

## **Expert Group Meeting: “Measuring population ageing: Bridging Research and Policy”, Bangkok, Thailand, 25–26 February 2019**

### **Session 2: Ageing in the global development agenda**

Chair: *ESCAP*

1. Presentation: tbd (10-15 minutes)  
*Amal A Rafeh*, DISD/UN
2. Presentation: Ageing (measurements) in the context of SDGs, ICPD and MIPAA (10-15 minutes)  
*Storey Angele*, Titchfield ONS/City Group on Ageing
3. Presentation: tbd (10-15 minutes)  
*Verity McGivern*, HelpAge, tbc
4. Presentation: tbd (10-15 minutes)  
*Keisuke Nakashima*, Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

Discussion (30 minutes)

Population ageing is a well-established global demographic trend, with major socio-economic consequences. The long-term shift of the share of the population from the younger to the older ages is driven mainly by the declining levels of fertility, and also by the increases of life expectancy that are taking place almost everywhere. There is considerable international diversity in the onset and speed of population ageing, which, according to United Nations data, is most advanced in Japan and countries in Europe, followed by Northern America. Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania are projected to follow similar trends over the next few decades. Even in most of African countries, whose populations are still relatively young, the absolute number of older persons is growing rapidly, and is leading to long-term shifts in the age-structure.

Traditionally, the United Nations and most researchers have used measures and indicators that are mostly or entirely based on people’s chronological age, which provides a simple, clear and easily replicable way to measure and track various indicators of ageing. At the same time, there has been increasing recognition that the health status, type and level of activity, productivity, and other socio-economic characteristics of older persons have changed significantly over the last century, and even over the last several decades. This has led to the development of alternative concepts and measures of ageing, which provide different outlooks on the levels and trends of ageing, and a more nuanced appreciation of what ageing means in different contexts. At the frontline is the Characteristics Approach to the measurement of population ageing developed at IIASA.

These changes and the various approaches to understanding and measuring ageing, have important implications for the design and implementation of national development policies and programs, and for the follow-up and review of internationally agreed development goals that are related to or are affected by population ageing. Specifically, the different ways of measuring ageing affect the assessments of the evolution of the number of older persons, their living conditions, their contributions to the societies where they live and their needs for social protection. They have

significant implications for labour markets, life-long education and health, and the interactions and mutual support of older persons with the younger generations.

Recognizing the diverse stages and characteristics of ageing in various regions of the world, as well as the recent developments and innovations in measurement, the Population Division the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA), and Chulalongkorn University, in collaboration with the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), are organizing an international expert group meeting on “*Measuring Population Ageing: Bridging Research and Policy*”, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25 to 26 February 2019.

This expert meeting will seek to take stock of different concepts and methodologies, and their applicability to and usefulness for various policy analyses and purposes. It will bring together experts to discuss key questions related to the measurement of population ageing, including discussion of traditional and new concepts and methods, and to assess their scope and limitations to support national policy design and implementation, as well as the regional and global review of progress in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, as noted above. Experts from governmental and international organizations, from research institutions as well as civil society organizations will be invited to discuss the applicability of various measures of ageing in different contexts.

This session will discuss Ageing in the global development agenda. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a universal plan of action to achieve sustainable development in a balanced manner and seeks to realize the human rights of all people. It calls for leaving no one behind and for ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are met for all segments of society, at all ages, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable—including older persons.

Demographers early on have recognized population ageing as a success story. Frank W. Notestein, the first Director of the Population Division, stated at the Symposium on Social and Economic Problems of Ageing’ in 1953 convened at the American Philosophical Society that ‘viewed as a whole the ‘problem of ageing’ is not a problem at all. It is only the pessimistic way of looking at a great triumph of civilization’. Two World Assemblies on Ageing (Vienna 1982 & Madrid 2002) were convened by the United Nations for the international community to recognize population ageing as a challenge, but more so as an opportunity for development.

While the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in September 2000, made no specific mention of global ageing, the Sustainable Development Goals with their pledge ‘to leave no one behind’ can no longer exclude older persons and their right to be included in all development processes.

This session is expected to set the stage and possibly address the following points:

- Address the need for revised concepts of ageing and older persons that reflect the diversity of population ageing globally;
- Highlight the fact that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach;

- Discuss the need for different and more appropriate ways of defining and measuring population ageing and older persons in specific national and even sub-national contexts to enable policy makers and planners to develop more realistic and better-targeted approaches to development.

**Please note that all speakers are requested to adhere to the 15-minute time limit to allow for discussion after the session.**

Should you have additional questions, please contact either Ms. Stefanie Andruchowitz ([andrucho@iiasa.ac.it](mailto:andrucho@iiasa.ac.it)) or Ms. Karoline Schmid: ([schmidk@un.org](mailto:schmidk@un.org))