

Curacao

Members of the board of ECLAC, dear leaders of all delegations, other delegation members and the organizing committee, good morning, or bon dia as we say in Curacao! And a special thank you, masha danki, to the host country of this years event, Paraguay. We appreciate your hospitality and we hope to welcome you on our island in the near future.

As head of the delegation of Curacao, it is an honour for me to be part of this important conference. This is actually the first time Curacao participates in an ECLAC Conference as an associate member. Although we are the only country within the Dutch Kingdom that is actively participating these three days, we will share the lessons learned with our colleagues in the Kingdom. We consider our presence here as a first step towards more cooperation with the ECLAC members and a contribution to broaden our knowledge on the topic of ageing and the rights of older persons.

Let me tell you a little bit about our island Curacao. In 2010, Curacao obtained a new position within the Dutch Kingdom. Next to Saint Martin and Aruba, we obtained the status of an autonomous country within the Kingdom. This means that as of 2010, we had to develop a substantial body of policies to get our young and developing country on the right track. The road from 2010 on hasnt always been easy, but we are striving to tackle the most important subjects that are influencing the socio-economic development of Curacao. So you can probably understand that our participation this week, within our context of development, is of crucial importance to us.

Regarding the topic of ageing, Curacao follows the same trend as was described yesterday in the opening session by mister Prado. According to our most recent data from 2014, the number of inhabitants totals around 160.000. The percentage taken up by youth, ages 0-14 had dropped substantially between 1960-2011 from 41 % to 19%. In the same timeframe the percentage of the elderly has increased from 4% to 14%. As life expectancy is set to increase further towards 2050, the median age of the population is expected to be between 46 and 52 years in 2050. The population aged 65 years or older is estimated to make up between 24 and 30 percent of the Curaçaoan population in 2050. It is expected that in

2050 every elderly person will be economically dependent on half the number of working-age persons (about 2 persons) compared to 2015 (about 4 persons).

Our society faces various challenges regarding ageing and the situation of the elderly. On the topic of care and social services, we are transforming our pension fund. We introduced a general healthcare insurance and we are trying to focus more on prevention as a cost-effective measure.

Regarding behavioural aspects our reports conclude that unhealthy and irregular eating pattern and lack of exercise are causing obesity. Furthermore, reports show that a third of the population of the age 70+ uses more than five different medications every day.

Our most recent census shows that a majority of the elderly considers its health situation as good or very good. In the mean time, we have to be cautious of a growing group of vulnerable elderly people that do not timely attend to minor physical and psycho-social problems, which could evolve into major health issues.

Regarding housing, we have been actively involved in developing more social housing projects, including special projects for the elderly. Community development and increasing mobility for this specific group is a focal point in my policy agenda.

Regarding social aspects, the increasing number of elderly persons that feel unsafe causes social isolation. My ministry has been actively working on increasing the number of social activities.

Finally, three aspects of the economic environment have a significant influence on active ageing: income, work and social security. We have taken measures to make our general elderly pension viable, and, as I said before, we are taking steps to introduce a general pension fund for all employees. The level of income enjoyed by this group has a major impact on all the topics I have discussed before.

Concluding, we have a lot of challenges facing us, just like the other countries in the region. We look forward on learning from your experiences and developing new ideas regarding ageing and rights of the elderly people. We thank you for your attention and we wish you a pleasant and fruitful conference.