

BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Oral Statement to the

UNITED NATIONS SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING

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Our world is ageing as never before. As the human family grows older, this is likely to have a global effect as important as that of any of the other changes taking place today.

To keep up with this transformation, individuals, families and communities everywhere need to change too. This is essential in order to fulfil the rights and needs of the increasing number and percentage of older people. Yet if an ageing society brings challenges, it also offers benefits and potential in a world that needs the wisdom, maturity and insight of our elders. To realise this potential, the call of the time is for humanity now to come of age in its spiritual development.

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University strongly supports the ideal of a society that includes and values all people, regardless of age, gender or race. It believes that the foundation of an integrated society that lives by a culture of peace, dignity and caring is the awareness of the inherently spiritual nature of the human being. There is more to each of us than just the physical body. It is the spirit within our body, whether weak or strong, young or old, that gives value and worth to our lives and is the basis of our human rights. And it is on the basis of our common spiritual identity that all people of the world are one human family. So if society is to include all humanity, it must first include the human spirit.

To build a society for all ages we must therefore recognise active ageing. By including elders as full participants in society, their self-esteem and dignity will be upheld. If they receive the respect that they deserve, this in turn will draw their good wishes. We must truly listen to and dialogue with each other. Respecting each other's ideas, we can learn from the past and learn from the future. This will help create exchanges and harmony between generations, cooperation among equals and unity amongst people of all ages.

The values, principles and wisdom that seniors can give to others are society's forgotten treasure. In the past, elders have often had the role of bringing peace to the family and sustaining it. Since the seed of conflict is within people's minds, older people should therefore be supported in taking up the task of researching and developing a deep inner peace. They can then offer this as the foundation of a secure and stable society based on a culture of human values.

The need for values such as respect, cooperation and unity is clear. Our efforts must now be focused on methods of developing these values and then expressing in practical life changes in attitude, thinking and behaviour. This requires personal inner power and spiritual practice – the dedication of time and attention to the inner self. Collective change is possible but it must start with each of us. And it is when our efforts are combined with the gift of God's blessings that our values truly come to life and the task of bringing about a better world starts to be fulfilled.

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