



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Bob Rae (Canada)
President of Economic and Social Council**

United Nations International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP)
7 October 2024

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you to the NGO Committee on Ageing for the introduction and for your commitment and tireless advocacy in working to bring issues related to older persons and their human rights to the forefront of the global agenda. I appreciate your partnership in today's important event.

It is an honor to join you all for the United Nations International Day of Older Persons, which has been observed for over three decades. As someone who deeply appreciates the importance of today's celebration, I recognize its significance not only for others but for myself as well. As we continue to say, the youth of today will be the older persons of tomorrow too.

In a little more than half a century, older persons aged 65 and above, will outnumber children under 18 worldwide. Consider the impact this demographic



shift will have, regardless of a country's specific trends in the short, medium, and long term. We must understand that the shift towards an older population is largely irreversible and will influence all our efforts to achieve a more inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable future. Collective action and informed policy decisions will be essential to shape its trajectory and consequences, including through better mainstreaming of these actions at the UN, such as the upcoming Second World Summit for Social Development next year.

In my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council, I am particularly aware of the importance of mainstreaming issues related to population ageing, older persons, and their human rights across all subsidiary organs of the Council. This means ensuring that all discussions across ECOSOC's ecosystem reflect the realities of an ageing world and recognize that "ageing" encompasses more than just a set of discrete concerns for a single age group.

It affects all aspects of economies and societies, from healthcare and education to employment and taxation. Each stage of life can contribute to or detract from well-being in older ages.

It also means incorporating the needs, voices, and aspirations of older persons and their representative organizations into areas like poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, and climate change.



We must also ensure that human rights are at the heart of our efforts. Without a rights-based approach affirming that older age does not diminish a person’s value and dignity, we risk reinforcing ageism, rather than fostering the inclusivity we all seek to promote.

Many older persons face unique challenges, including age-based discrimination and other intersecting forms of discrimination, social exclusion, and, too often, the denial of their fundamental rights. Addressing these issues, as highlighted in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, requires a concerted effort to “link ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights.” The Plan emphasizes that the promoting and protecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential for creating an inclusive society for all ages – one in which older persons can participate fully and without discrimination and on the basis of equality.

This International Day’s theme on care and support systems, is a great opportunity for a rallying call to redouble our commitment to promoting the human rights of older persons and fostering societies for all ages.

I wish the event commemorating this Day great success in its rich programme, launches, and panel discussions, which we hope to inspire meaningful discussions and outcomes. Thank you.