

APPEAL FROM HAVANA

A MANIFESTO FOR THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE TO REMAIN ACTIVE CITIZENS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF SOCIETY AND WHO BUILD THEIR OWN LIVES



FIAPA Conference “The rights of older adults in the world” - Cuba - April 2017

We, participants of the International Conference on the Rights of Older Persons in the World, organised by the International Federation of Associations of the Elderly (FIAPA) and held in Havana, Cuba from April 3 to 6, 2017, in the spirit of and following previous commitments undertaken by governments such as the OAS Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, approved in Washington in June, 2015, regional agreements such as the Douala Manifesto, adopted in Cameroon in October, 2016, sub-regional agreements such as the Continental Network of Senior in Latin America and the Caribbean in Declaration, adopted in Guayaquil in August, 2016, and other working documents and research on this matter,

Hereby declare:

- 1- That we are aware of the limitations imposed on our rights by different opposing standards (normative vs. institutional, traditional vs. liturgical, applicable against progressive development).
- 2- For this reason, we wish for strong support and recommend that governments treat educational, cultural and political rights, economic and civic, with equal importance and with immediate application.
- 3- That particular attention be paid to the rights of older women, encouraging and fully supporting them against ageism, sexism and any other discriminatory cultural or traditional practices.

We realize that the existence of a right as an interest, which deserves the imposition of duties towards others, contributes to creating a broader context of understanding and support that is essential to the true enforceability of rights.

Together, we are launching this collective appeal for the Havana Manifesto, encouraging all parties involved to consider it seriously as an instrument to understand and support the struggle to defend the rights of older adults throughout the world....

Havana, 6 April 2017

A MANIFESTO OF HAVANA

“THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE WORLD”



FIAPA Conference - CUBA - April 2017

1 Rights do not change and are not limited by advanced age

- Any limitation of an individual's rights based on chronological age is contrary to the principle of equality in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The ageing of the population is a reality that affects most countries on all continents. Human rights are universal in character and should not be restricted or flouted on the pretext that a person who has become old, or very old, is considered vulnerable, fragile, dependent or even worse, “useless”.
- The older adult population is diverse. This diversity is to be respected. It includes a large and growing majority of self-reliant and independent people,

a fragile population and a minority of people with limited autonomy (ability to decide or to act for oneself). All these different older adults remain individuals with rights and obligations as citizens.

- Violations of the human rights of older adults, particularly women, remain a major problem. Indeed, respect for their fundamental rights may be limited by certain traditions, laws and regulations that must be declared unconstitutional in all the countries adhering to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2 The negative association with older adults is a main factor of their social exclusion

- Old age is not synonymous with deficiency, illness, vulnerability. This false belief is widespread in the media and among policy makers. It leads to many exclusionary processes - even those intended for protection.
- Lack of resources is another important factor in social exclusion for large parts of the ageing population.
- Access to social life must be encouraged and facilitated for all older adults. Emotional life also continues with age.

• The end of working life should not be equated with “social death” but can become a source of many activities according to the ambitions and skills of the adults in question. These activities can be hobbies, voluntary or family commitments, or even remunerated activities.

- The growing involvement of older adults themselves in social life must change this image of exclusion.
- Older adults constitute an important resource for the transmission of knowledge and skills in all fields.

3 Vulnerability and loss of autonomy must be compensated

- A growing majority of older adults remain autonomous and independent. But a minority can develop disabilities and diseases. This vulnerability - as at any age - can make it difficult to access and exercise their rights. Measures must therefore be taken to preserve all rights and freedoms.
 - Older adults with varying limitations must have equal access to the compensation systems adapted to their impairment.
 - Ageism is the most widespread and the most anchored of all discrimination. It must be combated by anti-discrimination legislation.
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4 Older adults must participate about decisions which affect them

- Public policies concerning older adults must be formulated in consultation with those concerned, even if they are under legal protection.
 - "Older adults have the right to participate in the entire process of building a society for all". (Madrid Declaration and Program - 2002). It is their right and their duty.
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5 Access to public and private services must be available to all at any age

- Old age may introduce challenges such as difficulty walking, driving, seeing or hearing, or even leaving the home. Developing easy access to all services is a vital necessity for those of all ages who are faced with these difficulties. However, for adults very advanced in age, exclusion from social life remains an important factor of confinement in the home.
 - No official service should only be accessible via the Internet. Official documents and instructions for use must be written in a way that is understandable to all citizens.
 - Governments and society in general must be careful not to create new barriers and exclusions, such as the "technological divide" linked to "technopenia".
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6 Poverty and precarity must be avoided, especially among older women

- Retirement often leads a portion of the population to poverty, or precariousness, especially among women. In some countries, most older women do not have their own resources and are entirely dependent on descendants, or even non-consanguineous parents.
 - Special attention should be paid to women in this respect.
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7 Access to skilled care must be guaranteed for older adults in a frailty state, whether temporary or permanent

- Geriatrics and gerontology are recent and complex branches. Inadequate care and support in these areas can lead to dramatic results: dependence, regression, disability, depression, being bed-ridden, etc. It is a right to be treated and accompanied by experienced and competent services in all aspects of care.

8 Access to education and culture is a right at any age

- It has been shown that the level of primary education is one of the main determinants of “ageing well” and longevity. Access to continuous education and learning throughout life, including later life, is also a factor in “ageing well.” It is also a fundamental right.
- Cultural differences between generations are often more significant than the cultural differences based on social or ethnic origin. Access to present or past cultures must be preserved; access to new ones is recommended and fundamental.

9 Access to justice is necessary at any age

- Justice is often expensive, complex and long. It is therefore difficult for older adults to access it.
- Access to human rights means access to justice, whenever necessary.

10 Abuse, neglect and mistreatment of older adults can be avoided

- Physical and particularly mental frailty, isolation and loneliness greatly increase the risk of mistreatment of older adults. Requiring assistance in daily activities and care can raise the risk of mistreatment (neglect, malpractice, inappropriate care, loss of dignity). Vulnerable older adults must be protected from any such mistreatment; their caregivers must be the subject of all necessary attention.
- This protection must guarantee respect for their will, their wishes and their freedom. Priority should be given to the search for a genuine life project and future, as well as the quest for happiness. Trained and competent teams, sufficient in number and qualification, and attentive to the needs of those cared for, can avoid mistreatment and demeaning behaviour.

11 Interdisciplinary research on ageing must become a priority

- Thanks to improved education, social and medical care, it is now possible to “age well.” The mechanisms of ageing, both deleterious and adaptive, are not yet well known.
- Further progress will only be achieved through comprehensive and strongly interdisciplinary research, with the participation of older adults in the formulation of hypotheses, protocols, procedures and evaluations, expectations and needs. This research will provide a better understanding of the complex mechanisms, as well as socio-health and societal risks related to ageing. Singular expectations, needs and life projects which may stimulate the desire to live, must be considered so as to prevent any adverse effects of ageing. Living well, throughout one’s life, and living longer, must be the goal sought by our societies.