

**Presentation by the National Secretary for Human Rights of the Older Persons,  
Mr. Alexandre da Silva.**

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International Conference on Human Rights of Older Persons – ICHROP

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I would like to thank the Government of Austria for inviting, hosting and organizing such an important event for the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons,

Madam Independent Expert,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In dealing with the protection of the human rights of older persons from the perspective of a country in the Global South like Brazil, I would like to propose a few questions to guide this presentation.

Firstly, it should be recognized that we are dealing with a fragmentation of human rights and public policies aimed at older people. I wonder if this fragmentation is a consequence of the various ways in which ageism manifests itself.

The fragmentation of human rights can be seen as a consequence of the fragmentation of the means of production. This is a process that seeks to optimize costs and increase productivity to the detriment of the protection and guarantee of human rights and good coexistence between generations.

My next question is whether our legal frameworks are capable of reducing the distance created by this process of fragmentation.

In Brazil, we have a Federal Constitution that guarantees equal rights. These are rights granted not only to Brazilian nationals, but also to anyone who chooses my country as their country of residence.

The constitutional guidelines are complemented by the National Policy for Older Persons, which will be 30 years old in 2024, as well as the Statute of Older Persons, Brazil's main law protecting the human rights of this population, which is 20 years old in 2023. We also have the Inter-American Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, which, although not yet ratified by Brazil, guides the formulation of public policies aimed at reducing the distance between the various social groups of older people.

This set of rules has been combined with the Unified Health System (SUS) and the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) to care for and protect older persons in Brazil. In fact, one of the positive results of this combination of rules and public policies is the increase in longevity in Brazil. According to the 2023 population census, there are 32 million older persons in Brazil, which accounts for almost 16% of the total population, and this is the fastest growing age group in recent decades.

Therefore, the process of fragmentation is reduced when public policies enable longevity through programs, projects and other actions. Our work at the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Older Persons is to unify aspects of health, social assistance and social security as a means of maintaining the focus of public policies on care and prevention and thus guaranteeing autonomy and independence for older persons. By reducing emergency demands on the health system, which overburdens the public budget, and focusing on prevention, it is possible to envision increased longevity with quality of life, reflecting greater participation by older people in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres.

It is also worth asking how the process of unifying the protection and promotion of the rights of older people would take place.

From our perspective, unification involves a cross-cutting approach: ministries such as Human Rights and Citizenship, Women's Affairs, Indigenous Peoples, Racial Equality and Labor, in ongoing consultations with civil society, academia, companies, all with a focus on the older persons, who should be at the center of the formulation of such policies and, for this reason, it is already a revolutionary moment in the history of a country that values its elders. In other words, the transversal approach must have older people as participants and decision-makers in the formulation of public policies and the implementation of legislative frameworks.

Unification also involves the cohesion of laws and regulations on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older people. In this sense, I would like to point out that Brazil's National Policy for the Older Persons stipulates, in Article 3, the principles and guidelines for the protection of older persons. In our law, therefore, family, society and the state have the obligation to guarantee the right to citizenship, ensuring their participation in society and defending their dignity, well-being and right to life.

Similarly, Article 3 of the Statute of Older Persons (Law 10.741 of October 1, 2003) lists their rights, starting with the obligation of the family, the community, society and the government to ensure the right to life, health, food, education, sport, leisure, work, citizenship, freedom, dignity, respect and family and community life.

It can therefore be seen that our legislation is in line with the provisions of the main regional instrument, the Inter-American Convention on the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons, which contains the same elements of rights protection in its articles 5 (non-discrimination and equality), 6 (life and dignity). 7

(independence and autonomy), 8 (participation and humanitarian integration), among others.

Unification involves reinforcing the principle of the indivisibility of human rights.

Now I would like to give you some examples of the initiatives we are promoting at the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Older People.

**Aging in the Territories Program** - creation of training strategies for agents and older people, creation of municipal councils and training in human rights for older people.

**Viva Mais Cidadania Program** - qualified listening to specific groups, such as native peoples and traditional peoples, to identify problems that guide public policies at different levels of government, by promoting good medical treatment, the right to social security benefits and the resumption of lifelong learning.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that, for countries like Brazil, reducing illiteracy and increasing the years of schooling of older people is one of the main challenges in promoting citizenship and social integration, as well as reducing violence against older people.

**Education for Life Project:** a project in the state of Rio Grande do Norte for the implementation of literacy in non-school spaces, in the case of people who are bedridden or have difficulty walking.

**Vida Digna em Casa Project:** also with the Government of Rio Grande do Norte, it aims to strengthen the state's primary care initiatives and training and reducing the workload of caregivers, who are mostly women aged between 40 and 50 and with darker skin.

**Digital Citizenship Project:** incentives for literacy in poor communities in the country, in order to help reduce violence, hate speech and the spread of fake news.

I would also like to highlight the ongoing call for proposals for the treatment of older people in traditional communities, with 28 traditional communities benefiting, with the aim of promoting actions in two areas: (i) the solidarity economy and (ii) health.

Also the recent launch of a call for proposals for a course on **Universal Design for Older Persons**. This is an unprecedented initiative in Brazil, which aims to disseminate universal design as a process for creating environments, products and services that are accessible to all persons.

I therefore believe that there is room for reflection on international conventions, but above all on the implementation of policies that effectively reflect the unification component I have been discussing.

In this context, I would like to highlight the issues of economic fragility and the promotion of social equality, which are central to countries like Brazil. The discussion on digitalization is undoubtedly necessary, but in many countries of the Global South, it must be brought forward by tackling the challenge of illiteracy and providing basic education to a considerable portion the population of older persons.

The same is true when we consider the policies of neighboring countries, which together create common territories for many older people. In this sense, one way of defending the need for an international convention could be to interpret it as a means for dialogue between countries on the coordination of public policies to support and protect older people.

In border regions, where we can see the territory as a living space, it is important to promote cooperation between neighboring countries in order to minimize overloads on one system or another.

When reflecting on the territory, it is inevitable to think about the actions of companies in these territories. Their influence can be positive (by creating jobs, for example) or negative (by creating barriers to local producers entering the market).

Considering the UN Decade of Ageing and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is possible to identify opportunities for jointly defining metrics for measuring actions based on solidarity economy principles, both inside companies, such as guaranteeing employability, preparing for retirement, protecting human rights and decent work, and outside companies, in supporting services, attracting people and engaging in community activities.

From the point of view of companies, tax incentives can be offered when implementing programs. In Brazil, it is possible to allocate part of the income tax due to the **fund for older persons**. With this, companies can participate in programs based on the implementation of the SDGs and other initiatives to promote gender equality and social inclusion related to the protection of older people.

Let me close with a brief consideration of the Facilitation Mechanism established by Decision 13/1 of the Open Working Group on Ageing.

The choice of Brazil and Portugal as co-facilitators, brings a combination of different experiences and challenges in the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. We hope that, in this difference, we can attract and unite member states and civil society in the aim of deepening discussions on the multilateral treatment of the issue.

I reiterate the importance of the participation of the actors involved, in particular the member states, by submitting answers to the questionnaire circulated by the co-facilitators, whose deadline has been extended to December 8.

Our colleague from Portugal, Minister Jorge Aranda, will go into more detail about the work of the consultation mechanism in New York.

Thank you very much.