

4 October 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the 17<sup>th</sup> Celebration of the International Day of Older Persons**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons; and, to present the following statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Dr. Srgjan Kerim.

I would like to begin by thanking the NGO Committee on Ageing for organizing today's event in partnership with the United Nations; and for their sustained efforts to ensure that older persons have a voice at the UN.

As we gather to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons and the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Madrid Plan of Action, I salute you all for your outstanding work to galvanize the attention of the international community around issues confronting older persons. I would also like to emphasize the recommendations made in resolution 61/142 concerning the Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing. This resolution emphasizes that ongoing efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, fully take into account the situation of older persons.

Respect for the rights and dignity of older persons must be a global priority.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While advances in science and technology have helped to extend the human life span, it is evident that much more can and should be done to address the quality of life for older persons.

Improving access to health care, information, education, employment, and community service are therefore fundamental.

To this end, we must also correct the misconceptions which stigmatize the ageing process. We should never underestimate the contribution that older persons can make to society and the economy. Experience achieves more with less energy and time.

Mark Twain once wrote: "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

So, whether in the context of the family, or elsewhere intergenerational relationships and respect for elderly persons are important and productive.

The role of older persons in transmitting knowledge, values, and traditions is of great importance. Especially, in the context of globalization which has tended to reinforce the value of human diversity.

But more generally, all members of society must be engaged in bringing forward their strengths and skills in order to adapt to the challenges confronting the world today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, we will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In this context, it is essential to review the extent to which all societies respect and promote the rights of older persons.

As the average age of the global population increases so does the significance of this issue. The youth of today will be the elderly of tomorrow. We all have a stake. We all therefore have an interest.

Let us build on our celebration today, to pave the way for a future in which security, development and human dignity are assured for all.

I thank you very much for your attention.