

SECOND FOLLOW-UP MEETING OF THE BRASILIA DECLARATION Towards a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

In the context of the efforts by the Argentinean government towards a Convention for the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons, representatives from 22 countries from within and without the region met on 21-22 May 2009 at the San Martin Palace to take part in a meeting coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and the Foreign Ministry of Argentina.

Taking on the lessons from its history, Argentina hosted the Second Meeting to follow-up on the Brasilia Declaration of 2007. We must recall that it was Eva Duarte de Peron who proclaimed to the world, for the first time, the Rights of Old Age, at the UN General Assembly meeting in Paris in 1948. Also, Argentina was the first country in the world to recognize such rights in its Constitution in 1949.

The population aging is an unprecedented phenomenon that will only deepen over time. During the XX Century, the ratio of older persons increased, and that trend is expected to continue in the XXI Century. In 2007, 10.7% of the world population was sixty years of age or older. In 2025, it is expected for that ratio to be 15.1% and in 2050 it will increase to 21.7%.¹

Every country in the world has experienced changes in the distribution of its population by age – nevertheless, the regional differences regarding the magnitude of the ageing process are considerable, bearing in mind that each country is in a different stage of the demographic transition. In 2007, 5.3% of the population of Africa was sixty or older, and 9.6% of the population of Asia and the Pacific were older persons. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 9.1% of the population was 60 or older: in Oceania, 14.4% of the population consisted of older persons, while in Europe the older adults in the population were 21.1%.²

Even though, today, the population of older adults in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean is younger than that of Europe, projections indicate that those regions will experience a rapid growth in the population segment of older persons in the future, as a result of the high growth rate of this population. At the international level, the population over 60 has a growth rate of 2.6%, but this rate is higher in Africa (2.8%), Asia (3.0%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (3.4%).³

Thus, even if in mid-1900, the demographic ageing was a phenomenon predominant in developed countries, in the future we expect that ageing will affect the population in developing countries faster, which implies a shorter time for adaptation to the consequences of this demographic phenomenon, while in the context of a lesser level of socio-economic development.

In the specific case of Latin America and the Caribbean, this is a region that is ageing slowly but surely. In absolute terms, between 2000 and 2025, 57 millions of persons over 60 years of age will be added to the existing 41 million, and between 2025 and 2050, the increase will be by 86 million. This is a population in fast growth, at a master rate that the rest of the segments. The change speed of this age group is estimated to be between

1 United Nations (2007) *World Population Ageing, 2007*. New York, DESA.

2 Ibid

3 (see CEPAL/CELADE (2007) *Report on the Regional Strategy for the Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, LC/L.2749 (CRE-2/3) Santiago, Chile)

three and five times master for the terms 2000-2025 and 2025-2050. According to this dynamic, the proportion of persons older than 60 within the total population will grow fourfold between 2000-2050, so that one in every four Latin American and Caribbean persons in 2050 will be an older adult.

There is no legally binding instrument to standardize and protect the rights of older persons. In international doctrine of human rights, "age" is an issue that has been dealt with under the umbrella category "any other social condition", which refers by extension to the age and generational differences, but has not been treated explicitly.

This is why Argentina has initiated an international action towards a Convention to protect the rights of older persons, and in this context that the Social Development Ministry, the Foreign Ministry organized the Second Follow-up Meeting with the support of PAHO and CELADE. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights, the National Institute of Social Services for Retirees and Pensioners, UNFPA and the National University of La Plata.

For two days, representatives of governments, of NGOs, experts, scientific institutions and international agencies such as ECLAC/CELADE, PAHO/WHO, CIDH, OAS, and UN/DESA participated in this meeting. According with the agreements in the Brasilia Declaration signed on December 2007, the follow-up which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2008, and in line with its active policies pro the rights of older persons, they worked in the formulation of recommendations for a Convention on Older Persons.

Participants included representatives of the following countries: Germany, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, US, Spain, Netherlands, Mali, México, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Suriname, Uruguay, Costa Rica and also from Antilles, besides Argentina.

There was an agreement on the fundamental principles that must guide the future Convention. They are: respect for the inherent dignity, independence of older persons, including the freedom to make decisions and retain their individual autonomy, non-discrimination on grounds of age or any other attribute: the full and effective participation and inclusion in society: equal opportunity: accessibility; gender equality; respect and deference for the ethnical and / or racial origin; recognition that there are links and obligations among persons, regardless of their age, because of the fact they are members of the same political community.

There was also agreement on some minimum contents, which will be further discussed in future meetings to generate the articles of the Convention. Such are: Equality and non discrimination; Equal rights between men and women; Awareness raising; Accessibility; Right to life; Indigenous older persons; Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies; Equality before the law; Access to justice; Personal freedom and safety; Prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Prevention of exploitation, violence, abuse and ill-treatment; Protection of the integrity of older persons; Independent living and inclusion in the community; Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information; Respect for privacy; Respect for the home and the different forms of family; Education; Health; Work and employment; Guaranteed income, social security and pension; Priority health attention; Adequate standard of living and social protection; Participation in the political and public life; Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports.

The next meeting shall take place in the Republic of Chile in the second half of 2009.