

WHO Headquarters – Statement

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Statement by Dr Vânia de la Fuente-Núñez, Technical Officer, Ageing and Life Course Department, World Health Organization, Headquarters.

Dear colleagues, distinguished delegates, Madam Chair,

Let me start by thanking the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for organizing this conference, as well as the panelists who contributed to this very interesting first thematic session on population dynamics and sustainable development.

It is without question that the biggest demographic change facing the world today is population ageing.

And while people are living longer, too many people are spending their older years in poor health.

At the same time, all the advantages and disadvantages that people experience through their lives impact their health and build with age, leading to large inequities in health and functional ability in older age.

But it does not have to be this way.

The World Health Organization's General Programme of Work 2019-2023 commits to reducing the number of older people who are care dependent by 15 million.

This can only be achieved by improving the health of people as they age and supporting them to develop and maintain the ability to do the things they value.

Health equity is the concept that everyone should have a fair chance to health. This is especially true for people as they get older, when health inequities can be the greatest.

As the Sustainable Development Goals focus on leaving no one behind, we must ensure that every person has a fair chance to optimize their health and well-being – regardless of their age.

The *Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health* unites the world to develop, between now and 2020, the necessary tools and partnerships to support a Decade of Healthy Ageing between 2021-2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Strategy calls on the world to do five things:

1. Commit to action on Healthy Ageing in every country;
2. Develop age-friendly environments;
3. Align health systems to the needs of older populations;
4. Develop sustainable and equitable systems for providing long-term care; and
5. Improve measurement, monitoring and research on Healthy Ageing

Let's use today to ensure that as we move together towards the Sustainable Development Goals, our actions leave no age behind.

Thank you very much for your attention.