

## **Economic Commission for Europe**

### **Working Group on Ageing**

#### **Ninth meeting**

Geneva, 21 and 22 November 2016

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

#### **Report of the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing and briefing on the outcomes of ageing-related events during 2016**

## **Proposal for transforming the UNECE Working Group on Ageing into a UNECE Committee on Population Ageing (CPA)**

### **Draft Proposal by the UNECE Working Group on Ageing (WGA)**

#### **Note by the Bureau**

##### *Summary*

Over the years, there has been a mounting importance of work on mainstreaming population ageing into all policy areas, of advancing and monitoring the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), and more recently of responding to the national and regional commitments under the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. To reflect the development of UNECE work in the field of population ageing and intergenerational relationships, the Working Group proposes a resource-neutral transformation of the WGA to a Sectoral committee and requests the secretariat to initiate informal consultations with interested delegations of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) on the proposal. Subject to a positive outcome of the consultations, the Chair of the Working Group will submit the proposal to EXCOM, requesting its recommendation to the 67th session of the Economic Commission for Europe for further approval by ECOSOC. The revised terms of reference are contained in the Annex.

## **I. Background and History**

### **A. Early stages**

1. In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (Spain) adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) followed by the first UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing held in Berlin (Germany) which adopted the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) for MIPAA.
2. The United Nations General Assembly (GA) in its resolution 57/167 (18 December 2002) endorsed the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002; with the resolution 58/134 (22 December 2003), GA acknowledged the road map for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action and supported the follow-up on MIPAA in a number of subsequent resolutions (last GA resolution 69/146 on Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing).
3. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), based on the Commission for Social Development resolution 42/1 of 3 February 2004 on Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, decided to enforce the review and appraisal of MIPAA implementation every five years on the regional level (ECOSOC Official Records, 2004, Supplement No. 6).

## **B. Establishment of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing in 2008**

4. Following the second UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in 2007 in León (Spain), which concluded the first review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS, an intergovernmental body – UNECE Working Group on Ageing (WGA) – was convened for the first time in December 2008. The Working Group membership consists of national focal points on ageing representing the member States of the UNECE region, along with representatives of international organizations, NGOs and academia as observers.

5. The Working Group aims:

- a) to contribute to the implementation of commitments taken by member States (e.g. MIPAA/RIS)
- b) to provide direction and guidance to the UNECE work in the field of ageing and to disseminate professional information and good practices through policy briefs and publications
- c) to promote international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing
- d) to promote awareness of ageing and its implications throughout the UNECE region
- e) to create synergies within and outside UNECE.

6. The Working Group meets annually in November in Geneva, where it reviews the progress and developments of the past year and sets the agenda of work for the year to come. In between sessions its work is guided by the Bureau, currently consisting of representatives of Austria (Chair since 2010), Germany (Vice-Chair since 2013), Belarus, Belgium, Georgia, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and two observers representing respectively the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research community.

## **II. Rationale for Proposed Action**

### **A. UNECE Population component: Growing scope of work**

7. Since 2008, the scope of work under the Subprogramme on Housing, Land Management and Population in connection to population ageing and intergenerational relations has grown markedly. This came in response to the calls of member States expressed in the Vienna Ministerial Declaration (2012) and the outcome document of the Regional Conference concluding the ICPD Beyond 2014 review (2013). It was also ingrained in the recent ECOSOC resolutions which “request[s] the regional commissions to continue to facilitate the review and appraisal exercise [of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing] at the regional level” (para 7, E/RES/2015/5), and “encourage[s] the regional commissions of the United Nations to continue to contribute to the work of the Commission [on Population and Development]” (para 14, E/RES/2016/25).

8. The outputs of the Working Group on Ageing have proven to be of high value and impact for mainstreaming ageing into policy frameworks and advancing the implementation of MIPAA/RIS as well as for promoting a life course approach and intergenerational solidarity at regional, national and subnational levels. They also gained global recognition, in particular in regard to the joint UNECE/European Commission project on the Active Ageing Index (AAI) that established a system of indicators to review and appraise the implementation of active ageing policies in member States as adopted at the third UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing 2012 in Vienna. The AAI project also gave an impetus to the development of the Global AgeWatch index.

9. The national and regional commitments under the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development will generate more work on population ageing and demographic change as well. A strong intergovernmental structure to guide and support this work is imperative.

## **B. Transforming a mature Working Group to a Sectoral Committee**

10. A working group is typically established to service a short-term activity while issues of population ageing and demographic change are of long-term and of growing concern in the UNECE region. Over the last nine years the member States took a keen interest in participating in the Working Group on Ageing, yet the perceived ‘short-term status’ of the latter led sometimes to a higher turnover of country representatives which resulted in fragmented continuity of engagement in WGA activities.

11. The current mandate of the Working Group on Ageing expires by the end of 2017 and therefore a decision by the 67th session of the Economic Commission for Europe to support the upgrade of its status to that of a Sectoral Committee on Population Ageing would be timely and well based. The more so since the fourth UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing will be taking place in September 2017 providing a unique opportunity for member States to endorse the Committee’s activities and outline focus areas for its work over the next five years.

## **III. Purpose and Scope of the Proposed Changes**

12. The scope of this proposed change is rather limited in that it has a resource-neutral impact and the secretariat’s work will be carried out within existing regular budget resources currently devoted to servicing the Working Group on Ageing. The voluntary contributions to the UNECE Ageing fund established at the initiative of the Working Group on Ageing will support, if any, additional activities of the Sectoral Committee. In substance, however, the Sectoral Committee status would help to assure the stability and longer-term perspective for the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and the cross-sectoral engagement with other UNECE Sectoral Committees on equal basis.

13. The proposed change in a status of the Working Group guiding UNECE work on population ageing and intergenerational relations would also contribute to safeguard the fundamental rights of older people by facilitating the full and effective implementation of MIPAA/RIS, an underlying condition for an improved enjoyment of the human rights by older persons.

## **IV. Anticipated Impact on the Population Component of the Subprogramme on Housing, Land Management and Population**

### **A. Better reflect the status of UNECE work on population issues**

14. The proposed change in the status of the current intergovernmental structure will have several positive impacts and will better reflect the well-established status of UNECE work on population ageing and intergenerational relations.

15. The majority of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (15 out of 17) directly or indirectly relate to population issues, and in the globally agreed indicator set to measure the progress of SDGs all population-related indicators are to be disaggregated by sex and age

groups in order to gauge the disparities and persisting/emerging gaps. Integrating current indicators for monitoring MIPAA/RIS and those related to demographic change in the regional/national follow-up on SDGs implementation therefore becomes a must while addressing issues of vulnerable population groups including older people. In advancing the 2030 Agenda, the Population component guided by a Sectoral Committee would acquire a stronger status and encourage closer cooperation with other UNECE Sectoral Committees.

16. The UNECE has by now developed Road Maps on Mainstreaming Ageing for individual countries (Armenia, Georgia and Republic of Moldova) and provided guidance and direction to member States in setting up national strategies on ageing. The results of its international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing were published in a series of policy briefs covering a number of important issues related to societal implications of population ageing and demographic changes in member States. The exchange of experience and peer review of ageing-related national policy measures that the Sectoral Committee would be able to provide would be instrumental in advancing implementation of MIPAA/RIS as well as moving towards meeting some of SDG targets.

## **B. Facilitate closer links with international partners**

17. The WGA maintains extensive and high-level contacts with international partners, including the UNDESA, World Bank Group, WHO, ILO, UNFPA, European Commission, etc. which will be facilitated by transformation of the WGA into a Sectoral Committee. For instance, the Committee status may provide an incentive to turn the current informal ad-hoc meetings of the Geneva-based agencies working on ageing issues – initiated in 2014 by the Population Unit – into an inter-agency group informing the Committee regularly about the cross-sectoral activities and agendas.

## **V. Proposal of the Working Group on Ageing**

18. In May 2016, at the 84th session of the UNECE Executive Committee, the Chairperson of the WGA reported on how much the work on population ageing evolved since the WGA was established in 2008. It was also stressed that the national and regional commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will generate stronger need for integrated approach to work on population ageing and demographic change. This provided an impetus to launch a discussion on transforming the Working Group to a Sectoral Committee with a longer-term mandate and equal status with other Sectoral Committees of UNECE. Subsequently, the Bureau of the Working Group developed a present proposal.

19. The WGA members were requested to consult in advance with their respective authorities and express their views in support of or against requesting a resource-neutral change in the intergovernmental status of the WGA to a Sectoral Committee during the 9th annual meeting of the Working Group. [a sentence reflecting on the result of this consultation will be added here].

20. [If supported by a majority of WGA members, the following recommendation will be made: *The Working Group agreed on the resource-neutral proposal to transform the WGA to a Sectoral committee as outlined in this document including comments made during the discussion. It requests the secretariat to initiate informal consultations with interested delegations of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) on the proposal. Subject to a positive outcome of the consultations, the Chair of the Working Group will submit the proposal to EXCOM, requesting its recommendation to the 67th session of the Economic Commission for Europe for further approval by ECOSOC.*

## Annex

### **Mandate and Terms of Reference (draft) Committee on Population Ageing**

#### **I. Mandate**

1. In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid (Spain) adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) followed by the first UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing held in Berlin (Germany) which adopted the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) for MIPAA.
2. The United Nations General Assembly (GA) in its resolution 57/167 (18 December 2002) endorsed the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002; with the resolution 58/134 (22 December 2003), GA acknowledged the road map for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action and supported the follow-up on MIPAA in a number of subsequent resolutions (last GA resolution 69/146 on Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing).
3. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), based on the Commission for Social Development resolution 42/1 of 3 February 2004 on Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, decided to enforce the review and appraisal of MIPAA implementation every five years on the regional level (ECOSOC Official Records, 2004, Supplement No. 6).
4. Following the second UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in 2007 in León (Spain), which concluded the first review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS, an intergovernmental body – UNECE Working Group on Ageing (WGA) – was convened for the first time in December 2008. The Working Group membership consisted of national focal points on ageing representing the member States of the UNECE region, along with representatives of international organizations, NGOs and academia as observers.
5. Acknowledging how much the work on population ageing in the ECE region evolved since the WGA was established in 2008 and taking into account the need to integrate issues of relevance to older persons and intergenerational relationships in the efforts to promote the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in the ECE countries, [to be elaborated further including the pending GA resolution on Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/C.3/71/L.7, tabled at the Third Committee on 28 October 2016)] the Economic Commission for Europe at its 67<sup>th</sup> session decided to transform the Working Group on Ageing to the sectoral Committee.

#### **II. Terms of reference**

##### **A. Objectives:**

6. The Committee on Population Ageing aims to help all countries in the ECE region to mainstream population ageing in their policy and regulatory framework in order to adjust to demographic changes and create environment conducive to full realization of individual and societal potential of living longer. The Committee supports the realization of the policy principles set out in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) and the subsequent Ministerial Declarations on Ageing among the ECE member States and strives for synergies in monitoring MIPAA/RIS activities and those related to demographic change in the regional/national follow-up on implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

## **B. Membership**

7. The membership of the Committee consists of national focal points on ageing representing the member States of the ECE region. In addition, representatives of relevant international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and academia can also be invited as observers, in compliance with the UN rules and practices in this respect .

## **C. Activities**

8. The Committee, acting within the framework of the policies of the United Nations, is entrusted with the implementation of the Population component of the Housing, land management and population subprogramme of ECE. The work of the Committee is demand-driven, focuses on issues of population ageing and intergenerational relations and aims to contribute to the effective implementation of commitments taken by member States at international summits on population issues, particularly the commitments of MIPAA/RIS by:

- (a) promoting international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing taking into account the situation and different needs of individual countries;
- (b) developing guidelines and policy recommendations for Governments on population ageing issues
- (c) providing a basis for demand-driven policy advisory services and other capacity building activities
- (d) supporting MIPAA/RIS monitoring activities and coordinating the five-year review and appraisal exercises of MIPAA/RIS implementation
- (e) raising awareness of population ageing and its implications throughout the ECE region;
- (f) creating synergies within and outside ECE.

9. The Committee operates in accordance with a multi-year Programme of Work anchored to the five-year cycle of the review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation.

10. The Committee cooperates and determines its activities in close contact with other United Nations agencies, international governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field of ageing, to avoid duplication, and to focus on challenges of specific interest to ECE member States. It promotes cooperation with international organizations and encourages partnership among the public and private sectors in addressing the implications of population ageing.

## **D. Officers**

11. The Committee elects a Bureau and a Chair according to the section V of the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37 E/ECE/1464).

## **E. Meetings**

12. The Committee meets annually. In between the sessions its work is guided by the Bureau as provided by section VI of the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37 E/ECE/1464). The Committee on Population Ageing and its Bureau are serviced by the ECE secretariat.