

**Speech for Lord Mayor of Dublin,
Cllr. Christy Burke
Special signing ceremony of the Dublin Declaration
on Age Friendly Cities & Counties
Thursday, 27th November 2014**

Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here today to welcome you all to Dublin on the occasion of this special signing ceremony of the Dublin Declaration on Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

I especially welcome An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, who will give the keynote address at this landmark ceremony. A welcome too to Garda Commissioner Noirin O'Sullivan, HSE Director Tony O'Brien, Mayors, Cathaoirigh and City Councillors.

Ireland, like Europe, is changing and our population is ageing, which poses a challenge for the future. We, however, have an obvious and valuable resource in our older population, with an estimated half a million people over the age of 65. According to the Central Statistics Office, over the next 30 years, the number of people in Ireland over the age of 65 will double and the number over 80 will quadruple.

Instead of only seeing the negative effects of an ageing population on our society, significant numbers of local and regional authorities have decided to take action and now view this challenging situation as a positive opportunity to rethink our society, improve services to older people by taking into account their needs and involve them in the thinking process.

Our growing population of older people must be seen as a positive resource for this country, as we recognise their talents and skills.

The Dublin Declaration on Age-friendly Cities and Communities was originally signed in 2011, during the 1st International Conference on Age Friendly Cities. By signing the Declaration signatories have made a clear commitment to undertake a continuous cycle of improvement and to promote equal rights, opportunities and outcomes for older people.

The Dublin Declaration commits cities and communities to be more age friendly. Cities such as New York, Oakland (California), and La Plata (Argentina) have joined with European Cities like Manchester, Edinburgh and Lyon, and with Asian Cities such as Seoul and Akita (Japan) in signing the Declaration and in committing to the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities.

In Ireland the Dublin Declaration has played a critical role in underpinning the work of the Irish Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme. I am delighted that Dublin City

Council is now hosting and facilitating the national Age Friendly Ireland programme office on behalf of the local government sector.

We are gathering on this occasion to witness the signing of the Dublin Declaration by 10 Local Authorities. In doing so this will mark full engagement by *all* 31 of our local authorities to a common set of values and principles, and to a commitment to taking actions that will improve the quality of life of older people across our counties. This is a significant milestone for the Age-Friendly Programme as it affirms the commitment on the part of *all* local authorities to working towards an Age Friendly Ireland.

Everyone hopes that as they grow older they will be supported to stay in their own home, be listened to and taken seriously, be able to work or volunteer, enjoy a good social life, and have access to good information and healthcare. Neighbourliness, a sense of belonging, feeling safe, feeling valued - These are things that everybody wants in their lives. The Age Friendly Programme provides an opportunity to bring about improvements in the quality of life for everybody in the community.

By signing the Declaration in 2013 Dublin city affirmed its commitment to being a more open and Age Friendly City. This signing paved the way for the establishment of a successful city wide Age-Friendly programme which, in turn, led to the recently launched Dublin City Age Friendly Strategy 2014-19. I am particularly pleased with some of the actions contained within this strategy including commitments on the part of An Garda Síochána to appoint a dedicated Garda with responsibility for older people in every station throughout Dublin, the development of a cross-agency partnership programme to support older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and the establishment of a network of age-friendly GP practices in Dublin.

It is appropriate that we put plans and policies in place now to make Ireland an 'age-friendly' country in which every individual, regardless of their age, can access the kind of services and supports that enable them to live healthy, fulfilling and independent lives.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to the very good work being undertaken by both the established and formative Age-Friendly City and County programmes. This signing ceremony and what it represents provides us with cause for celebration. However, we must now follow through on the principles and actions set out within the Declaration. I would like to wish all of the partners continued success in the future, and I look forward to working closely with you on behalf of older people.