



**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
PRESS RELEASE
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR OLDER PERSONS
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The International Day for Older Persons is marked every year on 1st October. The theme for this year's commemoration is: **“Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing UN Global Strategies”**.

It is a well-known fact that the older population is increasing very rapidly in our continent. It is also a fact that today's society has been built thanks to the efforts of the previous generations of people. The ageing process is part of our life cycle, which starts from birth and continues as people adjust their life style through the various stages until death. However, demographic and growth changes have affected this process and negatively impacted on the family system in particular the traditional African family system. There is wide-spread concern of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on older persons, wherein older persons are increasingly bearing the burden of providing care and support to sick young adults and orphaned children. Similarly, young children have become adults as they have the responsibility to take care of siblings after the death of their parents.

There is no age limit for making a contribution to the society in which one lives. Older people are an important element of the human resources of any country and play active roles in socio-economic development. Consequently, there can be no African renaissance without the participation of older people. However, the trend to-day is that older people remain the most vulnerable and disadvantaged group in the social, economic and political development taking place.

Concerned about the welfare of the older population on the continent and as a contribution to the UN global strategies on ageing, in particular, the Madrid International Plan of Action (MIPAA), the AU Heads of State and Government adopted a Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing in Africa in 2002. The Policy Framework is an instrument to guide member countries in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating national policies on ageing to address the individual and collective needs of older people. More specifically, the Plan of Action provides recommendations on how to improve the quality of life and conditions of the elderly people in the continent. This includes: the rights of older people, health, poverty, food and nutrition, housing and living environment, the family, social welfare, employment and income security, and education and training. African

Governments must commit to improvement of the living conditions of the older people and the provision of their basic needs.. In this regard, therefore, it is necessary to change the mindset of policy makers and service providers for them to view ageing as a normal process in the life cycle and as a lifelong and society-wide phenomenon which recognizes the centrality of the human spirit, in this case that pertaining to older people. Governments should be encouraged to mainstream ageing issues in policies and programmes by implementing existing international and continental instruments in favour of older people.

The AU Commission, working in close collaboration with its international and regional partners, will spare no efforts in continuing to raise awareness and promote the need to give older people a better standard of living. Recently, AU, the Government of Cameroon, and HelpAge International – together with a number of Partners have issued the Yaounde Call for Action, which recognizes the vulnerability of older persons on the Continent, and the need to promote efforts to provide a better life for older Persons. Towards that end, the Yaounde declaration calls for the for the incorporation of the needs and concerns of older persons in national development policies and poverty alleviation strategies, and provision of the necessary support to older persons in terms of access to health care and services, pensions, and raising awareness at national, regional, and international levels of the needs and concerns of older persons.

On the International Day for Older Persons, the call is for all stakeholders, including older people themselves, to utilize the AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing and adapt it to their needs. Each one of us has a role to play as we are slowly, but surely, joining the group of older citizens.