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Your excellencies, friends, colleagues all

It is a great honour to be asked to speak at this vital Forum. I am an activist, optimist and advocate for and with older persons. I call for human rights compliance, for inclusion and collaborations that bring together people of all ages, diverse backgrounds, countries and experiences. I believe that civil society partnerships are at the heart of the vision and practice of the United Nations - its Member States, Regional Commissions, specialised agencies. In 2025 we have a historic opportunity to remind and make good the promises made by our governments to us – We the People.

As a Gray Panther, member of the SGA, core group member of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF) and working with the Global Call for Action Against Poverty (GCAP), our call for the 2nd World Summit for Social Development is to be there in person, to be present and to explain the urgency of

1. **A decisive goal on universal social protection coverage across the life course with necessary financial arrangements that support all countries by all governments.**
2. **Recognition of and compliance with** existing human rights instruments and the adoption of new ones, specifically that of the rights of older persons, with accountability and monitoring mechanisms.
3. **National implementation plans for universal social protection floors with time frames and monitoring arrangements at regular intervals.**
4. **Full integration of responses to ageing in social, economic and civil rights policies and programmes**

Copenhagen 1995 gave breath to the ‘social pillar’ of development, putting people, in all their diversity, first. It galvanised global attention to ageing, with the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Ageing with its 3 priority directions of older persons and development, health for all and the enabling environment, to make societies for and of all ages; it recognised unsustainable debt burdens; paved the way for policies and for finance to support social cohesion with universal social protection, leading to ILO Recommendation 202 on the Social Protection Floor; to the tripartite consensus on Decent work; to the necessity of universal access to health, education, decent housing and safe water. It underlined the urgency of mutual and intergenerational solidarity; to transforming lives through respect for and compliance with human rights; and led to Agenda 2030 and its 17 development goals.

So, thirty years on, how are we doing? Our world is one where

- There are longer lives, especially amongst women, in all regions, with the percentage of the global population aged 65 and above to rise from 10 per cent in 2022 to 16% in 2050
- 1 in 27 persons, or 3.6 per cent of the global population, are migrants
- 4 billion are without social protection. Half the global population do not have any cash benefit despite the 2012 Recommendation 202 on the Social Protection Floor which commits governments to health access for all and secure income at a nationally defined level in old age, childhood, time of maternity, disability and unemployment

- 60 percent of the global workforce – of all ages, from the very young to the very old are ‘informal workers.’ Our farmers, caregivers, factory workers, hospital, school and office cleaners, builders, street vendors. Without documents they are stigmatised and harassed
- We see widening inequalities – within and between countries - and the exponential rise in wealth of a few already staggeringly rich individuals.
- Harassment and silencing of peoples voice and their participation in national and global affairs
- Military spending to fuel war and conflict at an all time high, and a flourishing arms trade
- Xenophobia, scapegoating of migrant and asylum seekers, and political populism that deliberately excludes and demonises
- Homelessness everywhere is on the rise

The world is ageing and fast. Long lives is our shared present and common future. This is positive. An opportunity, not just a challenge. But older people face many challenges, and are often unheard, pushed aside.

This will not do. Together we can and must build societies for and of all ages. What kind of a world will this be? Will it be one where being Left Behind is the norm for older people, for youth, for the millions of dispossessed and the persecuted?

No, this must and can change. But we have no time to lose. We must act together. Intergenerational approaches to building social resilience and strategies for strengthening solidarity within and across communities are possible and are happening. They are at the heart of the Gray Panthers belief in ‘age and youth in action’ to make the vision of ‘a society for all ages’ a reality. The SGA calls for societies which recognise and end age discrimination, that value participation, and are inclusive of voice and agency of young and old, bringing the marginalised to the centre. We call for political will to embed our human rights in legalisation and practice, with joined up policies that value and reward inclusion and connectedness, participation and wellbeing across and between generations and cultures.

So, at the WSS 2, we want our governments to hear and act on our call for a clear, action oriented, monitorable and accountable outcome that puts people back at the centre. We call for clear and measurable actions to deliver the right to social protection for all, and for age gender and disability inclusive investments to protect and deliver our human rights and the right to development for all generations.

So again, our call is for

1. **A decisive goal on universal social protection coverage across the life course with necessary financial arrangements that support all countries by all governments.**
2. **Recognition of and compliance with** existing human rights instruments and the adoption of new ones, specifically that of the rights of older persons, with accountability and monitoring mechanisms
3. **National implementation plans for universal social protection floors with time frames for their full achievement.**
4. **Full integration of responses to ageing in social, economic and civil rights policies and programmes.**

Thank you