

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ASIAN SYMPOSIUM ON BUILDING SUSTAINABLE AGEING SOCIETIES**

**5-6 July 2012, Changchun, China**

The Asian Symposium on Building Sustainable Ageing Societies was held in Changchun, China on 5-6 July 2012. The Symposium was co-organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Subregional Office for East and North-East Asia (SRO-ENEA) and the National Population and Family Planning Commission of China (NPFPC). The Meeting was attended by 110 participants including senior governmental officials and representatives of intergovernmental and civil society organizations from Australia, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam and the Republic of Korea, and representatives of UNESCAP and UNFPA.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

1. Population ageing is a global phenomenon. But, it is particularly pronounced in Asia where it accounts for 57% of the older persons (65 years or older) living in the world in 2010. Within Asia, the subregion of North-East Asia is undergoing demographic transitions at an unprecedented speed in human history. In 2010, 1 in 10 persons living in North-East Asia was 65 years or older. In 2025, however, their proportion will increase to 1 in 5 persons, and in 2050, it is projected that 1 in 3 persons in the subregion will be 65 years or older.
2. While the impact of population ageing on a country's well-being is widely recognized, policies put in place and their impact to date has seen few successes, and more needs to be done.
3. One of the main challenges of the ageing societies is the pressure that elderly care (including care for physical and psychological health, and social and income support) will have on the country's fiscal sustainability and economic growth. One thing that is clear, however, is that older citizens are not idle beings, nor are they mere beneficiaries of social welfare benefits. They have been and will continue to be contributors to the economy and the progress of societies at large with their multiple roles as producers, consumers, teachers of

traditions, tenders of children in families, moral authorities in communities, and so on. The internationally agreed document, Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) proposes a social inclusion of older persons in all aspects of life in society.

4. The Symposium was convened against this backdrop to strengthen communication on ageing-related issues among countries in Asia, and to promote the development and cooperation in the region and beyond.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

5. The objectives of the Symposium were to:

- Build a platform for sharing experiences and good practices in building sustainable ageing societies.
- Promote communication and cooperation among decision makers in Asia.
- Discuss strategies of dealing with ageing against the background of International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) +20, Millennium Development Goals, and the Second MIPAA Review, and their adequate inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals to be formulated as a result of decisions taken at Rio+20.

## III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Taking note of the rapid population ageing currently observed in Asian countries, the Symposium exchanged information on challenges faced by different societies and the opportunities these challenges present. In this context, the participants took note of strategies and initiatives taken by national governments, international community and various civil society organizations. In addition, the Symposium had an opportunity to reflect on the global and regional MIPAA review process currently underway, and came to the following Conclusions and Recommendations.

7. **Current Situation, Challenges and Strategic Planning Regarding Population Ageing:** The Symposium reviewed the current situation of rapid population ageing in Asian countries, with examples from China, where the population over 65 years old is projected to reach 200 million persons in 2025, and the Republic of Korea, which has the current total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.24 and is projected to become the fastest ageing country in the world. The

Symposium recommends governments and relevant stakeholders to exchange information, and also reach out to wider communities so that the multi-sectoral challenges related to population ageing can be mainstreamed in national development planning and coherent policy on population ageing can be instituted. The Symposium recommends development of a knowledge platform for further exchange of information among governments and relevant stakeholders.

8. **Economic and Societal Influence of Rapid Population Ageing:** The Symposium reviewed both negative and positive views of the influences of population ageing on society's well-being. While participants found merit in both views, the discussion led to better understanding on how key variables related to prosperous ageing societies could be influenced by national policies. The Symposium also recognized the value of scientific studies for sound policy making and recommends evidence-based policy making, including support for scientific studies on ageing. In addition, the Symposium took note of the fact that in most countries in the world, there were more older women than men, and that population ageing affected women and men differently. Population ageing also had influence on society's ability to maintain intergenerational equity. Therefore, in order to build sustainable ageing societies, the Symposium recommends listening to older persons' experiences, providing more support to women, in particular widowed older women, and promoting intergenerational solidarity.

9. **Ageing in Place: Promoting Home Care and Community-Based Care:** The Symposium noted the dire need for sustainable Long-Term Care among Asian countries. This situation asks the question of who should be the primary caregiver for the elderly. The Symposium recognized that the answer depended on each national situation, and elderly care might be provided primarily by the government, family, institutions such as hospitals or older persons' care facilities, or through home and community care. A special attention was called for to provide support for the caregivers, especially family caregivers. The Symposium also took note of elderly citizens' own initiatives for "ageing in place". The Symposium recommends all relevant stakeholders to collaborate in making Long-Term Care available to older persons.

10. **Development of the Elderly Care Industry and Role of the Government:** The Symposium reviewed the key elements in setting up an accreditation system for Long-Term Care facilities. Noting that accreditation is also a risk management system for governments, the Symposium emphasized

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the challenge of taking into account the widely different perceptions and expectations of multiple stakeholders, such as service providers, caregivers, governments and communities, paying particular attention to the fact that residents are often reluctant to speak freely. The Symposium also reviewed the pilot projects to make community elderly-friendly in China, the Republic of Korea and other countries, and recommends the use of innovative technologies and creating communities in which both training facilities for caregivers as well as several types of care facilities are available and provide constant feedback into one another. In addition, the governance of care industry must ensure that care is equitable and that elderly care is not an opportunity for unreasonable profit making.

11. The Symposium appreciated all contributions made by the participants and recognized the value of platforms, such as this one, where representatives of governments, civil society, and United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations can come together and exchange information, find gaps and common challenges, enhance cooperation, and renew commitments towards building sustainable ageing societies in Asia.

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