August 25, 2017

ADDRESS TO: policycoherence2017@who.int

RE: Contribution to the NCD Outcome Document – Montevideo Roadmap

To whom it may concern

Gray Panthers is a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Gray Panthers supports the four pillars of the WHO NCD Strategy: promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and care, including palliative care.

Gray Panthers is a member of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA), formed in 2013 to bring evidence on ageing and the voice and presence of older women and men to the negotiations of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The SGA comprises global and national networks of organizations concerned with issues of ageing, representing 800 million older women and men in all regions of the world. See here for the SGA thematic submission to the 2017 HLPF, which includes a section on SDG Goal 3. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/15726SGA.pdf

We acknowledge with gratitude the WHO’s open platform for comments, and respectfully submit suggested text for inclusion below.

‘We note that older persons are disproportionately impacted by NCDs: cancers, Alzheimer’s and other dementias, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, HIV, alcoholism, tobacco use, diabetes, environmental diseases and conditions. All people including those over 70 must be included in strategies to prevent, diagnose, manage and treat non-communicable disease. Systematic collection and use of data on NCDs in the 70 plus age group must be given priority.’

We back up this request for inclusion with the following points:

1. As the World Health Organisation acknowledges, population ageing is the predominate driver of NCD prevalence and NCD deaths in developing countries1. NCDs account for nearly 90% of the disease burden for the over-60s in low-, middle and high income countries, and people over 60 accounted for 75% of the 35 million deaths from NCDs worldwide in 2004, with the majority in low and

---

1 Non Communicable Disease factsheet June 2017 http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs355/en/
middle-income countries. This was recognised in the UN Secretary-General’s note of September 2010 transmitting the World Health Organization’s global status report on NCDs, which refers to ageing as the first of four drivers of NCD predominance in developing countries.

2. Ageist health systems that discriminate against older adults fail to provide adequate preventive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care. Agenda 2030 mandates that these policies ‘for all’ be included under Universal Health Coverage in Goal 3, Target 3.8.

3. In order to reach Target 3.8, governments must include organisations of older persons in the planning, drafting, and ratification of specific national policies and programs that address the concerns of their members.

4. With regard to NCDs, these include availability of prevention, control, treatment and care, including palliative care, services, for persons at risk for, or suffering from, NCDs.

5. The health concerns of older persons must be an integral component of every aspect of achieving SDG #3 if governments are to avoid marginalising the growing populations of this particular cohort, "leaving them behind", in other words.

2: Gray Panthers also lends its voice to others that are asking that the term “Premature mortality” be replaced by ‘preventable morbidity’.

The term ‘premature’ is discriminatory and offensive to older persons. It leads to strategies, policies, budgets and programmes that exclude those most affected by NCDs. By retaining the term ‘premature mortality’ with an age cap of 70 the WHO is in effect discounting the health of persons 70 or over, implying that 70 is an appropriate age to die, as healthcare might not be covered past that birthday. Retaining this language opens the door to multiple human rights violations, can be challenged under the various global conventions including the right to health, and is counter to the agreements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its third goal of ‘Health and Well Being for all at all ages’ target 3.8.

Agreed language is contained in paragraph 15 of the 2011 Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, as follows “Note also with profound concern that non-communicable diseases are among the leading causes of ‘preventable morbidity and of related disability’

---

2 World Health Organisation: "Raising the priority of non-communicable diseases in development work at global and national levels”. WHO Presentation 2010

3 UN General Assembly sixty-fifth session 13th September 2010: Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report by the Director-General of the World Health Organization on the global status of non-communicable diseases, with a particular focus on the development challenges faced by developing countries

4 3.8 ‘Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all’

5 Para 15 A/RES/66/2
3. Gray Panthers notes the role of older women as family caregivers of NCD Patients. We ask that the Montevideo roadmap gives explicit recognition to the unrecognized role of older women as family caregivers. They are a hidden population whose human rights are consistently violated by the state’s reliance on unpaid labor. The provision of resources, including through social pensions, that would allow older female caregivers to be compensated for their work and also to participate more actively in the community, economy, and education systems. Providing caregivers with cash, basic respite, and palliative care literacy decreases their “secondary stress,” providing the conditions for resilience and civic trust, both of which are essential for governments striving to achieve all the Goals of Agenda 2030.

Gray Panthers draws attention to Costa Rica’s Ley de Cuidadoras, which recognises the work of caregivers and reimburses it accordingly.

With our best wishes

Yours sincerely

Jack Kupferman
President