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General Discussion, March 11 2013

Joint statement on behalf of Gray Panthers, HelpAge International, International Association for Homes and Services for the Ageing, International Longevity Center Global Alliance, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Population ageing is defining the 21st Century. Women experience different forms of violence throughout their lives, including in older age. As women live longer and the numbers of older women increase, so will the numbers exposed to different forms of violence and abuse in older age.

Older women are subjected to multiple and intersecting discrimination on the basis of their older age, sex and other characteristics. Many older women live with the cumulative impact of a lifetime of violence and discrimination as well as experiencing different forms of violence in older age, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence and neglect.

Data on violence against women is rarely collected over the age of 49 and when it is, it is usually limited to sexual and physical violence. As a result the different forms of violence that women experience in older age are not being captured in research and older women and the different forms of violence they are subjected to continue to be excluded from the debate and responses on violence against women.

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The current international human rights system does little to shed light on violence against older women nor support governments to understand their obligations to protecting and promoting older women's rights. CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 27 on older women's rights is a major step forward in understanding the specific nature of age and gender related violence. However, other existing human rights standards do not adequately cover issues of critical importance for older women, such as violence and elder abuse.

Action at the domestic level varies, resulting in inconsistent levels of protection across different countries. Some countries, for example Kenya, have provisions in their constitutions protecting older people from violence. Others have national legislation protecting older people from violence 4(. d)-2(r)3(pe)4(o