



FAFICS MATTERS

FAFICS AND AGEING

Ageing is our business

This edition of FAFICS Matters is devoted to Ageing and the involvement of the Federation in this crucial issue for us all - wherever we may be in the world.

We know that a number of different UN system agencies (WHO, UN-DESA, UN-ECE, ILO, UNFPA) as well as the World Economic Forum and the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities are actively engaged in ageing matters.

In a discussion in the FAFICS Bureau, what also emerged was that different agencies and entities view ageing from their own perspective - be it Human Rights, Social Protection, Health or Geriatrics and Gerontology.

With input from Dr John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course at WHO, the Bureau considered that:

- ageing is largely being ignored by the UN system of Organizations, at least in any coordinated manner.

- it is crucial to ensure that ageing is incorporated into the strategies for development which would mark the post Millennium Development Goals (MDG) period. Although next to no mention has been made in the MDG's, there could be no post MDG framework without ageing.

- the current state of "academically rigorous knowledge" is not adequate to determine norms.

- the "interest" of the diverse groups is not significant enough to generate resources - "noise was not the equivalent of doing something".

continued on page 2

May 2014

We very much regret that, for reasons beyond our control, there has been a hiatus in the production of FAFICS Matters.

This issue of our Newsletter revolves around Ageing and FAFICS response to it.

On this page is a reflection on the subject which took place in the Bureau in November 2013.

On page 2-3 are some data. Page 4 reflects some facts about ageing raised in recent WHO publications.

One of the key areas of concern for FAFICS is the Open ended Working Group on Ageing established by the UN General Assembly in 2010. The Working Group has held four sessions to date. Its fifth session will take place from 30 July to 1 August 2014. FAFICS representatives at the Fourth Session have provided reports on their findings (pages 5 to 7). This matter will be on the FAFICS Council agenda in July.

On page 8 are some considerations by Vice-president Michael Atchia which will also be taken up by the Council.

continued from page 1

FAFICS cannot stay silent on an issue which is of such global importance .

It is time for a coordinated global approach

First the issue is one of awareness raising with a view to ensuring that Executive Heads of UN Agencies are not only seized with the priority which

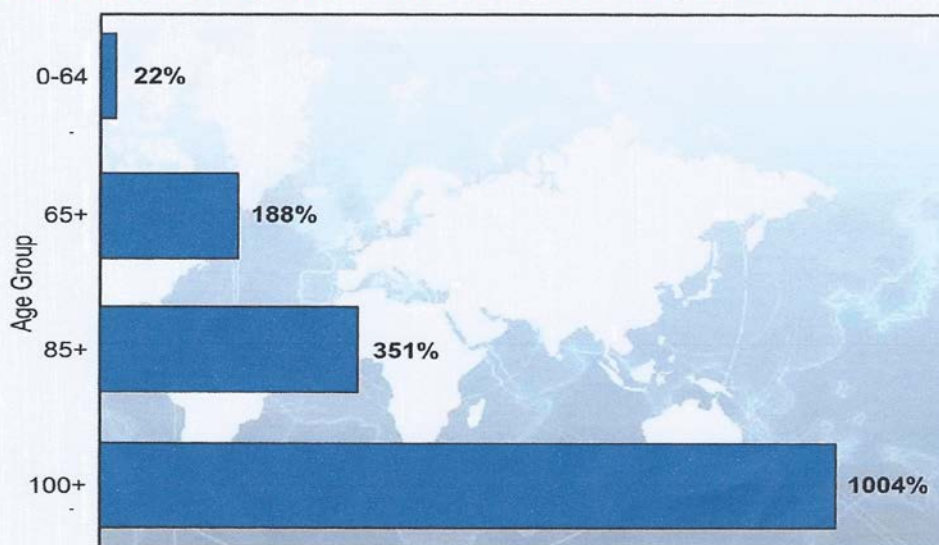
ageing deserves but are prepared to review in CEB for example, which agency should be doing what.

Activism is needed but this should be tempered by caution. The potential result of such an active approach should be carefully analysed. Care has to be taken not to be carried away by one or other initiative be it the creation of a UN agency for ageing or any other until global support were secured most notably in terms of Financial Resources.



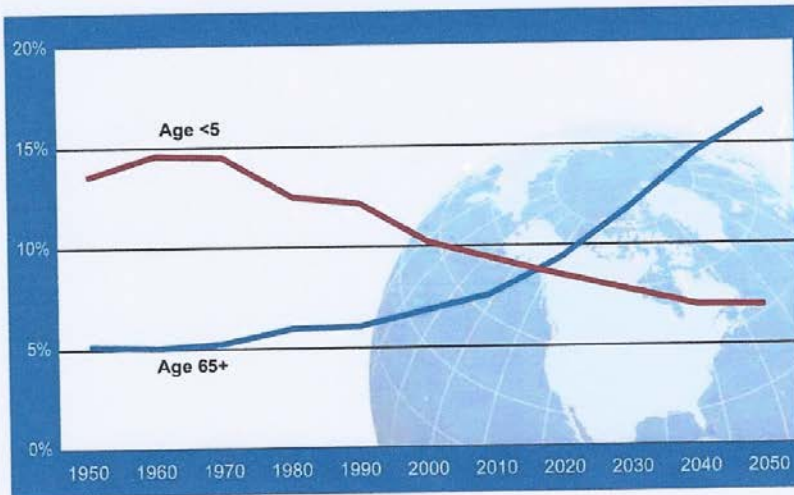
FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS DES ANCIENS FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX
FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS
FEDERACION DE ASOCIACIONES DE EX-FUNCIONARIOS INTERNACIONALES

Percentage Change in the World's Population by Age: 2010-2050



Source: United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*.
Available at: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp>.

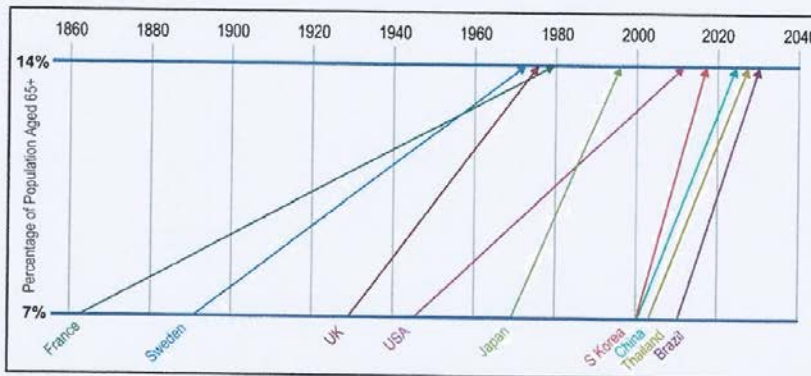
Young Children and Older People as a Percentage of Global Population: 1950-2050



Source: United Nations. *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*. Available at: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp>.

The Speed of Population Aging

Time required or expected for percentage of population aged 65 and over to rise from 7 percent to 14 percent



Source: Kinsella K, He W. *An Aging World: 2008*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Aging and U.S. Census Bureau, 2009.

FACTS ABOUT AGEING RAISED IN RECENT WHO PUBLICATIONS

Population ageing is a global phenomenon that is now occurring fastest in low- and middle-income countries.

While Europe and Japan were among the first places to experience population ageing, the most dramatic change is now occurring in countries such as Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mongolia. The first places to experience population ageing, the most dramatic change is now occurring in countries such as Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mongolia.

Population ageing is inextricably linked with socioeconomic development.

Typically, as a country develops, more people survive childhood and childbirth, fertility falls, and people start to live longer. These changes in turn reinforce development. But they are also the drivers behind population ageing. Unless societies adapt in ways that foster the health and participation of older people, this inevitable demographic transition may serve as a brake to future socioeconomic advances.

While ageing presents challenges to society, it also creates many opportunities.

Population ageing will challenge society by increasing demand for acute and primary health care, straining pension and social security systems and increasing need for long-term and social care. But older people also make important contributions as family members, volunteers and as active participants in the workforce. They are a significant social and economic resource, and longer life expectancy means a greater opportunity to contribute to society. Where the balance lies between these challenges and opportunities will be determined by how society responds.

Fostering good health in older age is central to the global response to population ageing.

Poor health, negative stereotypes and barriers to participation all currently marginalize older people, undermine their contribution to society and increase the costs of population ageing. Investing in health lessens the disease burden, helps prevent isolation and has broader benefits for society by maintaining the independence and productivity of older people.

Poor health in older age is not just a burden for the individual but also for their families and for society as a whole.

Loss of good health can mean that an older person who was previously a family resource may no longer be able to contribute and may, instead, require significant support. The cost of their health care can impoverish the whole family. This burden is spread inequitably. Those with the least resources, or who live in the poorest areas, are most at risk.

Ageing is interrelated with other major global trends such as urbanization, technological change and globalization.

Just as migration and urbanization are changing social structures and relationships, longer life expectancy will influence the way people live and plan their lives. Approaches based on 20th century social models are unlikely to be effective in this rapidly changing environment.

Increasing longevity may even lead us to rethink the way we view "old" itself.

With people living 10 or 20 years longer, a range of life options that would only rarely have been achievable in the past become possible.

There is no simple "magic bullet" solution to the challenges of population ageing.

Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

(Report by Mary Beth Weinberger, AFICS, New York - also representing FAFICS)

The fourth session of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Ageing took place at UN headquarters in New York during 12-15 August 2013. The General Assembly established the group in 2010 "for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons by considering the existing international framework ... and identifying possible gaps and how best to address them, including by considering, as appropriate, the feasibility of further instruments and measures" (resolution 65/182).

Background

Discussions at previous OEWG sessions revealed a general agreement that older persons everywhere experience serious age-based discrimination and other violations of human rights. However, there was no consensus regarding whether it was desirable to adopt further international human rights instruments and related measures in order to address those problems. Some countries "observed that existing international human rights standards and principles apply to older persons... and that current deficiencies in the protection of the rights of older persons could be addressed by more effective implementation of the existing mechanisms" (from the Chair's summary in A/AC.278/2012/1). Some other countries maintained that there were normative gaps - issues that particularly affected older persons that were not addressed in existing human rights instruments - and that the existing human rights framework was not sufficiently specific regarding the types of discrimination and rights violations older persons experience. They called for drafting of a new binding international instrument to promote and protect the rights of older person.

In December 2012, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/139, deciding that the OEWG would, "as part of its mandate and starting from its...fourth session..., consider proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons..." It also requested the Working Group to present to the General Assembly, at the earliest possible date, a proposal containing the main elements that should be included in such an international instrument. The resolution was adopted on a vote of 54 in favor, 5 opposed, 118 abstaining. Countries voting in favor included most of those in Latin America and the Caribbean and some developing countries in other regions. Developed countries generally opposed negotiating a new binding agreement, although most of them, along with many developing countries, abstained during the vote (see General Assembly official records, A/67/PV.60).

Fourth Session

In advance of the fourth OEWG session, many countries and civil society organizations submitted a note verbale outlining elements that a new international legal instrument might include. Those notes, as well as statements and presentations made during the session, are posted on the session's website: <http://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/fourthsession.shtml>.

Based on informal impressions, the number of national delegations attending the fourth session was similar to the number that attended the third session in 2012, while the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) - or at least the number of their prepared statements and other interventions - increased.

The session was organized around a series of issue-focused expert panels followed by interactive discussions. The first panel focused on the second review and appraisal of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing. That process involved reviews at the regional level and a global review that the Commission on Social Development considered earlier in 2013.

The second panel provided an update on regional multilateral processes regarding human rights of older persons.

The third and fourth panels focused, respectively, on social security and the right to health and on discrimination and access to work, and the fifth panel meeting featured an interactive dialogue with civil society organizations. (NGOs also participated actively in the discussions earlier in the session.) All the civil society organizations that spoke advocated the adoption of a binding international agreement to promote and protect the rights of older persons.

personal reflections from Dimitri Argyriades

1. Introductory Remarks

More than most UN events, the Meeting was attended by a host of NGOs along with delegations of some 150 Member States and Secretariat Staff. It was deeply interactive, with groups from civil society freely voicing their opinions, along with those of governments and panels representative of regional organizations. Very rich in information and ideas, the meeting was undoubtedly well-conducted and successful in engaging and involving NGOs from different parts of the world. Even so, it could be said that it ran out of steam by noon of Wednesday, and that improved time management would have enhanced the focus on overarching issues and also spared the audience too many repetitive statements.

Having said this, nonetheless, I still believe that the meeting was timely and important in singling out, exploring and underscoring issues of growing salience and relevance worldwide.

2. The issues

There is an old Greek saying that old age carries a lot in its trail. Traditional perceptions emphasized its *physiological* limitations and transformations, illnesses and disabilities. What this four-day event has shown is that, with better health and people living longer, these drawbacks are receding to some extent, but mostly giving way to equally or more pressing *economic, psychological* and *societal* concerns. Such issues and concerns have only recently started to draw and hold the attention of global public opinion, international organizations, the governments and legislatures of Member States, as well as NGOs... And not a day too soon, one might be inclined to argue *Why?* In the words of one of the statements from a well-known NGO (*Gray Panthers*),

"In 1948, the world wide number of persons over the age of 60 represented a very small percentage of the global population ... in 2011 the global population of those 60+ was estimated to be 809 million persons. Modern demographic projections suggest that there will be more than 2 billion ... by 2050."

From 1 in 9 today, in other words, the world's old age population will likely approximate 1 in 5 -- or 1 in 4, for some regions -- by the middle of this century. Accompanying this trend is a corresponding decline in the fertility rates of the developed countries, but not of these countries alone, and *feminization* of the old age population, also more pronounced in the North than in the South. Even before the crisis the effects of ageing were visible in the States of East Asia and Europe. Already, with youth unemployment in excess of 50 per cent in Southern Europe especially, this trend has been reinforced. "According to the EU, the total number of live births in 31 European countries fell by 3.5 per cent between 2008 and 2011. Decline, in absolute numbers, over the past half century is sharper still (*New York Times*, Wednesday, August 14, 2013, pp. A1 & 6).

Although for some time now, the demographic projections have been signaling a drop in population numbers (in Germany, for instance, by more than 15 per cent in the next 50 years), it would be safe to say that governments at large are only just awakening to the *size* and the *complexity* of this *multi-faceted trend*. The ongoing Open Ended Working Group on Ageing at the United Nations demonstrated as much.

The Changing Paradigm

Over the past three days, participants from governments and civil society alike touched on *legislative measures* and policies adopted in several parts of the world to deal with this phenomenon. What the debate has shown is limited success even in developed countries, arguably due to *mutations* in the configuration of the problem of ageing itself. In the words of many participants, the world seems to be moving from the traditional *paradigm*, which saw ageing as an issue of *social protection* primarily, to a paradigm which stresses the *human rights* of seniors. The term *ageism* has been coined and was frequently used at the Meeting to describe a sudden surge of *discrimination* in response to *stereotypes*, which are turning old age people into a bogey and a vulnerable group.

Many speakers pointed out that, in many countries, ageism like sexism and xenophobia, have drawn strength from the perception of "senior" men and women as taking jobs away from other, younger adults. The necessary lifting of mandatory retirement, now that people live much longer, created opportunities that were not there before but, on this very account, reinforced this wrong perception and thus created the need to afford the old protection from exclusion and to enforce their rights. Many groups representing the elderly argued forcefully in support of an "international instrument with the highest form of enforceability to protect the human rights of older persons," in general. Repeatedly, it was mentioned that demographic trends were an irreversible process, which made it both imperative and urgent to take, in timely fashion, the necessary measures to both prepare the future and mitigate the effects from present exploitation, maltreatment and elder abuse.

The Range of Measures Needed

Most speakers, from both governments and NGOs, broadly agreed on the range of the steps that were required. These included:

- *Consciousness-raising* to combat the surge of prejudice and stereotyping;
- *Legislative enactments* to ban existing practices of exclusion, inequality, passive discrimination but also to promote full inclusion of the elderly in the labour force, as well as in the political, civic and cultural life of the community;
- Such provision of *facilities* for people with *disabilities* as may be required in the work of public places; and
- Improvement of the quality, accessibility and *affordability* of *health care* delivery with palliative care, where needed; adequate protection, in cases of *guardianship* which, in the case of dementia, Alzheimer's and other afflictions, tend to impair the ability of elderly persons to take care of themselves and also fend for themselves.

A Cleavage of Approaches

The issue as many put it was the overarching need to safeguard the human rights of the aged as a vulnerable group; promote their integration into society, in order to protect the freedom, equality, autonomy and security that all citizens expect, as well as to continue affording them the means of a dignified existence. In this regard, however, there was a marked division between those who supported a *dedicated instrument*, specifically targeting the needs of old age populations and those who took the view that *soft laws* and enactments already in place were sufficient. In favour of the former, statements put forward the view that old age was no different, in this regard, than women, the disabled and the children, whose need for *specific protection* had received due recognition in the form of dedicated international conventions, notwithstanding the "umbrella" provision afforded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In favour of the latter, it was argued, by governments mostly, that *consensus* in support of such an instrument had yet to emerge world-wide. The most comprehensive of the existing instruments addressing the unique concerns facing the older persons was the *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*. Despite the broad support and praise, which it received from the majority of speakers during the present Conference, it had significant drawbacks, which drew repeated mention in the course of the debate and which the Secretary-General himself had recently acknowledged. The Plan lacked enforceability. But such was also the nature of other instruments both national and regional, of the EU, for instance, which qualified as *SOFT laws* and were designated as such, in the course of the discussion.

In light of this situation, government representatives mostly from northern countries (e.g. Canada, USA, Russia, France, et.al.) were inclined to take view that, rather than add an instrument to already existing treaties, more attention ought to be paid to *capacity-building*, on the national level especially, in order to improve the level and the quality of implementation, as well as *oversight* to take care of infringements and power abuse in some cases.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At the concluding session, the Chair, Mr. F. Villegas Beltran (Argentina) complimented all participants on their inputs and contributions. He mentioned, in particular, the role of civil society, whose presence at the meeting had been decisive. He noted, nonetheless, that this was mostly limited to groups from North America and Europe, although Latin America had also played a part.

This is a hopeful development; needs to be carried further, as more countries from the South join a movement and a trend of truly global dimensions. Although in its present form and composition, the debate has been overly weighted in favour of the governments and of the North, this situation is changing. The Working Group is new, only three years old. For now, it would appear that, while there is consensus on the acuity of challenges facing the senior citizens world-wide, there is still divergence of views on how best to deal with these challenges. Most of the representatives of groups from civil society and groups of Member States in Africa and Latin America have stressed the pressing need for a legislative instrument specifically directed to the rights of older persons and seeking to protect them. In support of this position, some of the expert panelists, including Dr. Israel Doron, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Gerontology, of Haifa University, have pointed to the ways that legislative instruments, "soft", as they no doubt still are, have influenced the thinking of courts of justice world-wide.

Contrary to this stance, the majority of the governments of North America and Europe, as well as Japan, cast doubt on the utility of yet a new convention, or "soft law", especially if this instrument did not reflect a consensus that were universal. The problem, in their view, was one of the implementation. They were firmly of the opinion that the United Nations, in cooperation with governments and the groups of civil society, ought to focus their efforts, instead, on narrowing a serious *implementation gap*. This entailed capacity-building and *institution-building*. Close to home, an example that was offered in the session of Wednesday morning was the work of the Regional Attorney at the New York District Office of the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, where Ms. Elizabeth Grossman has worked as Trial Attorney since 1993. She declared herself available to share the fruits of her experience.

From "institutions-in-action", as well as delegations - Canada, the U.S., Switzerland, the EU and France *inter alias* - the stress was on such terms and expressions as *progressive realization*, *reasonable accommodation*, *incrementalism* and *affordability*; no need for drastic new departures, in other words.

I personally agree with this approach. Considering our role as AFICS or as FAFICS, I think that, given our membership and composition, we need to listen carefully and, arguably, also explore possible ways of engaging in the debates and activities of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, in the future. These discussions and activities are bound to acquire more salience in the future and, conceivably in due course, also affect the interests and status of UN personnel, both active and retired. Meanwhile, there might be advantages in seeking to build bridges to groups and institutions, notably close to home with which we share concerns and from which we could learn. I mentioned some such groups and institutions in this report, but many more were present during this 4-day meeting, including AARP, the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People and the Age Platform Europe, particularly useful to people in Geneva and Vienna. Based on a closing statement by the Chair, Mr. Villegas, we would be playing our part in paving the way for the future; a world in which the elderly are bound to form a growing and arguably more influential segment of public opinion.

Calendar

7- 9 July 2014

FAFICS Council, FAO, Rome

10 - 18 July 2014

United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund,
FAO, Rome

30 July - 1 August 2014

Fifth Session of the United Nations Open Ended Working Group on Ageing

'Aged but not out'

Exploring FAFICS'S PROPOSAL (to be sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations) for improving the lot of elderly people during their lifetime, through the creation of a dedicated UN body such as UNAA.

Witnessing: the trend of ageing populations in most countries, leading to a tidal wave of research and consultation on how the growing number of elderly will impact the design and diversity of services they can still offer, the funding resources they rely upon, and the delivery channels they use for health and other welfare services.

We are all aware of how an increasingly elderly population can have a drastic impact on issues such as pension schemes and health care. Less frequently discussed is the much broader impact the ageing of the population is having across the board-and the key question of what would be meaningful roles (in close synergy with the younger generation) for this largely educated, highly experienced group of citizens, in the new world order of the 21st century. 8

Considering: the major current demographic trends directly or indirectly related to ageing populations, the crux of this proposal is to explore how international and governmental planning, services and actions will need to change in response to the ageing population.

In most countries the dependency ratio (i.e. the ratio of the economically dependent part of the population - children aged 0-14 years and the elderly aged 65+ years* - to the working-age population, 15-64 years) is on a sharp rise, not just because the aged are living longer but increasingly because young people stay on at university and college until 20/25 years.

Noting: that the 2 billion + of elderly people are the fastest growing sector of a world population now standing at 7 billion +,

Noting: that the UN has operational agencies/programmes dedicated to specific sections of humanity such as *children(UNICEF)*, *women(UN Women)*, *refugees(UNHCR)*, *workers and employers(ILO)*, *people affected by drug and crime(UNDCP)*, *people who are affected by hunger(WFP)*, *developing states(UNDP)*, *small island states etc*, and that none specifically catering for the aged,

FAFICS (as the accepted and operational body at the service of not just its 20,000+ formal members but of all former UN civil servants) **PROPOSES** the creation of a new UN specialised agency or fund or programme with a specific mission to cater for the **needs and role** of the senior citizens of this planet, tentatively referred to here as **UNSCP (United Nations Senior Citizens Programme) or UNAA** (United Nations Agency for the Aged)**.

The subject was extensively discussed at the FAFICS Council meeting at UN, New-York, 8-11 July 2013) led by Michael Atchia who presented the original proposal on behalf of AFICS-Mauritius, under the able guidance of Presiding officer Mary Johnson and with the invaluable input of the ever watchful FAFICS President Roger Eggleston. An astonishing list of wise comments were recorded, supporting the proposal, indicating new venues, highlighting weaknesses but also urging caution not precipitation. The proposal from AFICS-M was adopted unanimously for further development by the Council.

We intend, besides continuing research on the subject, to meet relevant officials of UN and other bodies to consolidate our survey of the often sporadic and discontinued present efforts*** being made on behalf of senior citizens. We will also attempt to consult a caucus of UN elders (former heads of UN agencies and programmes) on the feasibility and format of the UNAA motion.

Finally here we are, through *FAFICS MATTERS*, informing the wider membership and readership of the proposal and inviting you to react or otherwise comment on the UNAA idea.

Thank you for your feedback****. We aim to produce a consolidated format and transmit the same to the Secretary-General early in 2014 for consideration.

Michael Atchia

(Vice-President, FAFICS; Sec. General AFICS-M)

*We have moved a long way since 1875 when the Friendly Societies Act of Britain described *old* as "any age after 50", or those ancient societies where the average life expectancy was around 30 years. The cut off points for old age, which also reflect retirement age, vary between 55 to 60, 62 to 68, and, in most economies, is on the rise.

**UNAA: Any better appellation? The terms aged and elderly are both preferred to old ; in several cultures the descriptions of elder, senior or senior citizen are used, which tends to reflect the experience, knowledge and wisdom (?) which the elderly are deemed to possess.

***Example of ongoing effort: the Open ended working group(OEWG) established by the UN General Assembly in 2010; work being undertaken towards a Convention on the rights of older people; the United Nations International Day of Older Persons is celebrated annually on October 1st to recognize the contributions of older persons and to examine issues that affect their lives.