Rwandans have been urged to take an active role in supporting older adults, as the country marked the International Day of Older Persons this Tuesday.

Habimana Dominique, Minister of Local Government, spoke at the celebration in Gishyita sector, Karongi district, emphasizing the importance of ensuring older adults live healthy and dignified lives.

“Celebrating this day is part of our ongoing effort to encourage Rwandans to support older adults and vulnerable groups. We must help them enjoy good well-being,” Habimana said.

Rwanda’s 2021 national policy for older adults focuses on health, economic security, social welfare, and intergenerational solidarity. Programs such as savings schemes, employee retirement plans, the government’s *Ejo Heza* initiative, and financial support for vulnerable seniors aim to reduce dependence on families and allow older adults to contribute to national development.

Globally, the population of people aged 60 and above is growing rapidly, especially in developing countries. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said older adults play a critical role in society, contributing experience and knowledge that support development.

“As this year’s theme reminds us, older adults are powerful agents of change. They must have a voice in policymaking, age discrimination must be addressed, and societies should support their participation,” Guterres said.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus highlighted the urgent need for age-appropriate healthcare, noting that by 2050, one in five people worldwide will be 60 or older. “Our goal is to ensure all older adults can access the health services they need, wherever they are, and whatever their health status,” he said.

Experts say older adults often face multiple chronic conditions at once, yet health systems are largely designed to treat illnesses separately. Integrated services, combined with community health worker support, are key to ensuring longer, healthier lives for seniors.

The UN projects the number of people aged 60 and above will rise from 1.2 billion in 2025 to 2.1 billion by 2050. By 2080, adults over 65 are expected to outnumber

children under 18, underscoring the need for policies that support active aging, social inclusion, and lifelong contribution to society.