

# Rights of older people celebrated, as historic UN Declaration turns 70

The [UN International Day of Older Persons](#), celebrated each 1 October, promotes the human rights of older people worldwide and, this year, celebrates the continued importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([UDHR](#)), as it turns 70.

The theme of this year's International Day is "[Celebrating Older Human Rights Champions](#)." As well as promoting the rights of the elderly overall, and raising the visibility of their contribution to society, the 2018 theme aims to reflect on the progress and challenges in ensuring their rights and freedoms, and engage broad audiences across the world, to mobilize human rights for all.

Today, almost 700 million people are over the age of 60, a number predicted to rise to 2 billion – more than a fifth of the global population – by 2050. Asia will be the region with the largest number of older persons, and Africa is facing the largest proportionate growth.

This means that the needs and challenges of the ageing world population, and the essential contribution that older men and women can make to society, if adequate guarantees are in place, must be given greater attention.

Political attention on the subject has been growing since 2002, when the UN General Assembly endorsed the [Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing](#), described as a turning point in how the world addresses the key challenges of "building a society for all ages."

More specifically, the Plan contained guidance on the right to work; and the right to health, participation and equality of opportunity throughout life; stressing the importance of the participation of older persons in decision-making processes at all levels.

The last decade has seen progress in several areas, with the social sector taking centre stage. This includes innovative policies in the health, social security or welfare systems, national plans of action on ageing and the creation of new institutions to seek ways of gradually responding to the challenges faced by older persons.

A special event to commemorate the 2018 International Day of Older Persons is taking place on Monday at the UN office in Geneva, followed by an Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) session at UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday, to be attended by [María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés](#), President of the General Assembly.