

## **Third Committee - Statement on Ageing (Agenda item 27 – “Social Development”)**

**65<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
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### **Statement by**

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Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first time that Malta is taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your election to preside over this year's Session of the Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

Malta associates itself with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the European Union. I would like to focus on one particular issue of social development – the question of ageing and the elderly.

The U.N. Secretary General has presented us valid and comprehensive reports on this matter. We particularly welcome the section on “Perception, participation and integration of older persons and development”, which in our view provides insight on the significance of the contribution of the elderly population in our societies.

It is also recognised that the elderly are also contributing to the achievement of the MDGs. Indeed, as noted by the UNFPA, through their supporting roles in the family, experience and knowledge, older people can in fact help to achieve more than half of the MDGs.

At the national level Malta is continuously putting into place measures in the health, social and economic sectors that safeguard all ages of society – from the youngest to the oldest persons.

According to the Demographic Review of the National Statistics Office of Malta, the life expectancy for males has reached 78 years, while that of females is 82 years. While remaining the same for females, the expectation of life among males increased by one year when compared to 2008.

Statistics show that in 2009 over a fifth of all Maltese people were aged 60 and over, and the figure was expected to rise to nearly a third of the population by 2050. Population figures also showed that women outnumbered men.

Projections also reveal a continuously ageing Maltese population, with the share of elderly persons increasing in comparison with their younger counterparts. In fact, in 2050 the percentage of persons aged less than 20 is expected to decrease from 22 per cent, as recorded in 2009, to 17 per cent. On the other hand, the share of individuals aged 60 and over is expected to increase significantly in the coming forty years to 32 per cent from the 15 per cent recorded for the year under review.

Malta is doing its utmost to help this sector of our society. The total government expenditure on pensions with respect to retirement recorded an increase of 12 per cent with respect to the

previous year. This amounted to 51 percent of the total government expenditure on social benefits for the same year.

These demographic changes bring about new challenges. The Department of Elderly care in Malta, strives to attain the highest standards of care and in this respect, their services aim at providing creative, high quality programs to assist elders both within the state owned residences and also within their own homes.

In the firm belief that effective care requires professionally trained personnel and a high commitment towards ongoing training, this Department supports various training initiatives. In this respect the Department liaises closely with the Institute of Health Care and the Department of Gerontology (University of Malta), the Employment and Training Corporation of Malta, as well as with the United Nations International Institute on Ageing - INIA.

INIA has in its 20 years of existence made substantial progress in complying with its UN mandate. Its most notable contribution has been the training in relevant aging-related subjects of approximately 3,500 professionals in 137 countries. So far in 2010, INIA in collaboration with UNFPA has organised 5 training programmes and conferences, and another 5 will take place until the end of the year. Malta appreciates the support to all these activities by UNFPA.

Allow me at this stage to pay tribute to Professor Robert N. Butler, an outstanding scientist, educator, innovator and world leader in the field of ageing, who passed away on 4<sup>th</sup> of July this year. Professor Butler was one of the nine members of the First Board of INIA, and through his dedicated membership, he left no stone unturned to ensure the success of INIA's activities. Our sincere condolences go to his immediate family.

Quoting Malta's Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and Community Care when referring to this important component of our societies on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October 2010, "The elderly are living history books that can tell us about yesteryear and mesh it with today's reality. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't have our identity, culture, religion and many other things."

It is in this spirit that we are looking to strengthen healthcare and social care services in the community, so as to reduce the likelihood that elderly persons are marginalized or confined to hospitals or other institutions. Strong health community services could reach out to elderly persons who need healthcare services and to be able to live a relatively independent life in the community.

Thank you.