



**Dr Daisy Acosta**  
**Alzheimer's Disease International Chairman**  
**U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights**  
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Thank you, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Payne, and members of the subcommittee, for this opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Daisy Acosta and I come from the Dominican Republic. I am a caregiver, doctor and researcher. I am the Chairman of Alzheimer's Disease International, the worldwide federation of Alzheimer associations. Our 76 member associations represent people with dementia and their families in their countries. Alzheimer's Disease International, known as ADI, was formed in 1984 in this city with the Alzheimer's Association being one of the founding members. 27 years later, I am the first Chair of ADI from a developing country.

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are a global problem. We estimate that there are currently 37 million people with this disease in the world and, due to global ageing, the number will increase by more than one million a year to 66 million by 2030 and 115 million by 2050. Alzheimer's disease is devastating not only to the people who have it, but also to their families and to society at large. Many people have to stop working because they are caring for a relative.

In developing countries, the burden of the disease falls almost completely on the families and these countries will see the largest increase in numbers in the next decades. So I want to stress again: this is a global problem. The global cost of the disease was calculated last year at 604 billion dollars, which is around 1% of global GDP. This is more than the annual turnover of any company in the world. If dementia were a country, it would be the 18<sup>th</sup> largest based on GDP. One third of these costs are in the USA.

There is increasing awareness about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in the world. Several countries have launched a national plan or strategy, starting with Australia in 2005 and then France and South Korea in 2008. These plans have started creating significant changes in health care systems: more and earlier diagnosis of the disease, better disease management and increased research efforts are the key issues. All of these governments are aware that investments made now will reduce future health care costs.

At our annual International Conference in March 2011 in Toronto, we hosted our first symposium on the results of the current national plans and we will follow this up in 2012.

The United States has shown global leadership in the past and was one of the first countries to create a dementia research budget in the 1990s. Having said that, this budget has not followed the increase in the number of people with dementia, which has doubled in the last 20 years. It has not even been adjusted for inflation. Your Congress has now taken an important step by passing the National Alzheimer's Project Act. I congratulate the USA on this decision. It is a great opportunity to improve the ways that your health system deals with dementia, by providing information to the public, educating health care professionals, stimulating earlier diagnosis and intervention, giving more people access to medical and non-medical treatment and last, but not least, improving caregiver support. This should be accompanied by increased budgets for research into the cause of the disease and possible

prevention. If the USA takes these steps, it will encourage governments in other parts of the world as well.

ADI and its members have enabled people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias to have a voice. I commend you for your continued, productive work with the Alzheimer's Association as a champion in advocacy and encouraging research efforts in your country.

Finally, we need the help of the US Government for an international issue. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are the single most significant health and social crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The impact today is massive and will accelerate in the years to come. We must prepare now for the social and economic disruptions that this disease will cause. We have made great progress with other major diseases, such as cancer and HIV/AIDS, through national planning and political commitment to act and with substantial investment on research and care options. The United Nations are going to hold a High Level Meeting on 19 and 20 September this year in New York on Non Communicable Diseases (NCD). This NCD Summit currently does not include Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, only cancer, diabetes, heart and lung diseases, although they share the same risk factors and often coincide. It would be great if USA representatives at the UN could raise this in the discussion on the outcome document that has already started.

We can win this fight against dementia if governments make the commitment. Now is the time for global action!

