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71st session of the General Assembly

**Remarks by H.E. Peter Thomson,
International Day of Older Persons
“Take a Stand Against Ageism”**

Janet Sigal, Chair NGO Committee on Ageing,
Nelida Quintero, Co-Chair UNIDOP Planning sub-committees,
H.E Ambassador Martin Garcia Moritan, Permanent Representative of Argentina,
Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, DESA,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to join you today to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons.

I would like to thank the NGO Committee on Ageing, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Permanent Mission of Argentina, for organizing today's event, and for bringing focused attention to the pervasive and destructive issue of ageism.

Ageism is a global phenomenon.

While many societies take pride in the reverence with which they regard the wisdom and enlightenment of older persons, far too often this veneration has not benefited the lived experiences of older persons.

Prejudicial attitudes, negative stereotypes, restrictive social and cultural norms, and prohibitive legislation and policies can often serve to devalue and limit older persons' contributions to society. The compounding effects of other forms of discrimination and vulnerability, including gender inequality, disability, and race, as well as poverty, food insecurity, and lack of adequate housing, can have devastating consequences.

Countering ageism, combatting bias and discrimination, and upholding the human rights of older persons, must be addressed as a global priority – not only as a moral imperative, but as a human rights and socio-economic necessity.

Globally, our population is ageing at an unprecedented rate. Almost one quarter of the world's population is expected to be 60 years or older by 2050.

Last year, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by world leaders with the historic promise of transforming our world by eliminating extreme poverty, building prosperity, sustaining peace, and combating climate change.

The universal nature of the SDGs, and the foundational promise that its benefits will reach all people, means that achieving the SDGs will require that we specifically address our approach to ageing and the rights of older persons.

By 2030 the number of people aged 60 and above is set to increase from 900 million in 2015 to 1400 million. Our challenge therefore is not only to ensure that development gains reach older persons, but that their knowledge and expertise are also harnessed, as a fundamental part of the unprecedented mobilization of resources that will be necessary to deliver on the SDGs.

For the General Assembly, we have made the principle objective of the 71st Session driving a universal push to achieve meaningful progress in the implementation of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

I encourage you all to become a part of this effort to advance the realization of the SDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Persons living longer and healthier lives is a fortunate issue for us to contend with. However, the consequences of this global trend – including the rebalancing of our societies, and the impact on our economies and communities – require focused policy attention.

Governments around the world need to develop programs and policies that respond directly to ageing societies and empower older persons.

Older persons are one of our world's greatest, and often most overlooked and under-appreciated, resources. Promoting and protecting the human rights of older persons by countering the corrosive effects of ageism is only our first step towards ensuring that all older persons are able to live their lives with respect, dignity, and life-long opportunity.

Thank you.