

NGO POLITICAL DECLARATION

UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing

20-22 September 2017, Lisbon, Portugal

Preamble

1. We, the NGOs gathered in the NGO Forum have come together from across the UNECE region to take part in the 15th year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS).
2. We welcome the opportunity offered to discuss the impact of MIPAA on older persons in the UNECE region. While we acknowledge that the MIPAA is not a human rights instrument, we note with concern that its great potential to uphold the full spectrum of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of older persons remains unused.
3. While acknowledging that many UNECE countries have undergone a difficult crisis during the past five years, the NGO Forum feels that MIPAA's potential to trigger policy changes that improve the situation of older persons has been under-utilised. We insist that fiscal uncertainty is not an excuse for inactivity.
4. The review of the Plan and its objectives beyond 2017 should focus on mainstreaming the full spectrum of older persons' rights into the Regional Implementation Strategy for the UNECE Region. Moreover, the renewal of UNECE Member States' commitments should build on the recent developments in the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) on improving the protection of older persons' rights.
5. The NGO Forum supports the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on the rights of older persons, Ms Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, to establish a binding legal instrument, such as an international convention, to address the specific barriers faced by older persons in realization of their human rights, and urges Member States to use the complementarity of the two processes to uphold human rights of older persons.
6. We, further, call on Member States to ensure that older persons are included in implementation measures for Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and a life course approach is taken in all policy work related to Agenda 2030 and to the implementation of the SDGs, including monitoring and evaluation.
7. We also call upon Member States to implement the recommendations of the forthcoming 56th session of the Commission for Social Development on the third review and appraisal of MIPAA.

NGO Forum Recommendations:

To enhance the potential of the MIPAA as an instrument to protect the rights of older persons, the NGO Forum recommends that Member States:

8. Commit to follow-up action on the Synthesis Report on the implementation of the MIPAA in the ECE region between 2012 and 2017, (Note by the Secretariat ECE/AC.30/2017/3).
9. Take strong measures to raise awareness, address and eliminate neglect, abuse and violence, especially violence against older women, widows and persons with dementia, and create support services to address elder abuse.
10. Develop policies to effectively ban any form of age discrimination, ageism and pejorative behaviour towards older persons.
11. Address from a gender perspective the particular challenges older persons face with regard to access to: goods and services: adequate income to live in dignity; employment supported by life-long learning; social networks to fight loneliness and stimulate social participation; accessible, affordable, and quality health and long term care under Universal Health Coverage including the full spectrum of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care.
12. Develop common indicators in the context of MIPAA objectives to assess the positive impact of social measures on older persons, and monitor what is the real impact of the existing MIPAA framework on their lives, showing how policy measures help fight ageism and ensure that older persons can live in dignity and actively participate in society.
13. Acknowledge and adopt the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on the Rights of Older Persons to develop a binding instrument to address the specific barriers older persons face with respect to their human rights.
14. Remove barriers and strengthen the voice of older persons and their organisations in the monitoring and implementation of MIPAA (via more transparency and genuine consultation mechanisms) in order to utilise its full potential to build consensus among all stakeholders on the creation of an inclusive society for all ages, leaving no one behind.
15. Develop policies to implement the UNECE call for active strategies to meet the economic, social and healthcare needs of older migrants and refugees.
16. Intensify research and data gathering in the field of ageing and actively involve older and younger persons and their organisations in translating research outcomes in evidence-based co-produced policy decisions that sustain a society for all ages.

Recognizing the potential of older persons

The NGO Forum calls on member states to:

17. Fully recognize that older persons are valuable contributors to society, the national economy, their families and their communities and not always in need of assistance.
18. Actively consult with and involve older persons in designing policies and strategies that concern them, including them in all decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes from the beginning.

19. Recognize the opportunities that come with the marked increase in numbers of persons 80+ who are still fully participating in or wish to contribute to society, in the communities and places they choose to live in taking into account that most older persons wish to continue to live independently in their own homes.
20. Combat ageism through awareness-raising campaigns, including – but not limited to contributing to the WHO campaign against ageism. Ministries should partner with civil society to create training programmes to fight ageist and patronizing attitudes for a wide range of professions, including but not limited to police, health providers, public servants and administrators.

Encouraging and capacity building for longer working life:

21. Challenge stereotypes and age discrimination in the labour market through legislation banning age discrimination, and by strengthening the promotion of diversity in the work force: make funding available at national level to promote awareness of the value of older workers in the work place and in society at large.
22. Create specific employment targets for labour market participation of older workers and for the participation of older workers in life-long learning programmes. Foster educational programmes aimed at highlighting older persons' potential.
23. Recognise the value of informal care giving provided by older workers through acknowledgement of carers' rights, providing flexible care leave provisions and compensation to accommodate the needs of older workers, in particular older women.
24. Protect workers of all ages by implementing decent work standards, including health and safety rules that include emotional and social risks linked to work, as well as enhance occupational health prevention by adapting work places to the needs of an ageing workforce. Support innovative entrepreneurship aimed at finding new solutions for older persons' employment.
25. Respect the right to work of older persons, including after pensionable age if they wish, as changing forms of work and better health will make a longer working life desirable for many older persons in the future. Encourage intergenerational approaches to work practice and foster possibilities for older persons to pass on their skills and knowledge to society and following generations.
26. Promote flexible pathways into retirement that allow older workers to reduce their working time without losing out on acquired social protection rights, such as pension or health insurance; create possibilities to combine part-time employment with part-time pensions.

Ensuring ageing with dignity:

27. Guarantee the adequacy of pensions and recognise individual pension rights for all to insure a dignified life in old age, including those with career breaks, mainly women, who assumed caring responsibilities for family members during their working life.

28. Enforce gender pay and career equality through measures such as investment in childcare and eldercare to ensure compensation and an adequate retirement income for women in the future.
29. Introduce transitional measures to address the unacceptable gender pension gap currently affecting older women.
30. Guarantee an adequate minimum income in old age to fight poverty and prevent social exclusion; recognize minimum income schemes such as minimum pension as a fundamental right to ensure dignity and independence.
31. Promote all older persons' right to dignity, physical and mental well-being, freedom and security. Quality standards should be introduced and adhered to for social, health and long-term care services.
32. Pay particular attention to radical changes foreseen in the provision of care and in the way older persons participate in society, given the increasing use of assistive technologies and robotics in older persons' lives. Ensure that the use of these new technologies does not reduce human care. Involve older persons in all stages of the development of new services, technologies and products, from conceptualisation to access, and ensure affordability.
33. Implement the recommendations of the UN Independent Expert in her report on Digitalisation and Use of Robots and ensure that the use of assistive technologies matches the needs and preferences of older persons.
34. Take measures to increase the recognition, training, and the payment of carers, in order to guarantee a life with dignity for carers as well as for those who need their care and assistance.
35. Improve participation of older persons in clinical trials of medicines and support research and pharmacovigilance to improve knowledge on the use and impact of medication.
36. Reach out, inform and help those older persons in particularly vulnerable situations who are unable to claim their rights: the very old, disabled and/or isolated older persons, older migrants, and refugees. Take measures to empower them to actively participate in their communities and in society at large.
37. Ensure equal access by older persons to appropriate services and resources before, during and after natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies as recommended by WHO, ADCAP and other sources, and acknowledge older persons as a valuable resource in emergency management.
38. Recognize the importance of intergenerational relationships by providing opportunities supporting the development and growth of intergenerational cooperation.
39. Engage and collaborate with older persons and with civil society to ensure that the commitments made at the present Ministerial Conference are fully realized; convene planning meetings with older persons and organized civil society at the national level to take forward those commitments, and report publicly, both nationally and regionally, on the results of action taken.