

Pre-Congress Session on 15 June 2026

Strengthening the links between Human Rights, Equity and Age-Friendly Environments (16:00-17:30 in Room 4)

Organised by AGE Platform Europe (GNAFCC affiliate member) with the contribution of BAGSO, GAROP, IMSERSO, the HOMeAGE Network, INPEA, ILC GA and the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva.

Background

On 3 April 2025, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a landmark resolution to establish an intergovernmental working group (IGWG) to draft an international legally binding instrument, i.e. a UN convention on the human rights of older persons. This resolution represents a decisive step to strengthen and protect the rights of older persons worldwide. The IGWG commenced its work in February 2026.

This milestone represents the culmination of many years of advocacy and campaigning by older persons, civil society organizations, and other advocates. The extensive evidence gathered throughout this process, in particular at the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, has clearly shown that the most effective remedy for the gaps and fragmentation within the international human rights framework is the establishment of a dedicated convention on the human rights of older persons.

The UN convention on the rights of older persons and the global movement toward age-friendly cities and communities are deeply interconnected, both aiming to ensure the dignity, autonomy, and full participation of older persons in society. It will provide the legal foundation necessary to ensure that age-friendly cities and communities are not just aspirational goals, but concrete realities for older persons worldwide. It will transform existing best practices and policies into binding obligations, fostering environments where older persons can enjoy equal rights and opportunities to flourish.

Beyond the rights to social and political participation, Age-Friendly Cities and Communities actually help protect and promote the right to health, the right to autonomy and independence, the right to housing, etc.

Objectives:

- Contribute to the UN convention's drafting process, particularly in making sure that the lived realities of old age are adequately reflected in the proposed human rights framework.
- Provide a platform for discussion on the importance of the current momentum for older persons' rights, examine the role of the GNAFCC, its members and affiliates, and identify ways the network can support and participate in the process.
- Show how existing human rights frameworks have helped GNAFCC members and affiliates deliver on Age-friendly environments and vice versa.
- Discuss how to bridge human rights, equity and age-friendly environments, while these notions do not necessarily align.

Agenda

Moderator: Dr. Heidrun Mollenkopf, President of AGE Platform Europe and Board member of BAGSO

- Setting the scene by Dr. Alexandre Kalache, President of ILC-Brazil
- How to contribute to the UN Intergovernmental Working Group on older persons? By Silvia Perel Levin, NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva, INPEA, ILC GA, GAROP
- Interactive Panel with:
    - Kenneth Arguedas, Deputy Mayor of Heredia, Costa Rica
    - Diane Tuner, Consultant and former Director of the Office for Seniors, New Zealand
- Q&A with audience
- Concluding remarks

Expected outcomes

- Raise awareness on the UN convention process
- Additional engagement in the drafting process of the UN convention via local organisations and GAROP
- Take stock of the experience at local level to nurture the content of the convention while enhancing the endeavour for age-friendly cities and communities.

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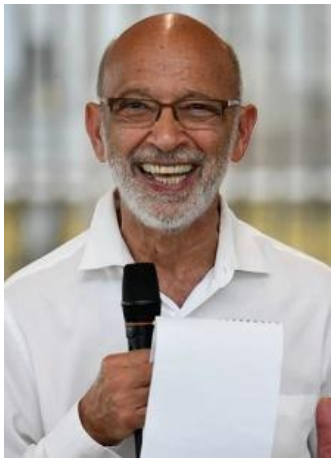
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Speakers



Heidrun Mollenkopf is President of AGE Platform Europe and Board Member of BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations. Besides, she has been appointed to the office of the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) as the representative of civil society. Heidrun is a sociologist and gerontologist. From 2007 to 2014, she was member of the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO) Expert Council and Chair of the “Universal Access and Independent Living” Expert Group of AGE Platform Europe. In this capacity and due to her specific interest in environmental conditions for satisfactory ageing, she participated in the First International Conference on Age-friendly Cities in Dublin, 2011. Since 2014, she is member of AGE Task Force "Age-Friendly environments". Since 2014, Heidrun Mollenkopf is Board Member of BAGSO and represented BAGSO regularly at the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing at the UN in New York (2016 to 2024). In 2023 she has been elected President of AGE Platform Europe.



Alexandre Kalache began his career in Brazil in clinical and educational roles in public health, addressing infectious diseases in contexts of rapid urbanisation. In 1995, Kalache joined the World Health Organisation as Director of the Ageing and Life Course Programme, a position he held until 2008. During this period, he led global initiatives to promote active and healthy ageing. Among its key initiatives, in 2002 it launched the WHO Policy Framework for Active Ageing. In 2007, he initiated the Age-Friendly Cities and Communities movement. Since 2012, he has chaired the International Longevity Centre-Brazil (ILC-Brazil), a think tank dedicated to research and policy on ageing in Latin America. In addition, since 2015 he has been co-chair of the Global Alliance of International Longevity Centres, global ambassador for HelpAge International and advisor to the World Economic Forum on ageing issues in developing countries.



Silvia Perel-Levin is an advocate for the human rights of older persons and an independent consultant. With 25 years of experience in human rights, ageing, and health, she has worked with international organizations including the World Health Organization and UNFPA. Before transitioning to this field, she was a social theatre and television producer. At the UN in Geneva, Silvia represents the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) and the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance (ILC GA), currently serves as Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing and as ex-officio member of the steering group of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP). Silvia is also an associate director of the Center for Multidisciplinary research in Aging (CMRA) and president of ILC-Israel at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev. Silvia edited the book “Ageing of the Oppressed: A Pandemic of Intersecting Injustice”). Her contributions to global advocacy for older persons have earned her the Rosalie Wolf Award (2023) and the Julia Alvarez Award (2024).



Diane Turner MNZM played a pivotal role in establishing and leading New Zealand’s Age friendly programme while serving as the Director of the Office for Seniors from 2016 to 2025. Based in the Ministry of Social Development she led the team that supported the Minister for Seniors to advocate for the interests and issues of older people. Her role included providing national leadership, supporting local councils and communities, academics and the research community. Diane has held senior executive roles in local government and indigenous organisations. She continues to be actively involved in Age friendly work both locally and internationally and also serves her community through a number of governance roles. Her work was recognised with a King’s Birthday Honour in 2025 for services to governance, seniors and Māori. She has Bachelors degrees in Social Sciences and Town Planning and a Masters in Business Administration.



Kenneth Arguedas Navarro, Deputy Mayor of the City of Heredia, Costa Rica, GNAFCC Member
He served as the head of the Office for Older Adults of the Municipality of Heredia from 2015 to 2026, where he stood out for leading the incorporation of the city into the GNAFCC Network in 2019. In May 2026 he assumed the role of vice mayor, where his responsibilities include promoting social initiatives and projects, accessible and ecological urban planning, as well as maintaining a sustained commitment to the rights of older adults. Holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from the National University of Costa Rica.