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Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, 8-12 April 2002)

European Parliament resolution on the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, 8-12 April 2002)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to United Nations Resolution 46/91 of December 1991 on Principles for Older People, which supports the rights of older people to participation, dignity, independence, personal fulfilment and care,
 - having regard to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular Article 25 thereof, which recognises and respects the right of ‘the elderly to lead a life of dignity and independence and to participate in social and cultural life’,
 - having regard to Article 13 of the Treaty, which outlaws discrimination on grounds of age,
 - having regard to the ILO’s Older Workers Recommendation (R 162) of 1980,
 - having regard to the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Second World Assembly on Ageing,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 May 2001 on the Commission Communication to the Council, to the European Parliament and to the Economic and Social Committee "The Future Evolution of Social Protection from a long-term point of view: safe and sustainable pensions" (COM(2000) 622 - C5-0011/2001 - 2001/2003(COS))¹,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Stockholm, Göteborg, Laeken and Barcelona European Councils on pensions and employment,
 - having regard to the European Parliament initiative which resulted in the holding of a successful European Year for Older People and Solidarity between Generations,
- A. whereas 5.1% of the population in developing countries is aged over 65, and this is set to rise to 6.5% by the year 2015, representing an absolute increase of 52% (US Census Bureau),
- B. whereas within the EU people aged 60 or over account for 21.5 % of the population and whereas by 2020 a 30% increase is expected in this age group and a 40% increase in the group aged 80 or over (Old Age in Europe, MISSOC-Info, June 2001),
- C. whereas the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing will be held in April 2002, and whereas this provides an opportunity for issues associated with ageing to be recognised both in industrialised countries and in the developing world,

¹ OJ C 34 E, 7.2.2002, p. 362.

- D. whereas the ageing of society is too often seen in both industrialised and developing countries in negative terms, i.e. in terms of challenges to the age structure of the labour force and the sustainability of social protection and health care schemes and as a drain on family resources in developing countries, whereas in fact older people offer key community and family support,
- E. whereas this image fails to do justice to the enormous cultural and professional resource represented by older and retired people, and whereas the vast contribution they make to society, often in a voluntary capacity, is too often overlooked,
- F. whereas a change of attitude is needed if society is to become a society for all ages, bearing in mind the distinction within European societies between those belonging to the third age, who live healthy, active and independent lives and who should participate fully in the society they live in, and those belonging to the fourth age, whose independence and health is more fragile and who deserve specific attention and care in order to live dignified lives,
- G. having regard to the rights of older citizens to full participation in whatever society they live in, and recognising the barriers faced by older people throughout the world to employment, income support and community development programmes, all of which must be addressed,
- H. whereas migration from the developing world is leading to a drop in family support, so that the problem of isolation of older people is worsening; and whereas shifts in family patterns resulting from social changes is causing isolation and social exclusion in the European Union,
- I. whereas the eradication of poverty in old age throughout the world is a fundamental aim of the International Strategy for Action on Ageing, and whereas there is an essential need to incorporate the age dimension into poverty indicators and measures, in both the EU and the developing world,
- J. whereas access to healthcare for all and a good standard of physical and mental health and social well-being is a basic human right,
- K. whereas exclusion of older people from HIV/AIDS programmes in developing countries results in a lack of testing for those over 49, so that HIV in older people usually goes undetected or is misdiagnosed; having regard also to older people's critical role in the care of people living with AIDS and their orphaned grandchildren and their potential role as educators and players in HIV prevention in developing countries,
- L. whereas abuse against older people in all its forms is prevalent throughout the world, including in the EU, and whereas violence against older people must be condemned in the strongest of terms as an infringement of their most basic human rights,
- M. whereas women outlive men in all societies and, as populations age, the number of older women will increase; and whereas older women are particularly vulnerable in the developing world,

- N. whereas, in order to establish an inclusive society for all ages, the general principles to support it must be translated into specific guidelines and international and national plans of action based on a long-term strategy for ageing, including compliance with International Labour Organisation conventions, especially those relating to the development of social protection and tackling discrimination, with provision being made for regular evaluations,
- O. whereas older people cannot be thought of as a homogeneous group, and the diversity of older people must be respected and taken into consideration through specific policies as far as individual needs are concerned,
- P. whereas various estimates concerning demographic change in the Member States show divergences of up to 60%, which show that forecasts of social developments over a period of fifty years should be treated with caution and can under no circumstances be considered as ‘established findings’,
- Q. whereas there is an essential need to incorporate the age dimension into poverty indicators and interventions,
- R. whereas ageing of populations is poised to become a major issue in developing countries, whose populations are projected to age swiftly in the first half of the twenty-first century; whereas developed countries have been able to age gradually, but developing countries face the challenge of simultaneous development and ageing of the population,
- S. whereas the aim of the International Strategy for Action on Ageing 2002 is to ensure that people everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights, particularly through the use of new technologies,
1. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to actively support at the Second UN World Assembly on Ageing an international action strategy and a clear commitment towards a society for all ages (by allocating adequate political and financial means), based on solidarity between generations, a positive image of living longer, older people’s contribution to the well-being of society and the active role they continue to play in the family and community; believes that the right of older people to be actively involved in public life, to democracy and to equality needs be implemented by urgent, concrete and ambitious actions at all levels;
 2. Calls on the Council and the Commission to mainstream ageing issues in all relevant policy areas and to include older people in all relevant European social, economic and development cooperation policies and programmes on the basis of the UN Principles for Older Persons;
 3. Calls on the EU institutions and the Member States to preserve and strengthen the European social model, and in particular to develop legal, cohesive social protection systems based on universality and solidarity within and between generations;
 4. Reiterates its opinion that it is necessary to step up the fight against all forms of discrimination on the labour market, in particular discrimination against older workers, and to encourage, through refresher and vocational retraining measures, including new

technologies, and through changes in the organisation of work and working hours, and industrial safety and health protection in keeping with the needs of the elderly, the re-entry of persons excluded from the labour market into working life; believes that phased retirement schemes are a possible way of presenting older workers' experience and knowledge by handing it down to younger ones;

5. Calls on the Member States to assist older persons by promoting self-employment, for example by encouraging small and micro-enterprise development and ensuring access to credit for older persons, without discrimination relating to gender;
6. Reiterates its support for an open method of coordination in the fields of pensions, social inclusion and health care, welcomes the Commission's recent initiatives in these fields and expresses the hope that the work undertaken will be pursued in greater depth by the Council; reiterates its request to be fully involved in this process;
7. Calls on the Commission and Member States to give priority to activities geared to the integration of older people in danger of isolation, both within the European Union and through their development cooperation policies;
8. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to come forward with specific measures aimed at reducing inequalities and poverty among older people, and in particular at improving the situation of older women as regards inequality in pension payments, and the situation of the very old;
9. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to take measures to ensure that the incomes and resources available to older and retired people keep pace with the standard of living of society as a whole;
10. Draws attention to the particular problems of older migrants and refugees within the EU in terms of social integration;
11. Calls on the European Union and the Member States to recognise that for many older people learning opportunities and access to new knowledge are a valuable aid to maintaining physical and mental health and continuing to be active by preserving the maximum level of physical, psychological and social autonomy; calls on them also to recognise that this represents a means of increasing cross-generational links and social cohesion; calls therefore for the principles of 'active ageing' to be further developed in their policies;
12. Draws the Commission's attention, in the context of its communication on "The future of health care and care for the elderly: guaranteeing, accessibility, quality and financial viability (COM(2001) 723)", to the vital supportive role of carers for elderly people and the need for a major effort to recognise the role of family carers and to give particular attention to the accessibility of health care for all and to the quality of services provided;
13. Calls on the Commission and Member States to develop and encourage research initiatives aimed at gathering data on the situation and needs of older people in European society, making clear the difference in the situation of the third age and the fourth age; calls on all the institutions and actors involved at worldwide level to increase cooperation by developing common research, policy making and programmes, the analysis and

processing of statistics, including data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors, and regular performance reviews;

14. Calls on the Commission to present a proposal for a specific action programme on ageing, to provide for the establishment of an exchange programme for older people in Europe and to appoint a Commission official in charge of these issues within the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs;
15. Calls on the Council and Member States to recognise that the EU needs a broader legal base to enable it to promote worthwhile measures to assist older people;
16. Calls for international assistance to developing countries and those with economies in transition to enable them to develop policies to address ageing, and for issues linked to ageing to be included in the social aspects of EU enlargement; calls on the Commission to issue a communication on the needs of older people in development cooperation; calls on the Council and Commission to fund capacity-building measures for older people's organisations in the European Union and developing countries so that they have a strong voice and are consulted on matters of concern to them;
17. Notes that poverty in old age has a strong gender dimension, and that women are more likely than men to experience discrimination in access to education, work, income, health care and inheritance; points out that sufficient social security schemes including decent pensions are particularly important for women, whose entitlement can otherwise be very low due to low pay and/or part-time jobs, and may often be interrupted by family responsibilities and unemployment;
18. Notes that access to healthcare for all, and a good standard of physical and mental health and social wellbeing, are basic human rights, and calls for the implementation of integrated public health care/social services systems which act as enablers for equality of access, the free supply of essential medicines worldwide, health promotion, disease prevention, action to combat infectious diseases, especially AIDS, the prevention of dependency, and wider provision of equitable and dignified home and long-term care services;
19. Emphasises the role played by the social partners in activities, which include bargaining, leading to collective agreements on different policies for managing the human resources that are older workers in the workplace;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the United Nations World Assembly on Ageing.