

**The 20th Annual Celebration of the International Day of Older Persons
“Older Persons and the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”
Thursday, October 7, 2010**

**Welcome Remarks on Behalf of the NGO Committee on Ageing
Jessica Frank, Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing/NY**

Chef du Cabinet of the General Assembly, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the NGO Committee on Ageing, welcome! As we mark the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons we celebrate the fact that people around the world are living longer and healthier lives.

As we have heard, this is the first time in history there will be more older persons in the world than children in just a couple decades. This is certainly a reason to celebrate. Throughout the month of October older persons, their families and communities gather around the world to celebrate and march in capital cities to call to attention the contributions that older persons make to society.

As we celebrate it is also important that we recognize that we are far from fulfilling our goal of building a society for all ages. Just two weeks ago, President Obama and all world leaders gathered in New York for the United Nations General Assembly. Heads of State presented their agendas, priorities and concerns on the world stage and reaffirmed a renewed support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an ambitious agenda world leaders set 10 years ago to tackle global poverty.

There is no doubt that the MDGs have been influential in galvanizing international support and providing momentum to tackle poverty, hunger, disease, climate change and discrimination against women. However, as a Committee of organizations representing older persons around the world, we are concerned about the continued exclusion of older women and men in international agreement and the Millennium Development Goals. There is significant lack of recognition of the critical contribution they make towards the achievement of the MDGs.

Older people remain invisible in efforts to achieve the MDGs

Poverty affects whole households and is transmitted across generations. Old age can be a period of extreme vulnerability to poverty and ill health and social exclusion. It has been estimated that currently less than 20% of older people in the world are covered by pensions which suggests that as many as 607 million people aged 60 and above lack income security.

Despite this, older people are not explicitly mentioned in any of the MDG targets or indicators to measure their progress. As a result most development policies and programs

focus their efforts on children, young people and the working age poor, lacking any understanding of the critical social, economic and contributions of older people.

When older people's rights are respected and their efforts supported, the contributions they make is even greater and significantly contributes to achieving the MDGs.

The NGO Committee on Ageing calls for a more inclusive, rights-based approach to ensure all those living in chronic poverty, including older women and men, be reached.

Through the UN International Day of Older Persons this year we hope to:

- ❖ **Raise awareness** of the objectives set forth in the Millennium Development Goals and of their relevance to older persons.
- ❖ **Identify the activities of older persons** to achieve these Goals
- ❖ **Exchange ideas** for further involvement of older persons in the progress towards the MDGs.
- ❖ **Develop action items** to recognize the human dignity and equality of older women and men.

Through the speakers you will hear throughout the rest of the morning, we are certain you will help us to accomplish these objectives.

I want to take a moment to thank the individuals who have worked tirelessly to organize this commemoration:

First and foremost the Chairs of the International Day of Older Persons: Denise Gosselin-Caldera and Patricia Brownell.

Together they worked with an intergeneration team to make this event a success: Bethany Brooks, Mary Covington, Alexandra Collier, James Collins, Florence L. Denmark, Lia Daichman, Erica Dhar, Vernie Ellis, Linda D. Misek-Falkoff, Ian Laidlaw, Helen R. Hamlin, Jack Kupferman, Amine Lamrabat, Rosemary Lane, Melissa Lattanzio, Judy Lear, Kaja Meade, María Luz Melon, Elizabeth Nolasco, Nancy Ross, Jesús Pérez, Rosa Resnick, Edward J. Ryan, Rick Sanford, Janet Sigel, Norma P. Simon, Susan Somers, Richard Velayo, Peter R. Walker and Robert Venne.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication.

Thank you for your attention and enjoy the rest of the morning.