



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE
Advancing Hospice & Palliative Care Worldwide

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The International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care thanks the Chair for the floor welcomes this session on the Way Forward. Frankly, the world cannot go much further *backwards* in terms of how the vast majority of health systems treat older persons and neglect their palliative care needs. We were deeply disappointed by the lack of member state participation in the discussions this past week given the enormous suffering older persons and their loved ones have undergone during this pandemic. One Vatican official recently called what has happened in “the massacre of the elderly.” Yet populations have no way to hold their governments accountable for this crime.

Our deliberations this week have been haunted by the spectre of the hundreds of thousands of older persons who lost their lives in great suffering over this past year. Let’s mark, and then harness, the energy of that vast well of disenfranchised grief and suffering that follows in the wake of their untimely passing and ensure that it was not in vain. Their suffering *can* be redeemed and dedicated in an authoritative, binding, international convention that protects the rights of all aging populations everywhere, so my grandchildren will not have to endure what so many of my generation and older did, with no effective legal shield for their existential vulnerability.

Palliative care, like human rights, is rooted in the dignity of the human person. Its aim is to alleviate serious health related suffering such as that which accompanies most chronic conditions and fatally infectious diseases. *It can help restore autonomy and participation*, if properly upstreamed and made part of primary health care.

Had palliative care been integrated throughout health systems as we have advocated for years, much of the suffering we have been, and still are, witnessing could have been avoided. It wasn’t mainstreamed though, because like ageing, palliative care, illness, and dying are stigmatized and subjected to medicalized, magical, wish-it-away thinking. The political will simply isn’t there YET. I have faith that it will be.

This Working Group has developed a fresh, destigmatizing narrative that prizes a universal community of rights holders of all ages, one that must be made visible and legible in a binding convention that celebrates every last one of us. Let’s do it, let’s draft a convention together. Global civil society can overcome the apathy and indifference of member states and build a multilateralism of the people.

I thank you.