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Statement

by

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United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

14th Standing Working Group on Ageing

Geneva, 22 November 2021

Dear members of the Standing Working Group on Ageing,
Dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to welcome you to this annual plenary session of the Working Group.

This is the first time I address you and I am delighted to see that several of you are able to join us in person, despite the tightening travel restrictions. It is encouraging to see that important intergovernmental work is gradually finding its way back to Geneva. And my hope is that we will all be able to meet in person in Rome for the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in June next year.

Population ageing is clearly one of the determining trends in our region.

By 2050 about one in every four persons in the UNECE region will be aged 65 years or older, with wide-ranging economic and social implications for which we need to be earnestly preparing already today.

To adapt our societies, we need a genuine whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort, which should be focused on two main objectives:

- realizing the potential of living longer;
 - and ensuring that health and social care, pension systems, labour markets, and education systems are prepared for a growing proportion of older persons.
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The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPPA) provides an important blueprint on the way to reaching these objectives.

Every five years, the review and appraisal of the implementation of MIPAA and its Regional Implementation Strategy gives us the opportunity to:

- discuss emerging issues,
- consider the most pertinent challenges,
- and this time around, also reflect on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, which as we all know, had grave implications for older persons in our region and across the world.

In June next year, we will have the opportunity to recommit to MIPAA and its Regional Implementation Strategy through an updated set of goals laid down in the Rome Ministerial Declaration that you are currently preparing.

We believe that the decisions and goals that will be set by the Ministerial Conference next year will define a new milestone and will further strengthen UNECE work on Population Ageing. The previous Ministerial meetings - Vienna in 2012 and Lisbon in 2017 - defined concrete directions for the work in our region.

I would like to thank Italy for hosting the 2022 Ministerial Conference on Ageing. Let me also recognise the great cooperation we have had so far with our Italian colleagues.

The preparatory work that is currently underway is key to a successful conference and to the adoption of an ambitious Rome Ministerial Declaration, which will be guiding our efforts in the area of ageing in the next five years.

I want to assure you of my commitment and of my colleagues from the secretariat to support these preparations, as well as the Ministerial Conference itself, by all means available to us.

The successful outcome of the Conference will also depend on your support and engagement and the strong involvement of the Standing Working Group and its Bureau.

I wish you a productive meeting.
