IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF OLDER PERSONS IN THE FAMILY AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

FOR CRESCENDO: Dr. Astrid Stuckelberger* and Sister Anne**

* Phd in Health Psychology and Gerontology, Lecturer and Researcher, Public Health School, Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva (Switzerland) and Chair, NGO Committee on Aging at the United Nations Geneva - Switzerland
** Little Sisters of the Poor, Rome, Italy

Introduction: Presentation of Crescendo

"Crescendo" is a worldwide Network founded in 2001 in Paris inspired by the Great Jubilee. It emerged from the International Catholic Organisations (OIC) Conference working party "Third Age".

Crescendo was created with the aim to establish dialogue and collaboration with networks, organisations and institutions concerned by the problem of aging, with particular attention towards those who value the human and spiritual richness of the person, through all possible means. The name "Crescendo" was chosen as a symbol expressing - like in music - a gradual increase in the intensity of life. It expresses the fundamental conviction which animates all members of the network:

> *"According to the plan of God, each individual human being lives a life of continual growth,*
> *from the first sparkle of his existence to the moment at which the last breath is taken"*
>
> *John Paul II, apostolic exhortation Christi fideles laici, n°48*

Crescendo acts at the international, national and local level in order to diffuse a positive image of aging, to promote and to defend the dignity of the person at every stage of life, without reducing it to criteria of profitableness or usefulness. It also promotes core Christian values of family and intergenerational solidarity, as well as spiritual values until the end of life. Crescendo is continuing its work with the United Nations and the International Plan of Action on Aging established in Madrid in 2002.

POPULATION AGING: THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF SOCIETY

Global population aging is emerging as a 'silent revolution' around the world. Never in the history of mankind have we witnessed a phenomenon of such significance for all sectors of society. The spectacular increase in human life expectancy associated with lowered fertility and improved health is generating growing numbers and higher proportions of an older population; it is extending the duration of life to exceptional ages in all parts of the world - India included. What remains silent is that population aging is affecting policy, economy, social cohesion and every generation of man, woman and child, with direct bearing on intergenerational and intragenerational equity and solidarity.

World-wide figures reveal the increasing size of the global older population. The elderly, generally defined as over the age of 65, number approximately 420 million today and will exceed one billion world-wide by the year 2030. In almost all countries the elderly population is growing faster than the overall population. This phenomenon is occurring in both developed and non-developed countries. In absolute numbers Europe, along with China, the former Soviet Union, and India, will have over half of the world's elderly population in the 21st century[1]. Today, it is China that has the largest elderly population, numbering nearly 88 million in 2000.

The tremendous change that has taken place in the world and in society in the last decades and this new situation has modified the architecture of the family and its functioning bringing new challenges but also fantastic opportunities for humankind. Let's underline a few key elements of aging within this new architecture of society (see table 1 for details):

- *Longevity has dramatically increased, fertility has decreased and has created a multi-generational society worldwide. We find today up to 5 generations living together at the same time, increasing interdependency between generations at all levels.*

- *The numbers and proportions of older persons has increased, which translates into more grand-parents and even great-grand-parents,.*

- *The older population itself is aging.* There are more octogenarians, nonagerians and centenarians than ever before in history all through the world, modifying and diversifying the different stages of aging.

---

1 Kinsella K. and Velkoff V.A. (2001). *An Aging world: 2001. International Population Reports.* US Census Bureau, Washington.
   United Nations Population Division (2000). *World Population Prospects: The 2000 Revision.*

- *Developing countries are aging at a faster pace than developed countries but often are not yet ready for the aging of their population at many levels.* By 2020, five of the ten countries with the largest populations of older persons will be in the developing world: China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and Pakistan.

- *The majority of older persons are women (55%) in particular widows with no social security and very low income creating the feminization of poverty in old age*

- *Half of the world population today lives in cities*, which has an impact on the living arrangements of families and the elderly; a shift is taking place from the traditional 'all under the same roof' family patterns onto nuclear families migrating to cities and leaving behind the elderly in rural areas. India, as other developing nations, is going through this shift and needs to avoid the mistakes of the west.

- *Migration of younger generations leaves older generations behind and diminishes the natural social ties and security (such as in the case of AIDS orphans with grand-parents in rural areas)*

This mutation has been called the 'Silent Revolution' or the "Age Quake" reflecting the lack of attention given it in the media and society. The effect of technology on globalization has produced the idea of a society centred more on the values of what is 'new', 'young' and 'fast', while the far-reaching effects of the 'silent revolution' are virtually ignored, despite the fact that they are already felt by every individual, family, neighbourhood and nation throughout the world.

INDIVIDUAL AGING: SLOWING DOWN/REVERSING THE AGING PROCESS

The scientific findings of this last decade have revolutionized the negative model of the aging process portrayed by the 'irreversible physical decline with age'. Although many stereotypes and stigmatisations of age remain, many of the prejudices and remaining myths and fictions related to aging are being challenged today by new studies in geriatric medicine, psychological and social sciences. Table 2 describes several scientific facts that contradict some of the classical myths and fictions now prevalent in society. It is crucial to be aware that we have today enough scientific evidence to combat these negative stereotypes of aging: although many age with chronic diseases and handicap, the majority of older people lives physically and mentally healthy lives and can maintain their health and independence close to the moment of death. Attributing negative models to aging runs the risk to not treat properly a reversible health condition and precipitating the older person in an unnecessary dependency. The stereotyping and generalization of the geriatric decline model too often misleads the population to believe only the worst about aging and to overlook the added-value of life and the spiritual growth associated with aging.

"The invisible part of me is not old.
In aging we gain as well as lose—our spiritual forces expand.
A life of the heart and mind takes over as our physical force ebbs away."
A 90-year-old woman

Strategies must be found to combat stigmatisation/discrimination of older persons in the future, such as:

In statistics and data
- presenting statistics in a negative way
- generalizing physical decline to mind/spirit decline
- denying the value of experience and spiritual growth (e.g. infantilizing the elderly)
- emphasizing or exaggerating negative findings
- focusing on the problems rather than successes and best practices.

In social and interpersonal interactions

- infantilization of older persons, as in talking to them like infants
- spreading the stereotype of the difficult and rigid older person
- projecting stereotypes of a negative imprint on the family model
- considering a person only in terms of economic value and portraying beliefs that if a person does not produce or there is "no cash return on investment", he or she has no social value (e.g. why invest in health if death is the end result?)
- fear of death and illness leading to denial of the value of existence, an attitude carried over to younger but also older generations.

We need to combat these myths and ageist attitudes to ensure integration, social cohesion and a healthy human and family development. Adjusting our images of aging with the newest realities disclosed by scientific evidence can contribute to the image we have of our own aging, but also to the comprehension of the untapped potential of an active aging population to participate in societal issues. Breaking 'ageist' attitudes removes barriers between generations and gives a better understanding of the possible and important interactions with youth. Living longer has allowed more members of the family to be alive at the same time, a multigenerational society, which brings very new dynamics for younger generations, with more 'older generations' than ever before in history. The majority of those elderly are contributing to the family not only with their experience but as models of life and continuous spiritual development.

AGING IN MODERN SOCIETY: FAMILY AND GENEALOGY IN MUTATION

Considering the state of the world and the spectacular increases in longevity, two key features of the new architecture of society should be emphasized:

- the extension of the ***inter-generational*** lineage and living descendants

- the restriction of ***intra-generational*** links as the fertility decline results in fewer siblings and children.

In other words, the structure, the backbone, of our society has expanded from '2 or 3 generations' during this last century to '4 to 5 generations' living at the same time, while the number of children and potential brothers/sisters has decreased, which affects family dynamics and all dimensions of life. This is true in both developed and developing countries. Population statistics show that the average growth rates of higher age groups are increasing in all regions of the world (figure 2). The developing world is actually more likely to see a 4 or 5 generations structure, because the average age of the mother at the birth of a first child is lower. The architecture of their families can include live grandparents and great grandparents with specific roles. This fact has implications when dealing with migrant families, for distributive justice, for inheritance, for economic development balanced between generations, etc..

With longer life for all, a multi-generational society has taken place which has Increased the complexity of extended family patterns and relations, and thus of the concept of the family and of the genealogy. Let's underline a few facts:

- *Importance of grandparents:* The importance of grandparents is not trivial and is gaining in importance. In some countries both women and men provide care for their grandchildren - from babysitting to being a custodial grandparent and primary caregiver. Many grandparents find themselves the sole providers of care for their grandchildren, one reason being the migration of the middle generation to urban areas to work. These "skip-generation" families are found in all regions of the world and are becoming increasingly prevalent. Another reason for the increase in the number of children living in households headed only by grandparents can be attributed to trends in several factors (e.g. divorce, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and child abuse).

- *the "traditional extended families" are gradually disappearing.* Recent data confirm this tendency worldwide. For example, in the Middle East, as is the case in Egypt specifically, 85% of all households are now nuclear families (UNFPA, 2001). The question is where are older persons living?

- *Urbanization and migration but also divorce is a 'generation splitting factor':* As mentioned earlier, the tendency toward urbanization is increasing worldwide. This leads to the separation of young people from their grandparents, who previously played a role in their traditional education and socialization. It also causes new financial difficulties of not living together, of natural caregivers, of older persons with no social security, poor and left alone with no health care guarantee.

- *Effect of epidemics on generations:* Today in some regions, *an entire generation may be wiped out* by crises such as epidemic and war. Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS is a matter of great concern. Not only do the children depend on older relatives for their care, but when separated and not "brought back" to their elders or relatives, they are at an increased risk of becoming street children or entering the social assistance system and heading toward the 'poorest of the poor life course.' A human rights framework and better legislation must be put in place to protect intergenerational ties for orphan children.

The most striking mutation observed today is that *the complexity of family ties and lineages is increasing* in all corners of the world, not only with the steady decline of fertility, but with the changing patterns of men and women's lives in societies that allow more choices, more mobility but also growing rates of divorce at all ages. One of the questions one could ask is whether those population, individual and social changes will affect core family values and transmission of cultural dimension to younger generations

ROLE AND RESPONSABILITY: AGING WITH DIGNITY

Consequently, fundamental questions are brought to the forefront: 1) how to address the role of older generations and grand-parenthood in our families and in society today 2) how to value and reinforce aging with dignity for the healthy and peaceful development of families and future generations.

In a global context of the techno-/eco-lead policy agenda, empowering the family and older generations for the betterment of youth and future generations lies at the center of stabilizing society, ensuring a humanized development and guaranteeing inner and outer peace and security for all generations.

Data shows that grandparents and the elderly play an increasing role in all sectors of society, such as providing care to their grand-children, heading households, parenting orphans and volunteering in a number of activities.

They also provide implicit models of behavior and belief that impact the next generations. Traditionally, ancient cultures recognized older generations as the source of knowledge and wisdom and referred to them as models for their own lives and future. The Elders were praised for transmitting life values and called "Transmitters of culture", "Guardians of the secrets of life" or "the Wise," and often were expected to prevent conflicts and preserve peace and dignity of the family in society. Today, their role is challenged: with the mutation of the traditional family, migration, the mix of cultures and especially the predominance of a society based on the values of economics and technology, the importance of older members in the family and society is underestimated and ignored, with the risk of losing the very fundamental sense of value and dignity of a life-long development.

In this context, one area that has not been studied nor given much attention is the development of human dignity and the implicit role and 'unseen impact' of the elderly presence or absence on social issues, on belief systems and on behaviors of the younger generations.

- *At the micro-family level*: The scientifically documented transmission to future generations of patterns of behavior such as violence, abuse, alcoholism, etc. has not been taken into consideration when addressing the human dignity factor and sound development of the family. For example: the absent or dysfunctional 'grand-parents' model in a family could have effects on the psychological development of children, who might become 'grand-orphans' and thus lack the opportunity to integrate core values of life/death into their own life development, which could lead to disruptive behavior and an increased risk of aggressive violence;

- *At the macro- family level*: The way the collective memory of and attitude toward human dignity and respect for life versus violence and hate is transmitted to the next generations is a powerful factor in psycho-social development, either (i) positively, by encouraging human values and responsibility, including building a peaceful environment, promoting forgiveness and of reconciliation within society (political) and/or within the family (socio-genealogical) and within the self (psychological), or (ii) negatively, by increasing egoism, fear, hatred, the will for revenge from one generation to another, or a general lack of solidarity with others – the negative aspects of human relations - through daily expressions of attitudes, behaviors and words.

TRANSGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENT

Research has shown that the behavior of parents affects the behavior of their children even far beyond the time of education in behaviors such as smoking, alcoholism, suicide, sexual abuse and transgenerational violence. Much research has emphasized the importance of such transmissions between generations. Earlier writings in psychology have proposed to use the term "transgenerational perspective" to describe behavioural development and values transmission from generation to generation[2]. On one hand the older generation has a social and family responsibility in setting an example in the model of a righteous and wise life up to and including death. On the other hand all generations and the family owe to the elderly respect and dignity, honoring their contributions and their role in the family and society.

Older people can be a key to preventing violence and to the promotion of a culture of peace, healthy environment and world values, firstly, by the legacy they leave both to future generations collectively and to younger individuals personally through their implicit or explicit "moral testimony;" secondly, by the simple fact that, throughout their lives, they participated in and witnessed history at a personal level as well as at the levels of the family and society. In living the history of their own nation, older generations have experienced the profound impact of war and violence on society and on their families. Canadian General Romeo Dallaires, who witnessed the genocide in Rwanda and lived with post-traumatic syndrome for years, delivers speeches today to call for a non-violent society where older generations have a duty to stop war and violence (see quotation in the box below). Restoring and healing collective memories is thus of paramount importance for societies. The way in which the collective memory of war, violence and the peace process is transmitted to the following generations is a powerful and undeniable factor of social transformation:

(i)   either by encouraging a spirit of forgiveness and of reconciliation within society (political) and/or within the family (socio-genealogical) and within the self (psychological);

(ii)   or by increasing hatred and the will for revenge from one generation to another, through daily attitudes, behaviors and words – e.g. through informal education of war, but also through behavior patterns that implicitly or explicitly teach violence as an acceptable norm.

---

[2] *Stuckelberger A. (2002) , Population Ageing & World Peace. Empowering Future Generations . Older Persons Role and Responsibility. . Journal of Psycho-Social Intervention, Contributions of the Psychology on Ageing: towards a Society for All Ages. Special Issue for the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (pp. 29-75). Madrid, Spain.*
Stuckelberger A. (in press). Human and Family Development:: the Importance and Value of Older Persons for the Family and Future Generations, World Family Policy Center and Family Research Council. Washington.
Stuckelberger A. (in press). Transgenerational Perspective on Conflict and Violence Prevention. In F. L. Denmark and Bob Wesner (Eds.) Violence in Schools. New York Academy of Science. Springer: New York.

The beliefs – including false beliefs – passed from one generation to another can without any doubt be a source of individual or collective violence or a warranty of peace in the nation and in the world. One avenue for overcoming discord, hatred and violence is through the commitment of aging individuals to become conscientious role models and to embody and model key values of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. The elders have the choice to conscientiously address their responsibility towards youth: (i) to leave the fruits of their work and achievement behind them, a world of peace or a world of destruction, for the following generations, (ii) to leave a model of the way to live and die that will influence their peers and descendants positively, and (iii) more specifically, to transmit through their attitudes and behaviours a 'mental imprint' of living in peace with the self, the family and the nation.

CONCLUSION: DIGNITY IN AGING AS A ROLE MODEL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

This article demonstrates first, that human and family development includes all generations and the entire living genealogy of a family; second, that the family and time dynamics of generations make us interdependent during each unique individual life course; and third, that the values we express during our life through behaviour and value transmission do have an impact on the younger generations' growth and development, and on the family and nation as a consequence.

Thus, when addressing material development without the contextual systemic human development perspective, nations run the risk of approaching developmental goals only on a short term basis, and thereby only increasing family and social imbalance and ultimately failing in the development they seek. On the positive side, the findings of social science demonstrate that each generation has an impact on future generations through its behavior, through its pattern of attachment and by its approaches to problem solving.

In conclusion, the question for further debate is what duty and responsibility older generations have towards younger generations and vice versa. No one can dispute that older generations have shaped the world we now live in and therefore bear a certain responsibility for the state of the world today. It is the older generation that sets the standard, the reference and is a model or 'anti-model' of not only a successful life but more importantly a valuable life and noble death. Elders are essential to the cohesion of society. Not only are elders transmitters of tacit knowledge, of life experiences, of history, and of life crisis management, they are also the 'roots of our society.' Thus, in order to find our 'true common values for peace and justice,' it is of paramount importance to restore the role and dignity of the elderly in society and to build a cohesive and inclusive common vision for the future.

Crescendo is striving to achieve those aims and reinforce aging in dignity for older persons through several mechanisms and has just joined 20 non-governmental NGOs for statement in favor of the rights of older persons at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March 2006.

Dignity in aging is not only of paramount importance for the individual self-value, but furthermore for the others as role models, for society as a high standard living and as a policy to preserve the protection of fundamental rights to a decent life.

THE STATE OF OUR WORLD: ARCHITECTURE OF THE WORLD POPULATION
- A BRIEF FACT SHEET -

In general

. Number of inhabitants…6 billion = 1st time ever; in 1960's = 3 billion; in 2000 = 6.1 billion; in 2050 = 9.3 billion

. Annual Rate Growth: 1.3% per year or 77 million people/ year. Six developing countries account for half of this annual growth: India (21%), China (12%), Pakistan (5%), Nigeria (4%), Bangladesh (4%), and Indonesia (3%).

. Youth (15-24): We see today the largest-ever generation of young people at 1.05 billion.

. Elderly (60+) : We see today the largest-ever generation of older persons, estimated at 420 million at midyear 2000. 795,000 are added each month.

Growing number of generations

The number of the elderly will triple from 606 million now to 2 billion in 2050, the number of nonagenarians and centenarians is increasing worldwide, the proportion of older generations is increasing. Also, those age groups are proportionally the fastest growing segment of the population.

. 4 to 5 generations living simultaneously, of which 2 to 3 can be considered in the 'older persons generation' or at retirement age;
each generation living with certain age-specific cohort and historical characteristics, giving rise to new situations such as:
- "digital homeless generations" – i.e older generations that will never be technologically connected,
- "generations of war" - i.e. young generations who have known only a life of war, and
- "generational wipe out" – i.e. one to two successive generations the majority majoritiy of whom have died due to wars or epidemics such as HIV/AIDS.

. Continuing urbanization and international migration creates policy challenges. Half of all people live in cities, compared to a third in 1960. Worldwide, cities are growing by 60 million persons per year. Today, there are 17 mega cities – with 10 million people or more. The distribution by generations is unbalanced between urban and rural areas, as younger generations tend to migrate to cities to seek better job opportunities.

➔ **Today, the number of children under the age of 15 is less than the number of elderly.**

➔ **By 2050, the number of young people will be the half of the number of elderly people.**

➔ **This millennium will host four to five generations living simultaneously, each with its own cultural history and pace of development.**

Some key generational elements, by regional development category:

More developed regions

. Population: 1.2 billion in 2000
. Little change over the next 50 years
. Low fertility levels
. Population decline: By mid-century, it is projected that 39 countries will have a smaller population than today: Japan and Germany (each 14% smaller), Italy and Hungary (each 25% smaller) and the Russian Federation, Georgia and Ukraine (each between 28% and 40% smaller)
. Living arrangements: There is a tendency toward one-generation households, i.e. living alone.

Less-developed regions:

. Population: To increase from 4.9 billion in 2000 to 8.2 billion in 2050
. Decline in fertility: In the absence of such declines, the population of less-developed regions would reach 11.9 billion; fertility is projected to decline markedly in the future
. Rapid population growth is still expected among 48 countries classified as least developed; the population is expected to nearly triple from 2000 to 2050, growing from 658 million to 1.8 billion
. Rapid urbanization: By 2015, projections state there will be 26 megacities of 10 million and more, 22 of them in less-developed regions, 18 in Asia alone.
. Living arrangements: The tendency is for older generations to live with adult children.

Source: UNFPA (1999) ; UN Population Division (2000); Kinsella and Velkoff, US Census Bureau (2001)

TABLE 2.

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT AGING

Myth / Stereotype	Evidence-based Facts
"To be old is to be sick, dependant and senile"	The majority of older persons age in good mental and physical health. Statistics show that the majority of retirees, even at 80 years old, are independent and live at home. In the developed world, the younger generations of retirees has benefited from the improvement of public health and social security measures, they age with better health, higher education, and sound economic situations, pursuing social activities and contacts.
"At old age, it is too late to do anything"	The newest findings show that good health can be maintained and that the process of physical and mental decline can be reversed through active measures. Interventions at higher ages can improve physical and mental health. Several studies among persons aged 75 years and above have shown that physical activity can strengthen the muscles and increase the bone mass and that mental activity can prevent mental degenerative diseases.
"The secret of aging well is in the genes"	Our aging process can be modulated at each stage of our lives. Twin studies with adopted and non-adopted subjects have shown that the influence of genes diminishes with age and that other factors such as life experience and culture have a stronger effect.
"The elderly can't learn anything"	At all ages, one can learn, develop and expand knowledge and skills. Concepts such as continuous education or Life-Long Learning (LLL) are now well established. For example, Universities of 3rd Age and Seniorweb networks have flourished around the world.
"Older persons can't direct their lives, are not productive and are a burden to society"	Today, generations of retirees are healthy, active and creative; most of them can and want to participate in society, they have a role and responsibility in the way they use their full civil citizenship, as well as in the way they transfer their assets and memories. For example, the American Association of Retired People counts today more than 30 million members and stands as one of the strongest political lobbies in the United States.
"No cash return" when investing in the elderly	Older persons do contribute to the economy of the nation and the family through informal work and volunteering, through financial transfers to younger generations and also as consumers. They diminish the social costs of conflict and violence in younger generations by being role models, maintaining cohesion in the family, prioritising human values, restoring healing memories and history, and transmitting a sense of security in life.

Stuckelberger (2005 - adapted from Rowe and Kahn, 1998)

Table 4

Mutation of the Genealogy and Family Pattern:
…from Old to New Genealogies …

Traditional Architecture	Current Architectural Tendency
Strong mortality at all the ages	Increase of life expectancy and decrease of fertility
2 to 3 generations	4 to 5 generations
0 to 1 generation at retirement age	2 to 3 generations retirement age
Predominance of	
Intra - generational links	Inter-generational lineage increases
Many siblings	Few brothers / sisters
Numerous descent	Weak descent at each generation
Traditional family	Nuclear family or single parent
Generations living together or near	Generations living apart or abroad
Homogeneous family:	Heterogeneous family –"Recomposition" of the family
One life cycle with unique events	Repetition of life cycles (divorce/mariage, jobs, etc.)
Transmission of values	
Traditional education and socialization	Peers + new informal education (ICT*, mass media)
Shared economic management	Independent economy between generations
Genealogy-dependent survival	State-dependant survival
Women at home - Man-centered career	Men and women work outside the home
Hierarchy of age - the Elder	Multiple hierarchy (economic, technological, etc.)
Unidirectional life course	**Complexities of life course pattern**
Unidirectional genealogies	**Multiplication of genealogies**

Metamorphosis of solidarity – multiple generation society

United Nations Principles for Older Persons

(1991 - http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/iyop/iyoppop.htm)

The General Assembly:

Appreciating the contribution that older persons make to their societies,

Recognizing that, in the Charter of the United Nations, the peoples of the United Nations declare, inter alia, their determination to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Noting the elaboration of those rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other declarations to ensure the application of universal standards to particular groups,

In pursuance of the International Plan of Action on Aging, adopted by the World Assembly on Aging and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/51 of 3 December 1982,

Appreciating the tremendous diversity in the situation of older persons, not only between countries but within countries and between individuals, which requires a variety of policy responses,

Aware that in all countries, individuals are reaching an advanced age in greater numbers and in better health than ever before,

Aware of the scientific research disproving many stereotypes about inevitable and irreversible declines with age,

Convinced that in a world characterized by an increasing number and proportion of older persons, opportunities must be provided for willing and capable older persons to participate in and contribute to the ongoing activities of society,

Mindful that the strains on family life in both developed and developing countries require support for those providing care to frail older persons,

Bearing in mind the standards already set by the International Plan of Action on Aging and the conventions, recommendations and resolutions of the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and other United Nations entities,

Encourages Governments to incorporate the following principles into their national programmes whenever possible:...

INDEPENDENCE

1. Older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help.

2. Older persons should have the opportunity to work or to have access to other income-generating opportunities.

3. Older persons should be able to participate in determining when and at what pace withdrawal from the labour force takes place.

4. Older persons should have access to appropriate educational and training programmes.

5. Older persons should be able to live in environments that are safe and adaptable to personal preferences and changing capacities.

6. Older persons should be able to reside at home for as long as possible.

PARTICIPATION

7. Older persons should remain integrated in society, participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.

8. Older persons should be able to seek and develop opportunities for service to the community and to serve as volunteers in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities.

9. Older persons should be able to form movements or associations of older persons.

CARE

10. Older persons should benefit from family and community care and protection in accordance with each society's system of cultural values.

11. Older persons should have access to health care to help them to maintain or regain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well- being and to prevent or delay the onset of illness.

12. Older persons should have access to social and legal services to enhance their autonomy, protection and care.

13. Older persons should be able to utilize appropriate levels of institutional care providing protection, rehabilitation and social and mental stimulation in a humane and secure environment.

14. Older persons should be able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms when residing in any shelter, care or treatment facility, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy and for the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives.

SELF-FULFILLMENT

15. Older persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential.

16. Older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

DIGNITY

17. Older persons should be able to live in dignity and security and be free of exploitation and physical or mental abuse.

18. Older persons should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status, and be valued independently of their economic contribution.

For more information – see following website: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/aging/