The ILC Cape Town Declaration on a Global Response to Dementia — A Call to Action is a consensus outcome document of the symposium on “The Globalisation of Dementia: Issues and Responses” held in Cape Town, South Africa on October 26, 2010. The Declaration was adopted by representatives of International Longevity Centers on behalf of the ILC Global Alliance in the symposium, and subsequently disseminated to global agencies and organisations concerned with dementia for comment on the structure, contents and recommendations of the Declaration. Feedback from these online consultations was incorporated in the successive drafts of a revised Declaration. The Declaration was drafted by Jill Adkins, an attorney and consultant at Age Rights International (www.agerightsinternational.org), Dr Masako Osako, Executive Director of the Secretariat of the ILC Global Alliance and Dr Monica Ferreira, Co-President of the Global Alliance and President of ILC–South Africa, all of whom participated in the Cape Town symposium. Feedback was fielded and the Declaration revised by Adkins and Ferreira. The Declaration is published for the first time in this special issue on dementia of Global Ageing.

The Cape Town Declaration on Dementia (short title) was designed as an advocacy tool to mobilise forces around dementia awareness and to forge policy action. It is not portended to be a definitive statement of rights or principles that can inform a range of external processes, nor in its present form it is intended to be an action plan for implementation by other bodies. Rather, the Declaration acknowledges trends, embodies facts and addresses issues relating to dementia, and emphasises the urgency for countries to make dementia a national priority, and to develop a comprehensive response to the disease. In addition, the Declaration proposes a range of policy and response strategies in 12 broad recommendations. The recommendations are similar to those being made by experts and researchers on dementia, and dementia advocacy organisations globally, as necessary steps in a global, regional and national endeavour to address the present and future impact of dementia.

The Declaration adopts a human rights approach as a base for a comprehensive response to dementia, and acknowledges existing human rights mechanisms applicable
to persons with dementia. As such, it supports an ongoing international movement aimed at strengthening the protection of older persons’ rights, which include the rights of persons with dementia; the efforts of which may indeed culminate in a call to the United Nations for a convention on the rights of older persons.

The twelve broad recommendations articulated in the Declaration address topics that range from enhanced accessibility to appropriate health and social care, to the design and implementation of models of care which reduce the burden of dementia on families and national governments alike. A specific recommendation (#12) emphasises the importance of the participation and input of individuals and groups most directly impacted by the condition — the primary stakeholders: persons with dementia, and their families and informal carers — in the formulation and implementation of the policy.

The ILC Global Alliance initiated drafting of the Cape Town Declaration on Dementia, and coordinated consultation and its revision. It now encourages stakeholders globally to engage in debate on the Declaration, and to work towards its ultimate adoption and ensuing action plans. The Alliance renews an invitation in this special issue to all stakeholders to comment on the Declaration and to suggest processes that may be followed to foster its adoption. Comments and suggestions may be submitted online to Dr Monica Ferreira at monica.ferreira@uct.ac.za, Jill Adkins at jadkins@agerightsinternational.com and Dr Masako Osako at masakoosako2@hotmail.com
Cape Town Declaration on a Global Response to Dementia

A Call to Action

Preamble

Whereas, the International Longevity Center (ILC) Global Alliance is an international consortium whose members seek to understand and address the profound consequences of population ageing and increasing longevity on society and individuals;

We make this Declaration to enhance awareness of the rapidly increasing prevalence of dementia, to support the rights of persons with dementia as well as the rights of family members and caregivers, and to call for action. For purposes of this document, dementia is defined as a chronic, progressive and terminal disorder involving deterioration in multiple areas of cognitive functioning, and often associated with behavioural, psychological and functional impairment;

We note the ongoing global rise in the number of persons aged 60 years and older, with the age group 80 years and older being the world’s fastest growing population segment.1 This demographic phenomenon is accompanied by an increase in the incidence of age-related health conditions including dementia, which is projected to increase from 35.6 million cases in 2010 to 115.4 million by 2050;2

We emphasise the devastating impact of dementia on society, families and individuals. Dementia robs afflicted persons of their memory, cognitive functioning, and ability to contribute fully to family life and to participate in community life. Dementia burdens families and society with not only the direct costs of health and social care but also indirect costs relating to the informal care of persons with dementia;

We note that by 2050 nearly 80 per cent of the world’s older population is projected to live in less developed regions.1 With competing demands for limited resources, nations in these regions will be particularly challenged to shoulder the direct and indirect costs of dementia care;

We observe with concern that healthcare needs of older persons, mental healthcare in particular, are often accorded a low priority, especially so in the developing world which remains focused on the treatment and prevention of communicable disease, and maternal and childhood healthcare;

We affirm the human rights of all persons and, within the context of this document, we emphasise the human rights of older persons and persons with disabilities. We recall the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which recognises the right to “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” We further recall the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities which obligates States Parties to implement measures to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, which include those with dementia;

We celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and urge governments to continue to implement the Plan’s recommendations: specifically, to develop strategies, to conduct research, to implement programmes, and to deliver services and training which “increase the level of quality assessment and diagnosis of Alzheimer’s and related disorders at an early stage” and enhance the quality of life of persons with dementia and their caregivers; and

We invite international, regional and national organisations to support and adopt this Declaration and strengthen co-operation in addressing dementia and its impact.

Now, therefore, the International Longevity Center Global Alliance

Proclaims this Declaration on a Global Response to Dementia to be a call to action for all levels of government and for civil society, academia, communities and individuals to promote and protect the rights of persons with dementia as well as the rights of their family members and caregivers by:

1. Engaging in a multi-disciplinary dialogue to establish a common framework of standards for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of dementia;

2. Developing and implementing inter-governmental and national integrated policies and plans of action dedicated to dementia, as well as comprehensive policies and plans of action on ageing which incorporate dementia;

3. Supporting increased funding by governmental and non-governmental sources of research on all aspects of dementia and associated care giving;

4. Urging pharmaceutical companies to develop and supply affordable dementia medications to less developed regions;

5. Increasing the number of healthcare professionals trained in geriatrics, and in dementia in particular, in order to enhance dementia screening and diagnostic skills, and the provision of ongoing care;

6. Developing awareness of and education on dementia, including measures to prevent or delay the onset of dementia and to reduce the discrimination and isolation often experienced by persons with dementia and their family members;

7. Establishing models of care for persons with dementia which partner healthcare services with housing services, community based care and legal protection;
8. Instituting measures to ensure the safety of older persons with dementia and protect them from abuse, in both domestic settings and institutional settings such as hospitals and long-term care facilities;
9. Encouraging civil society organisations to advocate for improved dementia care and to expand care services to older persons with dementia and their care givers;
10. Providing support, including training and respite care services, to informal caregivers of older persons with dementia;
11. Supporting the drafting and adoption of a United Nations Convention on the human rights of older persons which would clarify those rights, create binding obligations on states, enhance accountability, and raise awareness of the issues which impact the lives of older persons including those with dementia;
12. Ensuring that all plans, strategies and programmes are developed in consultation with persons with dementia and their families and care givers.

Adopted by the International Longevity Center Global Alliance on the 26th day of October, 2010, in Cape Town, South Africa.

International Longevity Center Global Alliance Partners:

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ILC–Czech Republic
ILC–Dominican Republic
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ILC–India
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