

Declaration of the Rights of Older Persons

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The Declaration of Human Rights of Older Persons

Preamble

At the first United Nations World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, some consideration was given to human rights issues, and in 2000, Mary Robinson, United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights, emphasized the importance of protecting the human rights of older persons. However, no official United Nations document has ever identified and specified what these rights are and why they are important.

In April 2002 the second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing will be held in Madrid, Spain. As a nongovernmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations, the International Longevity Center-USA, in collaboration with its sister centers in Japan, France, the United Kingdom and the Dominican Republic, will highlight this critical subject.

The International Longevity Center-USA proposes that the following Declaration of the Rights of Older Persons become the basis of action as well as discussion at the Assembly and beyond.

This Declaration comes at a time of misery and chaos for many older citizens of the world who have lost children and grandchildren in armed conflicts, who are often homeless and destitute, who suffer from malnutrition and ill health, and who live in societies that cannot provide them with the basic necessities of life.

It comes at a time of global disharmony in the context of powerlessness and attendant rage, shaped in part by vast divides in education, wealth, and longevity as well as ideology and theology.

It comes at a time when the United World Assembly on Aging meets, with the goal of creating bridges to intergenerational cooperation and mutual respect between developing and developed nations.

May this Declaration, which concerns societies as well as individuals, serve to advance the struggle for human rights. We must not simply bear witness. We must compel change.

Declaration of the Rights of Older Persons

Whereas the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world,

Whereas human progress has increased longevity and enabled the human family to encompass several generations within one lifetime, and whereas the older generations have historically served as the creators, elders, guides, and mentors of the generations that followed,

Whereas the older members of society are subject to exploitation that takes the form of physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse, occurring in their homes as well as in institutions such as nursing homes, and are often treated in cruel and inaccurate ways in language, images, and actions,

Whereas the older members of society are not provided the same rich opportunities for social, cultural and productive roles and are subject to selective discrimination in the delivery of services otherwise available to other members of the society and are subject to selective job discrimination in hiring, promotion, and discharge,

Whereas older women live longer than men and experience more poverty, abuse, chronic diseases, institutionalization, and isolation,

Whereas disregard for the basic human rights of any group results in prejudice, marginalization, and abuse, recourse must be sought from all appropriate venues, including the civil, government and corporate worlds, as well as by advocacy of individuals, families, and older persons,

Whereas older people were once young and the young will one day be old and exist in the context of the unity and continuity of life,

Whereas the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other United Nations documents attesting to the inalienable rights of all humankind do not identify and specify older persons as a protected group,

Therefore new laws must be created, and laws that are already in effect must be enforced to combat all forms of discrimination against older people,

Further, the cultural and economic roles of older persons must be expanded to utilize the experience and wisdom that come with age,

Further, to expand the cultural and economic roles of older persons, an official declaration of the rights of older persons must be established, in conjunction with the adoption by nongovernment organizations of a manifesto which advocates that the

world's nations commit themselves to protecting the human rights and freedoms of older persons at home, in the workplace, and in institutions, and offers affirmatively the rights to work, a decent retirement, protective services when vulnerable, and end-of-life care with dignity.