

## Health & Wellbeing Discussion Forum, 5 April 2025

### Welcome Remarks by Venkatasubramanian Srinivasan, President, UN Pensioners' Association, India

Good morning, everyone,

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the UN Pensioners' Association India, to warmly welcome you all to this special session of the Health & Well-being Discussion Forum—an exclusive initiative of UNPAI dedicated to promoting holistic well-being and meaningful engagement among UN retirees.

This initiative is not just an event; it is a reflection of our deep commitment to ensuring that life after active UN service remains fulfilling, healthy, and enriching.

**Health is not merely the absence of illness**—it is the presence of vitality, purpose, and meaningful engagement in life.

Through this forum, we seek to create a space,

where knowledge meets experience,

where science meets wisdom, and

where we collectively empower each other to embrace aging with dignity and strength.

We're truly privileged to have with us today **Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar as our Chief Guest** — a towering figure in the field of healthy ageing.

Dr. Vinod Kumar has had an extraordinary journey. Trained in Agra, Delhi, and London, he has held teaching and research roles across the world — from AIIMS Delhi to assignments in London, Libya, Iran, and Chandigarh in India. He also worked with the WHO for over a decade as a member of its Advisory Panel on Ageing and Health, attending high-level meetings in Geneva, Tokyo, Bangkok, Vancouver, and beyond, and serving as a consultant in countries like Mongolia and Iran.

His insights have shaped public policy through his advisory work with governments, academic institutions, NHRC, the Delhi Police, and NGOs. Widely travelled, deeply respected, and a tireless advocate for senior well-being, he has received numerous honours — including the Government of India's **Vayoshreshtha Sammaan**, the Delhi Government's **Varishtha Sammaan**, and the **Lifetime Achievement Award** from AIIMS, Delhi.

We are equally pleased to welcome his gracious spouse, **Mrs. Kumar**, whose presence adds to the warmth of today's gathering.

Dr. Vinod Kumar, we look forward to your words — and the wisdom you continue to share so generously.

Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar will be joined by three distinguished panelists who will contribute to this discussion.

I will come to the introduction of the Panelists a little later.

## A Gathering of UN Leaders for a Shared Purpose

We are privileged to have among us distinguished Heads of UN Agencies who have joined this conversation today.

We have with us:

Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India,

Mr. Darrin Farrant, the Director of the UN Information Centre,

Mr. Sanjay Awasthi, Head of Office, UN Migration - International Organization for Migration (IOM), and

Also joining us virtually is:

Ms. Parul Agarwala, heading UN-HABITAT in India.

Your presence is not just a mark of solidarity but a testament to the UN's continued commitment to the well-being of those who have dedicated their lives to its mission.

**You**, our distinguished guests from the UN, are **not merely attendees—you are co-creators of this dialogue.**

Your insights, your leadership, and your presence today inspire confidence that the ideals of the UN extend beyond active service into a lifetime of shared knowledge, engagement, and well-being.

UNPAI—and I personally—are immensely pleased that this event is being held with the **active participation, encouragement, and support of our fellow UN retirees' associations in India: AFUNPI, WHO-AFSM, and UPGI.** Their warm endorsement and outreach have enabled many of their members to join us today, and for this, I am sincerely grateful to the leadership and Executive Committees of all three associations.

We are honoured by the presence of:

- **Dr. Prem Sharma**, Vice-President of AFUNPI representing their President, **Dr. Marashetty Seenappa**;
- **Mr. M.R. Kanagarajan**, President of WHO-AFSM; and
- **Mr. Dharendra Asthana**, President of UPGI.

Their **active engagement and shared commitment to mutual collaboration** augur well for the **unity, solidarity, and empowerment of the broader UN retiree community in India.**

We are also pleased to welcome **Mrs. Malti Jaswal**, the **Founder of Inspiring Seniors Foundation**, a newly established company with a bold and timely mission—to transform ageing into an opportunity for **healthy longevity, active participation, and purposeful living.**

The Foundation's work stands out not just for empowering seniors, but also for building **intergenerational bridges** by mentoring and supporting underprivileged children and youth. At a time when healthy ageing remains underrepresented in India, their vision of creating a **structured, scalable approach to productive ageing** is both urgent and inspiring.

We are also pleased to welcome our friends from **IndusInd Bank**, who join us today as observers. Their presence reflects a growing interest in **exploring meaningful collaborations between the private sector and civil society**—a vital step toward building strategic partnerships that can advance our shared goals in **healthy ageing, financial well-being, and social impact**.

### Session Format & The Five Dimensions of Health

Rather than a conventional lecture, today's session is designed as a dynamic and interactive discussion, encouraging active engagement from all participants.

We will focus on five key dimensions of senior health, each of which plays a crucial role in leading a balanced and fulfilling life:

1. **Physical Health** – The foundation of vitality, ensuring mobility, independence, and longevity.
2. **Mental Health** – Nurturing resilience, cognitive strength, and emotional well-being.
3. **Social Well-being** – The power of meaningful connections, shared experiences, and an engaged community.
4. **Connecting with Nature** – The therapeutic influence of the natural world on our health and peace of mind.
5. **Spiritual Dimensions of Health** – A deeply personal yet universal quest for purpose, harmony, and inner peace.

This is a hybrid session, allowing both in-person and virtual participation, so that our members from across the country and beyond can benefit from this conversation.

### Guiding the Discussion & Encouraging Participation

To make this conversation as meaningful as possible, we invited our members to share their health concerns in advance, and these will be addressed during the discussion.

I also encourage all of you—especially our esteemed UN dignitaries, our friends from the other three UN retirees' associations in India, the Inspiring Seniors Foundation, and friends from IndusInd Bank—to contribute your insights, concerns, and experiences. As leaders and champions of well-being, your perspectives will enrich this dialogue and help us shape future initiatives for our community.

To facilitate engagement, our volunteers will be distributing Q-cards to the audience, on demand. I encourage you to write down your queries, reflections, or key points you would like addressed, and hand them back to the volunteers. These will be compiled and directed to our Guest Speaker and Panelists as appropriate, ensuring that we address as many perspectives as possible.

### Ground Rules & Expectations

Before we begin, I would like to remind everyone that while today's session will touch upon various aspects of health, **it is not a medical consultation**. We kindly request that personal medical queries be avoided, though we welcome broader discussions on preventive health, lifestyle strategies, and holistic well-being.

**It is now my pleasure to introduce the three Panelists for today's forum.**

We are honoured to have with us **Dr. Sanjiv Kumar**, a distinguished public health expert.

Dr. Sanjiv Kumar served with distinction in **UNICEF** and as a **consultant to WHO**, and later led key public health institutions in India, including as **Executive Director of an institute under the Ministry of Health**.

Dr Sanjiv Kumar has been recognised with **four fellowships and eight awards**, including **two from the United Nations**.

We're also delighted to acknowledge the presence of his wife, **Dr. Neeta Kumar**, a retired **Professor of Pathology** and cancer diagnosis expert.

Dr. Sanjiv Kumar currently serves as the **Vice-President of the UN Pensioners' Association, India**.

We are pleased to welcome our next Panelist, **Mr. Shiv Kumar Varma**, a seasoned UN retiree who served with the **World Health Organization for over three decades**, and has been an active member of the **UN Pensioners' Association India since 1999**, including a past tenure on its Executive Committee.

Following his retirement in 2001, Mr. Varma dedicated himself to **promoting healthy living**, authoring the bilingual book *"Portraits of Healthy Lifestyles"* with support from HelpAge India. A **yoga enthusiast**, he continues to inspire others through his **YouTube videos and wellness-focused messages** shared widely within his community.

As the third **Panelist** on today's forum – myself - I need little introduction.

I'm especially pleased to be joined by my wife, **Rajalakshmi Srinivasan**, whose constant support has been a pillar of strength throughout my journey.

### **Invitation to Chief Guest**

With that, I now have the honour of **inviting our Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Vinod Kumar to share his insights** with us.

THANK YOU.