

## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

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I'm very pleased to be representing AARP to recognize the 8<sup>th</sup> World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Today's program demonstrated that much more needs to be done to protect our vulnerable elders, so I want to thank everyone who came to help with that cause.

You can literally feel the energy in this room.

- In particular, I want to offer special thanks to:
  - ✓ Minister Counselor Terri Robl, and the entire staff of the US Mission, including Peggy Kerry, for providing us with this wonderful venue for us to get together.
  - ✓ My friend, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging, Kathy Greenlee and the staff at the State Department along with their counterparts at the Government of Canada, Minister Alice Wong and the Canadian Mission to the United Nations. Their joint commitment to this issue is so critical.
  - ✓ The UN Focal Point on Ageing, Rosemary Lane and her team for her leadership as well as doing an excellent job and moderating today's panel.
  - ✓ And of course our colleagues at the UN NGO Committee on Aging.

We've already heard Assistant Secretary Greenlee and Minister Wong share some valuable perspectives on elder abuse. And in a few minutes I'll be asking each of them to offer concluding thoughts for the day.

Ambassador Msosa gave us a sense of what abuse looks like in his country.

But first I want to offer some perspective from AARP. This is because we hear stories of elder abuse all the time. Stories that would break your heart.

- Like the man who won the trust of an elderly neighbor. He then became her legal guardian, took over her apartment – and shipped her off to a nursing home without her consent.
- Or the older woman whose granddaughter illegally added her own name to the women's property deed – in effect stealing her grandmother's home and taking out the equity.

- These are just two of many stories we hear about gross abuse – of power of attorney, guardianship, and basic trust – sometimes even by close relatives.
- Finding ways to address this problem goes to the core of what AARP is all about. Our vision is of a society in which all people live with dignity and purpose. Many in this room share that vision. And we promote efforts to combat elder abuse at the state, national and international levels.
- Our affiliate group **Legal Counsel for the Elderly** represented in court those two abused seniors I just described.
- And we succeeded in getting the woman who was exploited by a guardian returned to her own home.
- Unfortunately, in the case of the conniving granddaughter, the older woman died. But we were able to get at least some justice, by returning the home to its appropriate heirs.
- These legal cases are just one dimension of our effort. AARP has a long history of supporting education and advocacy throughout the United States to protect older people from various forms of mistreatment.
- We find that financial exploitation is the most prevalent form of elder abuse, and it often causes injuries far beyond the pocketbook.
- So AARP has made it a top priority to advocate for laws and regulations that toughen the penalties for abuse and ensure adequate funding for adult protective services.
- We also try to help our members through education. AARP media regularly put the spotlight on scams and fraud that target seniors. We know that we not only need tougher laws and stronger enforcement, but broader public awareness – which is why this day is so important.
- Elder abuse is not just an American problem. It is a global problem. And AARP is committed to working with the international community to address it. We continue to gain insights from other countries and other organizations about ways to prevent elder abuse – ideally before it ever happens.
- Again, thanks to all of you for supporting this effort. At this point I would like to turn over the program to Susan Somers, Chair of the Elder Abuse Subcommittee of the UN NGO Committee on Aging in New York. Susan is a longtime warrior in the fight against elder abuse. Susan?

- Thank you, Susan, and now we will hear from Helen Hamlin, Main Representative of the International Federation of Aging, IFA. Helen is a legend in the army that fights for the rights of older persons.
- Thank you, Helen and this concludes our NGOs perspectives part of the program; I now invite an incredible champion of these issues, Assistant Secretary Kathy Greenlee, up to the podium. I hope we all accept her challenge to bring up elder abuse each time we speak publicly to raise our voices and raise awareness.
- I would also like to thank Erica Dhar and our volunteers at AARP for helping to organize this meeting along with our hosts at the U.S. Mission, Minister Counselor Terri Robl and especially Peggy Kerry.