

**Statement on the International Day of Older Persons
Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director
1 October 2015**

Sustainable Cities for All Ages

Population ageing and urbanization are major global issues of the 21st century. While cities are growing, their share of residents aged 60 years and over is also rising. Rapid urbanization is challenging both national and local governments in developing inclusive and integrated cities.

Today, as we observe the International Day of Older Persons, we must ensure that cities respond to the needs of persons of all ages and that older persons are as much a part of urban life as their younger counterparts.

This year's theme of *Sustainability and Age Inclusiveness in the Urban Environment* fits in perfectly with the objectives of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: **leave no one behind!** Together, we must ensure that older persons are fully integrated in cities' economic, social, political and cultural life.

What can we do to make our cities more inclusive? We can start by ensuring that both younger and older generations are included in the urban planning process and their issues, needs and concerns are equally taken into account.

We need an approach to urban planning that focuses on well-being throughout the life cycle. We should invest in young people today by promoting healthy habits, ensuring education and jobs, and providing access to health services and social security coverage for all workers. This is the best investment to improve the lives of young people, help stem the increasing tide of out-migration, and improve the lives of future generations of older persons.

At the same time, we must provide affordable and accessible health-care services, lifelong learning and retraining opportunities, and flexible employment for older persons to improve their well-being and facilitate their integration into the fabric of communities.

Strengthening human capital by ensuring empowerment, education and employment of all citizens will yield a high return on investment and will help countries reap a demographic dividend that can lift millions out of poverty. Creating hope and opportunity for young people to develop their full potential can drive progress in the years to come and, ultimately, result in a second demographic dividend of healthier, wealthier and more productive older persons.

Today, we call on policymakers and urban planners to work together to ensure an inclusive urban environment for all ages. This means paying particular attention to the important pillars of urban living, such as housing, transportation, basic social services,

and health care, to make them age-friendly. It means creating an ageless society, characterized by an urban physical environment that facilitates personal mobility, safety and security. It means creating an urban social environment that encourages respect, social inclusion, and participation. And it means protecting natural resources, preparing for natural disasters, and reducing risk so that current and future generations look forward to a sustainable future.

Today, we call on urban leaders to ensure the protection of the human rights of all urban residents, including the elderly who are more vulnerable, and to enforce zero tolerance of discrimination, neglect, violence and abuse of older persons.

Ensuring sustainability and age inclusiveness in the urban environment means creating a society for all ages where the voices of all generations are heard and where the needs of both young and old are met. It means empowering young and old to fully participate in the economic, social and political life of their communities. It means gathering data on city residents and their needs and working to ensure that they are adequately met. It also means sharing experiences about what makes a city a great place to live in for both young and old.

Age-friendly cities are not just elderly-friendly. They are better for everyone.
