

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY SENATOR DR. EZE AJOKU PRESIDENT OF
COSROPIN AT THE 1ST NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
MEETING/ELECTION**

Welcome Address presented by the President of COSROPIN, Senator Dr. Eze Ajoku on the occasion of the 1st National General Assembly Meeting of all Registered and financially up to date members of COSROPIN on – 14th September 2021 at GRAF Hall, 10 Lingu Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja.

It gives me great joy as the founding president of our organisation to welcome all registered members of COSROPIN to this first members gathering called general assembly of the Coalition of Society for the Rights of Older Persons in Nigeria (COSROPIN). Personally, it is a dream come true To Know that each of you is here today from all the states of Nigeria, because of your commitment, passion and hope for a better life for Nigerian Older Persons welfare, wellbeing and dignity which is worthy of very high commendation.

Please let us clap for ourselves.

Let me use this opportunity on behalf of the National Executive Council (NEC) of COSROPIN to welcome all our members across the 6 zones and states of the Federation. This being our first National General Assembly, it is a pleasure to see you all who have laboured with us in the last 6 years in pursuit of the welfare, well-being, dignity and protection of the Rights and Priviledges of Nigerian Older Persons/Senior Citizens. We also welcome the distinguished members of the 4th Estate –of the Realm, the gentlemen of the Press. Whereas in 2018 and 2019 we had our National Conferences on Ageing in Abuja which were well attended by Governments officials, Senior Citizens' across the Nation, NGOs/CSOs working on Ageing and International Organisations, with Speakers drawn from different states of the Federation. This is our first in house national meeting as a Coalition. On paper we have many more members but those of you here (over 54) are those who are financial members who have paid their dues. Therefore, we congratulate you all for your

commitment and dedication to the cause of this Coalition. I am sure some of you have wondered how did this begin. So allow me to take us back to the formation of this Coalition.

Background: As your current President, in 2009, God through a sickness experience that led me to start an NGO called Graceful Ageing Fellowship (GRAF) where we taught the need for people to age gracefully, live long and healthy avoiding sudden and unwarranted death through behavioural changes (lifestyle changes) targeted at 50+. As a healthy ageing group, we traversed this country and the west coast setting up branches in Abuja, Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Aba, Owerri, Enugu, Jos, Makurdi, Minna, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Liberia and celebrated our anniversary yearly. However, before the 6th year anniversary celebration of Graceful Ageing Fellowship (GRAF), I had a strong impression that with the existing poor awareness on the plight of the issues affecting Older Persons judging from my rural work in my village with older persons, that a Coalition of all those working Older Persons issues will create a louder/strong voice for the group. That each of us working as we are currently will not attract enough government attention to support the elderly. A united strong voice was needed so I decided to look for others in ageing. That year we choosed the anniversary theme as “Care of the Older Persons” whose responsibility is it? General Gowon was our Guest Speaker (Represented by a Prof) This inspired me to go to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs who were responsible for Older Persons groups to demand for list of CSOs/NGOs working with Older Persons. On a flight from Ibadan to Abuja on a Saturday, I shared with Late General John Shagaya (Rtd) my vision and he informed me that they have a group that was going to meet the next day and extended invitations to me. I attended and shared my vision and all in the group bought into it. The Late General, Dame May Ikokwu, Sir Peter Aliu and Dr. Menakaya are all from that group – Senior Citizens and Elders Forum of Nigeria (SCEFON). I made calls, visited others and was able to locate different groups and invited all to the GRAF 6th year Anniversary celebration. From that Celebration, this Coalition was proposed. Series of meetings were held after the GRAF event by the 12 organisations

whose members attended the event, COSROPIN was adopted as a name. Communique was developed from the Anniversary Meeting in this GRAF Hall which states as follows –

THE COSROPIN COMMUNIQUE

Arising from the deliberations during the 6th Anniversary/Seminar of Graceful Ageing Fellowship (GRAF) which took place on 31st October 2015 and the emanating communiqué, an association known as COALITION OF SOCIETIES FOR THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN NIGERIA (COSROPIN) was formed.

At a subsequent meeting of the Coalition held on 27th November 2015, the Communiqué from GRAF was considered, modified and adopted to read as follows:

- i. Ageing demands action and must be at the front burner always.
- ii. Sustaining the Rights and Privileges of the Older Persons should be a collective responsibility of the entire society.
- iii. Government at all levels should be prevailed upon to put in place an enabling law to give effect to the issues affecting the Rights and privileges of Older Persons in Nigeria, through the establishment of AGEING COMMISSION.
- iv. COSROPIN agrees to champion the causes of the Rights and Privileges of Older Persons.
- v. The National Health Insurance scheme should be inclusive of people of all ages.
- vi. Older Persons who worked for Government and Non-Governmental organisations should be adequately cared for after retirement so as to sustain their living standards.
- vii. Public Health Institutions should be compelled to make provisions for Geriatric Units.
- viii. COSROPIN should be given adequate recognition by Government as a mouthpiece of Older Persons.
- ix. Government should create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs in the Ageing business.
- x. The skills and experiences of Older Persons should be harnessed for continued development of the country.
- xi. The following shall constitute the offices of COSROPIN with a fair spread among the member bodies of the Coalition:
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary General
 - Assistant Secretary General

- **Public Relations Officer/Information**
 - **Financial Secretary**
 - **Treasurer**
 - **Legal Adviser**
 - **Welfare Officer**
 - **Auditor**
- xii. **COSROPIN finally affirms its allegiance to the overall development of the country.**

(Signed by all groups that make up the Coalition)

The COSROPIN communiqué thus presented was adopted by general consensus.

Hence on the 27th of November, 2015. The gathering was formalized and the current Executives were elected. Different Committees were set up to ensure registration with Cooperate Affairs Commission (CAC), raising of Money, advocacy/Bill for the Rights of Older Persons etc hence COSROPIN was born. Since 31st October 2015, all meetings of COSROPIN at all levels have been in this GRAF Hall.

Let me use this opportunity to appreciate these founding organisations that made the formation of COSROPIN possible. They are – GRAF, SCEFON, ARPON, SCANNON, RANAO, ARFESPO, DoF, CoR Nigeria, I-Care, CGII, NARPO.

Distinguished Ladies/Gentlemen, as we gather 6 years after at this historic GRAF Hall, it is important for you to know the story of the formation of this great Coalition that has become a recognised voice and advocate of the welfare, wellbeing, dignity and protection for the Rights and Privileges of Older Persons in Nigeria – COSROPIN. Our activities and achievement will be reported by the Secretary General. It has been 6 years of very hard work and I am pleased with what we have achieved so far. Once again, I welcome you all.

Thank you all.

Senator Dr. Eze Ajoku
President, COSROPIN