

**Discussion Paper**  
**on**  
**Ageing in the Twenty-First Century**  
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**Looking to the future, the world faces two huge challenges: one is adjusting to ageing societies. Another is highly uncertain climate change.**

Population ageing is one of the most significant trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People live longer because of medical advances, better nutrition, education and economic well-being. Life expectancy at birth is over 80 now in 33 countries; just five years ago, only 19 countries had reached this. A new structure of society is emerging. The Post-2015 agenda must be responsive to this structural shift. In this context, ageing deserves a greater focus.

**Cities, Demographic Dynamics and Ageing**

- i. The world is rapidly becoming urbanized.<sup>1</sup>By 2030 half of the global population will live in cities. Megacities are emerging in major Asian and African countries along with great rural poverty areas. The number of middle class people will grow from 1.8 billion in 2009 to 3.2 billion in 2020, and 4.9 billion in 2030 (out of a global population of 8.3 billion. The bulk of this growth is slated to occur in Asia, particularly in China and India. But all regions of the world will participate in this trend. Almost 80 percent of global GDP is generated in cities. It seems that the twenty-first century will be the century of cities with emerging middle classes, a process in which all of us will have a role to play.
- ii. The population is ageing at a pace never seen before in human history. The recent United Nations (UN) report “World Population Prospects” indicates that the world population will grow from 7.2 billion to 9.6 billion by 2050<sup>4</sup>. “The population of the world of the age 60 or older will be 2 billion by 2050” G20 nations will soon have over one-third of their population over 60. While ageing is global, there are marked international differences in the speed and the extent of the ageing processes. Even within the industrialized countries, differences are large. Europe and Japan have already a much older population than North America. Italy and Germany are ageing faster than France and Great Britain. In Asia, some countries start from a relatively young population, but ageing is very quick. China represents a dramatic example. The BRIC nations and others in the developing world are ageing at an even more rapid pace than Japan, Europe, and the United States.<sup>8</sup>
- iii. The UN definition for ageing is populations with more than 7% elderly at age 65 or higher. By 2020, the number of ‘super-aged’ societies will increase to 13 globally from three today. The UN defines populations with more than 20% elderly as ‘super-aged’. By 2030, 34 countries will be super-aged. The global working-age population will grow nearly half as through 2030 as during the previous 15 years (i.e., by only 13.6% vs 24.8%). However, 16 countries will see a decline of over 10% in their working age population in the same period.

- iv. Ageing poses critical challenges to economic growth, public finances, and welfare systems<sup>3</sup>. We believe, however, that an older population could productively contribute to economic activities in many areas. More attention needs to be given to ‘how to increase the economic productivity of elderly people in the development process’. Of course, we must not forget that elderly people in particular need social care, affection, and protection in a spirit of inter-generational solidarity.

### **Two cases: Ukraine and Turkey**

More than a third of countries are falling significantly behind those at the top of the Global Age Watch Index and lack capacity to deal with increasingly aged populations. Last year Ukraine dropped 16 positions to 82<sup>nd</sup> out of 96.<sup>10</sup> The increased ageing of Ukraine’s population mirrors the rest of the world, but for institutional, economic and political reasons, solutions are difficult to find<sup>11</sup>. In Ukraine as in other conflicts, women and children constitute the majority of IDPs and often of the elderly people who stay behind in conflict-affected areas. According to a recent UNHCR report, 66% of registered IDPs are women and 31% are children. Women have also been the majority of the IDPs interviewed by SMM monitors<sup>1</sup>.

**As the population continues to age, finding ways to empower older generations, many of whom have presumably found it more difficult to take advantage of new economic opportunities in a post-socialist economic system, will be increasingly important to the economic viability of the country. While envisioned reforms and the creation of a more competitive market economy would presumably provide more opportunities for a younger generation that has come of age since independence, older generations who grew up in a more paternalistic government system may find it more difficult to find their place in an evolving system. Ukrainian authorities are currently drafting a “Concept Paper” relating to the elderly, as well as a reform of the institutions for elderly creating one legislative policy.<sup>25</sup>**

Turkey faces similar challenges, falling behind more industrialized western societies, in addressing the ageing population problem due to demographic, economic and socio-cultural structure-related reasons. As it is forecast that in 2000s the elderly population of Turkey, as a developing EU candidate country, will double that of developed countries, the required measures have to be taken before ageing becomes a major societal problem. *(To be expanded).*

### **Facts on Ageing (WHO)**

- i. The world will have more people who live to see their 80s or 90s than ever before. The number of people aged 80 years or older will have almost quadrupled between 2000 and 2050 to 395 million. On average, women live six to eight years longer than men<sup>18</sup>.
- ii. Globally, many older people are at risk of maltreatment. Around 6% of older people in developed countries have experienced some form of maltreatment at home. Abusive acts in institutions include physically restraining residents and depriving them of

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Report on Profiling and Needs Assessment of IDPs of 17 OCTOBER 2014, <http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/971/IDP.pdf>, and OSCE SMM Thematic Report on Internal Displacement in Ukraine, SEC.FR/473/14, 13 August 2014, <http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/122620>.

dignity, which can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences<sup>15</sup>.

- iii. The need for long-term care. The number of older people who are no longer able to work in developing countries is forecast to quadruple by 2050<sup>18</sup>.
- iv. As people live longer, worldwide, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of people with forms of dementia such as Alzheimer's disease. The risk of dementia rises sharply with age with an estimated 25-30% of people aged 85 or older having some degree of cognitive decline.
- v. **In this regard, there is a need for a clearer understanding of the prevalence of neglect, abuse and violence against older women. Certainly they are care-dependant and may lack the ability to protect themselves from undue harm without the special protection that goes beyond that needed by women of all ages in our society.**<sup>27</sup>

**Review of all laws related to neglect, abuse and violence against older women needs to be undertaken, including an analysis of their implementation and their impact on the reduction and elimination of abuse against older women.**

**It is time for neglect, abuse and violence against older women to be made visible, and made to end.**<sup>27</sup>

### **UN Plan of Action**

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Political Declaration adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002 marked a turning point in how the world addresses the key challenge of “building a society for all ages”<sup>14</sup>. **This Plan of Action has been adopted subsequently by the UN General Assembly with the task of linking ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights, and also to embracing the potential of an ageing population as a basis for future development. Since then, there has been increasing awareness of the need for mainstreaming the concerns of older persons into the social development agenda**<sup>26</sup>

*“It represents the first time governments agreed to link questions of ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights, most notably those agreed at the UN conferences and summits of the past decades”.*(Kofi Annan, addressing the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing).

*The Plan outlines the following:*

- ✓ The full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all older persons in order to create ‘ a society for all with intergenerational solidarity’, in which every individual with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play<sup>2</sup>;
- ✓ **Empowerment of older persons to fully and effectively participate in the economic, political and social lives of their societies, and a shift from developing policies as independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity including the achievements of the MDG’s**<sup>26</sup>;
- ✓ Ensuring the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights of persons and the elimination of all forms of violence and

- discrimination against older persons; and
- ✓ Provision of health care, support and social protection for older persons, including preventive and rehabilitative health care.

### **The Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe has adopted a number of recommendations on ageing. The most recently adopted – the Recommendation on the Promotion of Human Rights of Older Persons – was adopted on 14 February 2014.

The Recommendation consists of a set of 47 principles, re-grouped under seven chapters. Each chapter of the Recommendation is accompanied by a guide of good practices from our member states, to illustrate possibilities and good ideas for the implementation of the principles.

The Recommendation aims at promoting, protecting and ensuring the full enjoyment of all human rights by older persons on an equal basis with others, and promoting respect for their inherent dignity. This instrument empowers older persons by acknowledging and reaffirming their autonomy and legal capacity in their daily lives. At the same time, it aims at ensuring them protection in societies where ageism exists and in situations where they may be vulnerable. Older persons may be discriminated against because of their age, and may face domestic violence, abuse or poverty. The Recommendation responds to these concerns and finds a balance between the autonomy and the protection of older persons.

### **Current debate on ageing**

- i. Current literature offers great insights into novel approaches to conceptualizing the quality of life and well-being of older people, as well as information on distinctive analytical tools (such as Active Ageing Index and the global AgeWatch Index). There is still a lack of a coherent, strong and positive regulation on global population ageing. This often narrows policy thinking and debate about the needs of older people. We need a new paradigm.
- ii. It is time for a new paradigm, one that views older people as active beneficiaries and participants in an age-integrated society and as active contributors as well as beneficiaries of development. Educating young people about ageing and paying careful attention to upholding the rights of older people will help to reduce and eliminate discrimination and abuse. This will support intergenerational solidarity and provide increased security for children, parents and people in their old age. “A society for all ages should ensure the protection, safety and dignity of people as they age.”<sup>22</sup>
- iii. Poverty and social exclusion are problems for those who are ageing, especially as roughly 80 percent of the world’s older population does not have a pension and relies on labour and family income. And as people age, they generally become physically, mentally and economically more vulnerable. Poverty in old age is more often chronic, because of a lack of economic opportunities.<sup>21</sup>
- iv. The strengthening of social protection schemes in recent times has relied on basic non-contributory social pensions such as in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay. Brazil’s social pensions, particularly in rural areas, is a good example.

- v. **The international human rights system has paid little attention to older persons in long-term care, especially care outside institutions focusing on the rights of older persons. Their concept of ‘ageing in place’ entails the right of everyone to live where they want and with whom they want, which is also based on the right to an adequate living, the right to health, freedom from abuse or torture; freedom of movement; the right to participate in decision making; and the right to privacy and personal integrity.<sup>29</sup>**

**Against this backdrop we have to ask some guiding questions, such as:**

**“What are the gaps in national and international frameworks to provide the legal empowerment of older persons in long-term care? How can these gaps and challenges be addressed?”**

### **International Istanbul Initiative on Ageing (IIIA) - Congress Declaration 2013**

**The Istanbul Initiative Declaration emphasized the following points:**

- ✓ **The attitudes of older people can act as a catalyst. That will help change family relationships; older people need affection and to be respected in their global role as senior citizens.<sup>28</sup>**
- ✓ **Ageing is a natural process of life; recognizing the specific rights of older people is essential to promoting human rights globally.**
- ✓ **The vast majority of older people make vital contributions to their societies, families and communities as workers, care-givers, volunteers, mentors, and as active citizens.**

### **Post – 2015 Agenda**

It is clear that we are now in transition on economic, political, and social fronts which consists of two possible self- reinforcing cycles: one is leading to great prosperity and another one to pervasive poverty and insecurity. The rule of law is an inalienable part of the post-2015 development framework and therefore, human rights, the rule of law and ageing problems are totally related to each other and need our attention<sup>19</sup>. The Coalition of NGOs on Ageing advanced the following messages during the UN General Assembly discussion on a new development agenda:

- i. **We have to ensure that the post-2015 development framework truly ‘leaves no one behind’, is inclusive of older people along with others and addresses the rights and needs of people of all ages. The specific abuse and discrimination faced by older woman must be recognized and stopped<sup>19</sup>. The post- 2015 development agenda is an opportunity to demonstrate the transformative potential of the rule of law.**
- ii. **The framework should also have a goal on universal social protection and decent work for all people of all ages and abilities. Social protection and decent work are at the heart of the social contract between the state and its subjects.**
- iii. **The post-2015 sustainable development framework must be human rights-based for all people of all ages and abilities. All goals and their targets must take account of the rights of people at all stages of their lives, from cradle to grave.**

- iv. We look forward to a dynamic and universal response to ageing in the framework. As population structures change, laws, policies, social attitudes and institutional practices must do the same<sup>19</sup>”.

### **Sustainable Development Goals(SDG's)**

On 19 July 2014, the UN General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG) adopted the document on “Proposal of the OWG for SDGs”. This contains 17 goals and 169 targets (including 67 targets on means of implementation).

*The proposed set of goals and targets now include “justice for all” and rule of law as a separate stand-alone goal. This is a welcome development due to the persistent efforts of IDLO. The proposed document also has age and age-related targets, which are now mentioned in nine of the 17 goals and in the document’s introduction. It covers psychological well-being within the broader dimension of health, financial security, employment and education. It looks at wider enabling environments, on how they influence earlier stages of life and affect the ageing experiences of people throughout their lives.<sup>20</sup>*

### **Key Reflections**

- 1. To sum up, population economics are likely to be at the center of global policy concerns in the future. (Tyler Cowen NTY, 10 November 2014). In this context reforms are needed to design the new social contract that reflects the realities of demographic trends and global economic dynamics. A new social contract will not appear out of thin air. Now is the time for the new European Commission to propose – and the new European Council and European Parliament to endorse – a political pact to legitimize and sustain the reforms needed to solve Europe’s economic problems. (Revamping Europe’s Tattered Social Contract, Kemal Dervis)**
2. In this respect, the International Community has to ensure a culture that does not discriminate on the basis of age. A culture in which the contributions of older people to their economies and societies are recognized and supported is one that “leaves no one behind”. Creating age-friendly environments includes legally enabling an environment for the protection of elderly people.
3. Rule of law can empower people and civic society to address underlying causes of inequality and exclusion. This progress includes the legal empowerment of women, older persons and others.
4. UN Agencies and IDLO continue to implement its programs and activities in raising awareness about the essential role of the rule of law in promoting sustainable development and building peaceful societies. This could include age-friendly initiatives which would boost the resilience of elderly people in the context of Rule of Law (elderly law).

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