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Statement for the Panel, 19 September 2012:
„Participation, Non-Discrimination, Social Inclusion of older persons“

You're Excellences,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Republic of Serbia is among the oldest populations, not only in Europe but even in the world. Current social and economic situation in the country is more unfavourable than in 2007, the time of the first Revision of the Madrid International Plan for Ageing. Despite the progress country made, total capacities for exercising the rights, implementation of measures and delivering services for Long Term Care are still, significantly low.

Accessibility of Long Term Care services also, is higher in the urban and lower in rural surroundings, higher in Belgrade than in southeast of country.

I.

At the policy level, regarding participation, protection against discrimination and social inclusion of older people, we have made a significant success in the past five years. Thanks to mainstreaming National Ageing Strategy (2006), participation of the older persons in the society, reduction of discrimination and social inclusion of older people, have become important strategic and legislative targets and integral parts of the reforms in Serbia.

II.

We were also, mostly successful *in terms of the national level implementation*, of the adopted Ageing Policy. The main achievements are

1. Government Ratification of Revised Social Charter of the European Union. This year we have submitted the first report, in line with Article 23, on social protection of the older persons

2. Functioning of the Government Council on Ageing and Old Age issues
3. Very good, quality work of the NGO and humanitarian network especially in the area of protecting older people against discrimination and abuse
4. Foundation of the Commissioner's Office for Equality of Citizens, which has already made contributions in practice
5. Activities of the Gender Equality Sector in Ministry which address the challenge of older women protection
6. and, First Government Social Inclusion Report (2011)

III.

In the other hand, in regular practice and projects we have had a lot of challenges which were mainly caused by economic crisis. Despite these difficulties there were also a few good results:

- A.** In the area of participation of older workers in the labour market, until the end of 2008, effects of Government subventions for the employers of the older workers were significant. But, than, they have started and kept weakening after the financial crisis began.
- B.** Number of older persons exercising the rights, using Long Term Care services and other measures is growing in public and NGO, but even more in private sector, making slowly higher accessibility of services and less discrimination of vulnerable older persons.
- C.** With same aim, Serbian Red Cross programmes recruiting older volunteers and includes growing number of the most vulnerable elderly population in municipalities, as well as in distant rural areas. Network of NGOs also is working very successfully on the project of self-assistance groups. Annually, network is involved in the international "Age demand action", too.
- D.** Among the one of the best examples of practice of active ageing and social inclusion of older people at the national level is a multi annual project raised from Olympic spirit, of the NGO "Third Age Movement". Every year in October, in spa on the southeast of Serbia, they organise three-day of sport, cultural and health programmes for almost a thousand older participants but also visitors of other generations.
- E.** In respond to the antidiscrimination challenge of adequately informing the elderly on services, rights and measures for them, Belgrade has been formed an Info Centre and introduces free of charge information services

for whole Serbian territory, and some forms for the adult education, as well.

Conclusion is that we have positive assessment of the results achieved in Serbia in the period 2007-2012., even, not as we aspect. This has been confirmed by the consensus at the broader level of the National Council for Ageing, including the representatives of the academy, public and NGO sector.

Few major recommendations are identified in the following areas:

- Further creation of measures and implementation actions in the labour market, for improving employment of older workers
- Raising awareness on population ageing and the fight against prejudices, among the citizens, workers, but also among the policy decision makers
- Fight against corruption which leads direct to discrimination, and overcoming deficiency of legislative provisions, and obligations of concrete stakeholders in Long Term Care.
- Making improvements in areas of cooperation: inner cooperation in sectors and cooperation between government sectors, cooperation between public, non-profit and private organizations, cooperation between national and local stakeholders, cooperation between urban and rural institutions and organizations.

We truly believe that the adopted strategic decisions in international level, as in our national ageing policy as well, will keep leading us successfully in the future period. That will be towards our common aims, improvements of the life quality of older persons and active ageing, the achievements which we know, leading us to the society devoted to all generations.

Thank you for your attention!