

Fraternite Notre Dame's Input

Tenth Working Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing for the Purpose of Strengthening the Protection of the Human Rights of Elderly Persons

United Nations Headquarters, New York City, 15 to 18 April 2019

On the occasion of the working group on ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of the elderly, Fraternite Notre Dame, founded by his Excellency, Bishop Jean Marie, would like to provide substantive input and share several considerations, dear to her Founder, especially when it comes to the right of elderly persons to be given long-term and preventive health care.

- Any elderly person should be given care with appropriate attention, affection and skills until he or she breathes his (her) last. This implies both attentive care given to the person, and respect of life. We ought to decry here that too often, sick elderly persons are disposed of because assessed as a useless burden for society.
- Euthanasia cannot be acceptable in any case. No man has a right to dispose of the life of another person, for God has given that one life.
- We have often noticed that palliative care, which is supposed to comfort the incurable, is in fact a time when the persons who cannot do it for themselves are no longer given any food or drink, which literally causes them to die from starvation and thirst.
- A great respect of the human person should be observed with bed-ridden elderly persons, and most especially with the most destitute among them.
- Great care must be taken in the way they are attended, fed and assisted. From our own experience, the Religious Nuns, Friars and Priests of Fraternite Notre Dame have witnessed life being prolonged, at times for a few years, when the elderly person is helped in every detail, surrounded and loved, even when his or her medical condition is hopeless.
To the contrary, how shortened is the life of some elderly persons in nursing homes, through a lack of help to feel themselves, or a lack of hygiene, and more or less intentional neglect. In those cases, the elderly feel that they have become a burden of which one wants to get rid.

- It is very regrettable that society has changed its values, when for centuries, the elderly played an important role, because of their wisdom and the life experience that they had acquired, and which they could transmit to the youth, as a legacy.
- When it comes to the right of elderly persons to education and life-long learning, let us mention a sometime systematic rejection, in some trades or professions, of people who have reached a certain age and are no longer considered fit for the job, even though their life experience is invaluable. We agree that the youth, obviously, have a right to work, but the elderly however should not be discriminated against nor laid off. Indeed, they contribute their know-how and unique experience to society, which is irreplaceable.

As a conclusion, Fraternite Notre Dame supports the cause of the elderly in their dignity and their right to live.

[End of Fraternite Notre Dame's Input]

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