



Commission on Population and Development

Forty-second session

30 March – 3 April 2009

Theme: The contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

AARP Statement to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development

AARP is honored to be participating in the 42nd Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development, and pleased to be joining government delegations and civil society organizations for these important deliberations on population and development.

AARP stands ready to offer our expertise, demographic research, and experience to these deliberations. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of 40 million members whose mission is to enhance the quality of life for all as we age. AARP has collaborated with the UN for 35 years by participating in major conferences and helping to forge an international constituency on issues impacting older persons.

Since its founding in 1958, AARP has served as a primary source of global information and advocacy on issues affecting aging populations by organizing policy discussions, disseminating concrete statistical and demographic research, and strengthening the network of opinion leaders, policymakers, and advocates who believe that everyone should age with dignity and purpose. AARP has held consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council for over 20 years.

The capacity of governments to assure a fundamental quality of life for hundreds of millions of older citizens is certain to be tested in the decades ahead. The several demographic trends that the Report of the Secretary-General points out – population aging, urbanization, the impact of HIV/AIDS, international migration, poverty among women, particularly older women – will recalibrate the way support systems meet the needs of the aging. From AARP's vantage point, these emerging population shifts raise pointed questions about *how* older people will live: Will their communities be 'livable?' Will they have access to the health care they need? And how financially secure will they be?

International demographic trends present a double-edged sword to people of all ages, not least older persons. However, AARP strongly believes that addressing older persons' needs will strengthen their ability to contribute to the well-being of their families, communities, and society. **Globally, the number of persons aged 60 or over is expected to almost triple, increasing from 739 million in 2009 to 2 billion by 2050 as a result of fertility declines and rising life expectancy.** Further, 65 per cent of the world's older persons already live in the less developed regions and, by 2050, nearly 80 per cent will do so. While population aging is less advanced in developing countries, the populations of a majority of them are poised to enter a period of rapid population aging, increasing by more than five-fold in developing countries, compared to slightly more than two-fold in developed countries.

Because the rapidly increasing numbers of older citizens are presenting our nations with enormous new social and economic challenges, we have been compelled to better promote intergenerational contracts, solidarity, and mutual support systems. These challenges compel us to address difficult questions such as, "What sort of social contract do our governments hold with

interdependent and interconnected world, and as we continue to face a severe global financial crisis, these challenges and questions will become even more critical. In many countries, the economic crisis already threatens to become a social crisis with increasing poverty particularly of older members of society, and even more so of older women.

Meeting the needs of today's older population, particularly in developing nations, seems daunting; yet the needs of older persons in 2050 will pose an even greater challenge. Fortunately, the projected expansion in the working-age population over the next few decades in many of these nations provides a window of opportunity for accelerated economic development. However, reaping its potential benefits depends on an environment for sustainable growth and development. It will be important to use the social and economic benefits that accrue to invest in the health and education of the population and to plan wisely for the aging boom ahead. Older people who are healthy and educated will then be able to continue to make valuable contributions to their societies.

The attainment of the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference of Population and the Millennium Development Goals, many of which are directed at improving the well-being of today's children and men and women of childbearing age, can contribute to laying a more solid foundation for better living conditions of tomorrow's older persons

AARP recognizes that each nation has its own unique challenges and will require policies and programs tailored to its own particular needs. But, clearly, the time has come for us to move forward from discussing the challenges to developing policies and programs that will benefit older persons and to conducting further age-disaggregated research on the situation and needs of persons 60 and older.

Finally, we would like to recall that ten years ago, the General Assembly, through Resolution 47/5, decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. This observance was celebrated by all sectors of society, in all corners of the globe. The International Year of Older persons was celebrated in recognition of humanity's demographic coming of age and the promise it held for maturing attitudes and capabilities in social, economic, and cultural contexts, not least for global peace and development in this 21st century. As we continue to celebrate the world's aging populations ten years later, AARP remains committed to working with the UN and all member states towards creating a society for all ages.

Thank you.

For More Information:
AARP Office of International Affairs
Email: intlaffairs@aarp.org
Website: www.aarpinternational.org