

HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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New WHO commitment to healthy ageing could help millions, says HelpAge International

HelpAge International has welcomed the WHO's new action plan on ageing and health, calling on countries to promote healthy lives for older people.

The Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health, endorsed by UN Member States at the World Health Assembly in Geneva yesterday (**Thursday May 26**), outlines the actions needed to ensure people everywhere can live long and healthy lives.

It builds on the organisation's *World Report on Ageing and Health*, released last September, which supported a shift from thinking about health in older age solely as the presence or absence of disease to looking at an older person's wellbeing and ability to function and do the things they want.

The WHO defines healthy ageing as 'the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age'.

"The endorsement of the Global Strategy and Action Plan marks a real milestone in efforts to ensure all people everywhere can live long and healthy lives", said Rachel Albone, Health & Care Policy Advisor at HelpAge International. ***"People are living longer but not necessarily in better health so we still have work to do".***

People aged 60 and over make up 12.3 per cent of the global population. This is projected to reach 16.5 per cent by 2030, up to three quarters of whom will live in developing countries.

"Given the huge demographic changes the world is facing, the WHO's calls for health and care services to be improved and provided in a more integrated way could not be better timed", said Albone.

The action plan sets out two key goals, focused on supporting all older people to be able to do the things that are important to them and establishing evidence and partnerships to prepare for a 'Decade of Healthy Ageing', starting in 2020.

"The strong support from our Member States shows how importantly they view the issue and I sense a real commitment to the key actions outlined in the Strategy", said Dr John Beard, Director of the WHO's Department of Ageing and Life Course. ***"These include concrete steps to transform the way older people are viewed by society, ensure better access to health and***

long term care services, and to remove many of the barriers that confront older people every day.”

Five objectives were agreed on: committing to action on healthy ageing in every country, developing age-friendly environments, aligning health systems to the needs of older people, developing sustainable and equitable systems for long-term care and improving measurement, monitoring and research on healthy ageing.

“The focus on addressing missing data on older people’s health is timely and vital,” said Toby Porter, Chief Executive at HelpAge International. ***“Recognising the need for more comprehensive information on older people’s wellbeing is key to improving our understanding of the health and care issues older people face”.***

“We strongly support the vision, goals and objectives outlined in the strategy”, said Porter, ***“We’ll continue to work with the WHO, member states and other partners to ensure that this important action plan is implemented and the Sustainable Development Goal on health for all at all ages is achieved by 2030”.***