

29 January 2019

His Excellency Mr. Martin Garcia Moritan

United Nations Ambassador

U.N. Headquarters

New York. NY 10017

U.S.A

Autonomy & Independence

Dear Ambassador Garcia Moritan,

We would like to thank you on behalf of our organization, SOS Rassismus und Diskriminierung Schweiz based in the city of Zurich, for your excellent service to the international community. The Open-ended Working Group's 9th session on Ageing brought into perspective the 'Autonomy & Independence' and 'Long-term & Palliative Care' issues faced by the elderly around the world. Therefore, we would like to the best of our efforts to provide normative input from our observations on the Autonomy and Independence focus area.

SOS Racism and Discrimination Switzerland is a constituent of the advisory network for the victims of racism. We operate an information, consulting and triage consultancy, to offer help and support to our fellow residents who are affected by discrimination, racism, intolerance and structural violence. One of the main tasks consist of taking up cases of racial assaults in Switzerland and, to analyze and document them objectively. The cases are then anonymously entered into the data bank DoSyRa, to carry out the basis of the prevention work in a joint venture between the Humanrights Schweiz and the federal commission against racism (EKR).

We have deduced that an important overlooked element regarding this focus area centers around the isolation that many of the elderly around the world feel. Currently, more effort and resources should be implemented for the worldwide integration of the elderly living in not only their home countries but also in foreign ones. For older persons to have self-governance and independence, they also need to be healthy mentally and physically, not feel isolated, and feel integrated into their current resident societies. However, with globalization comes the issue of people living abroad. If it's the case that the elderly themselves are residing in a foreign country, then there may be the issue of multiple discriminations occurring simultaneously with the lack of familial support, which would hugely contribute to the feeling of isolation and other negative impacts especially on mental health. So, what can be done to better this situation and make the elderly feel more integrated and therefore ameliorate their overall health and autonomy?

A program can be set up globally whereby the older people can cater to and look after younger children from other families, that require assistance, in specific times. This program can be referred to as 'The Adoptive Grandparent Program'. Such a project would be beneficial foremost to the elderly but also to many parents who need help with their children, whose grandparents may not be around to help possibly due to being in a different part of the world as well. The aim would be to improve the mental health of the elderly, to facilitate their integration into society if they are living in a foreign country and to create new forms of synergy in society. Such a program will improve relationships between people from different races, countries, religions and also between different social classes and different generations. Children will be able to learn about diversity from a young age and in turn, the elderly will be able to care for the young ones and not feel alone or isolated from society. The 'Adoptive Grandparent Program' would also help in the fight against the prejudice that the elderly face. Moreover, it would be a big help in the integration of older migrants into the societies they are living in, and thus will target multiple factor discrimination as well.

Due to the numerous advantages this program presents for all parties involved and especially the elderly, 'The Adoptive Grandparent Program' could be a feasible and long-term instrument to the enhancement of the general human rights of older persons around the world. 'The Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing' could implement in the future a pilot project in a specific area of the world that has a certain amount of immigrant and elderly population and where the local government has the interest and ability to do so. The focus of this program will be to challenge the discriminations that older people face due to their age and because of multiple factor discriminations such as race while also educating the younger generation about respect for older persons and diversity. By providing a general free child care service to the residents, such a program would be beneficial for the local government and community as a whole.

We thank you for your service to this working group and we look forward to this project being a reality in the distant future.

Sincerely,



Cristina Erica Schwarze
Founding President Legal Affairs



Rachel Ofner
Legal Assistant to UN affairs