousand years. In

the early Nineteenth Century, one became old by 40. Today, it is difficult to determine at which exact age people become older. The decision to use a specific age as the formal limit for this stage of life should not blur the complexity of the reality we are trying to address.

6. Argentina is happy to join the civil society organizations, the organizations of older persons, the experts from United Nations and representatives from Member States in this celebration that is, also, a call to action and to further understanding of each other.

7. Argentina has been working in the field of social development from a perspective of inclusion, and the firm commitment to guarantee human rights for all in every stage of life. Social rights are human rights, and the State must be vigilant to ensure that benefits reach those men and women who are not easily reached. We are proud to say that the social protection rate in Argentina is over 90%, and that we have achieved one of the highest pension-coverage rates in the region, over 90% as well, through initiatives such as non-contribution pension schemes.

8. We are reflecting today on the theme “Leave no one behind” and we are calling for an inclusive society for all. It is important to achieve a development agenda for the United Nations that is inclusive of all people, regardless of their circumstances. We should not pursue a “development model” that only worsens the barriers to access for those in vulnerable situations. Social action must not only reach those who are easy to be reached, but must endeavor to reach every man and woman. We are glad inclusion has been accepted as one of the overall parameters of the new development post 2015 agenda, and we must endeavor to maintain the concerns and the rights of older persons as an integral part of any agenda.