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September 22, 9:30-9:40am

Presentation of the main elements of the Ministerial Declaration

As Chair of the WGA it is my honour to introduce the main elements of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration 2017 “A sustainable society for all ages: Realizing the potential of living longer”

The UNECE Working Group on Ageing (WGA) was set up as a result of the Ministerial Conference held in León in 2007 and celebrates this year its 10th anniversary. It aims to foster international exchange, support and cooperation in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA 2002) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS Berlin, 2002).

The Working Group acted as the Preparatory Committee for the Lisbon Ministerial Conference 2017 and at its 8th Meeting in November 2015 the National Focal Points on Ageing agreed on the Concept Note of the Bureau. The first draft of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration was discussed in its Discussion Groups at the 9th Meeting in November 2016. In the discussions, electronic consultations and teleconferences of the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing and its Declaration Drafting Group, the text was elaborated over the period January to April 2017.

The draft text of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration in front of you today was prepared in consultation with all Member States as well as the representatives of NGOs. Two rounds of full-scale electronic consultations and a round for reaching general approval of the text were organised between the end of April and late August 2017.

The three main themes of the conference were agreed based on the achievements since 2012 and even more so as priorities for action for the next five- year cycle (2017 – 2022). Since 2012 active ageing has been advanced as the central concept and operational approach of national and regional policies on ageing. The Lisbon Ministerial Declaration proceeds on this way forward enriched by the experiences of the last five years with the following three main goals:

1. Recognizing the potential of older persons
2. Encouraging longer working life and ability to work
3. Ensuring ageing with dignity

With the Lisbon Declaration Ministers acknowledge the following significant progress during the last five years:

- * Increasing attention of policy makers, social partners, the media and the general public regarding issues of population and individual ageing, including the observance of older persons dignity and enjoyment of fundamental human rights
- * The development or revision of comprehensive national strategies on ageing to implement the concept of active ageing.
- * Measures to adapt national social protection systems to the consequences of demographic changes
- * growing involvement of civil society, in particular organizations of older persons, in the development of policies
- * wider use of innovative approaches in providing services related to education, employment, culture and leisure, rehabilitation, health and social care, including technological and organizational innovations.

It is noted that the pace of progress has differed across the region.

Despite the significant progress achieved, further action is needed. With the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration of 2017 Ministers aspire to realize the potential of living longer and they determine to work towards achieving the following policy goals by 2021:

1. empowering individuals to realize their potential for physical, mental and social well-being throughout their lives and to participate in and contribute to society according to their capacities, needs and desires

2. realizing the potential of longevity, combating ageism, promoting a positive image of ageing and enabling older persons to participate in the labour market, civil society and community life for longer, combating all forms of discrimination, and providing the services and financial security needed to ensure a good quality of life and dignity in older age.
3. recognizing the contributions of older persons to family and society and thus to intergenerational equity and reciprocity, as necessary for strengthening social cohesion in our societies.
4. Eradicating competitive disadvantage in the labour market with employment services tailored to older jobseekers.
5. promoting opportunities for lifelong learning and professional training, fostering health promotion and prevention, and providing incentives for employers to hire older persons.
6. Making thus early retirement less attractive and encouraging older persons to postpone their retirement.
7. Appreciating dignity, health and independence as basic requirements for active ageing and safeguarding the dignity and enjoyment of fundamental human rights of older persons
8. better integrating and coordinating health and social care, both formally and informally provided, in the community and at home, and enabling older persons to maintain their independence, health and well-being as long as possible.
9. developing age-friendly community programmes and better supporting informal carers.
10. Addressing challenges such as dementia, social isolation and loneliness and understanding the needs and preferences of older persons.
11. Ensuring the quality of integrated health and social services to meet the growing demand for long-term care and assistance as well as to support family carers and to take measures promoting the reconciliation of work and care duties. AND

12. strengthening intergenerational solidarity, socially responsible, financially sound and sustainable strategies to encompassing the needs and capacities of current and of future generations.

Ministers emphasize the necessity of mainstreaming ageing in all policy fields to make sure, that policies on ageing and their Implementation are seen as a shared responsibility of all major actors in society.

Last but not least please let me thank all National Focal Points on Ageing as members of the Working Group for their engaged participation in the preparation of this conference and its declaration. As leaving chair after seven years of chairwomanship I would like to appreciate the progress in the work of the WGA since its establishment in 2007.

On the occasion of its 10th anniversary, Ministers, please allow me to invite you to consider an upgrading of the WGA to a regular sectoral UNECE Committee on Population. This would not be associated with any more costs! The structure and the Secretariat of the Working Group exist and will continue to exist. You would really do pioneer's work by acknowledging the growing importance of demographic change and ensuring stable working conditions under the regular procedures of a Committee during the 5-years period of the MIPAA/RIS review.

Thank you for your attention.