A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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This publication includes the documents, keynote papers and summaries of panel discussions at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Ministerial Conference on Ageing, which was held from 6 to 8 November 2007 at the Parador de San Marcos in León, Spain.

The Conference was co-organized by UNECE and the Ministry of Labour and Social Services of Spain and its Institute for Older Persons and Social Services (IMSERSO). Additional financial support was provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The organizers of the Conference would like to thank the authors of the keynote papers, the Conference participants, and members of the Preparatory Committee and the Expert Group for their contributions and engagement in the discussion, which led to the material contained herein.

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NOTE

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FOREWORD

In the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, people today live healthier and longer than ever before, which is a great achievement. Accompanied with the trend towards having fewer children, this is leading to the ageing of the population, a stage in the universal process known as the demographic transition. Populations in the UNECE region are entering or have recently entered this stage, which holds significant opportunities but also comes with a number of challenges. The universal nature and broad implications of ageing require that policy responses are discussed internationally, cover a wide spectrum of economic and social issues and involve a broad range of stakeholders.

In the context of the United Nations, ageing was first put on the international policy agenda at the World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982. Subsequently, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons were developed and 1999 was proclaimed International Year of Older Persons. The Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in 2002 set the agenda for discussing the far-reaching implications of population ageing across all spheres of society. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) was concretized for the UNECE region in the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) adopted at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin in the same year. Five years later, ministers and Government representatives came together again in León, Spain, at the UNECE Ministerial Conference entitled “A Society for All Ages: Challenges and Opportunities”, to review the progress made in implementing this Strategy.

UNECE co-organized this Conference with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Spain. The Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Conference renewed the commitment of UNECE member States to the MIPAA and the RIS, and focused on areas that need the most urgent action. Reflecting their vital role in many ageing-related actions, UNECE involved non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in preparations to the Conference early on and acknowledges their contribution to the drafting of the Ministerial Declaration. A forum for civil society and the scientific community was held a day before the Conference, and its final documents are included in this volume.

The aim of this volume is to disseminate the Conference proceedings to a wider public and thereby inspire a broader debate. Apart from the Ministerial Declaration, the volume contains the Chairperson’s Summary, a review of the implementation of the MIPAA in the UNECE region, the keynote papers, summary of contributions, the NGO Declaration and the conclusions of the Research Forum.

UNECE is grateful to the authors of the keynote papers, to the Conference participants and to the members of the Preparatory Committee for their engagement in discussion and contributions, which have led to the material contained herein. It is expected that this volume will be of interest to a wider audience interested in population matters and will increase awareness about the need for policy responses to demographic change.

Marek Belka
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
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ABBREVIATIONS

BAGSO  German National Association of Senior Citizens’ Organizations
CEE  Central and Eastern Europe
CIOMS  Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences
DB  Defined-benefit
ECB  European Central Bank
ECLAC  United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EFI  Experience for Initiatives
EU  European Union
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GGS  Generation and Gender Survey
ILO  International Labour Organization
IMSERSO  Ministry of Labour and Social Services of Spain and its Institute for Older Persons and Social Services
ISSA  International Social Security Association
LTC  Long-term care
MIPAA  Madrid International Plan Action on Ageing
NGO  Non-governmental organization
NDC  Notional defined-contribution
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OAD  Old-age dependency ratio
PAYG  Pay-as-you-go system
RIS  Regional Implementation Strategy
PHC  Primary health-care
PPAS  Population Policy Acceptance Study
UNDESA  United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECE  United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
WHO  World Health Organization

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