

Statement delivered by Silvia Perel-Levin

Population ageing is one of most significant global trends of the 21st century. However, ageism and discrimination on the basis of age continue to be tolerated in both law and practice.

Older persons experience social exclusion in all fields of life, including in local, national, regional and international policies and programmes.

We know that there are good practices in many countries to enable and support older persons, but these practices are either not widely implemented or they do not take into account the wishes, autonomy and human rights of the older persons themselves.

Policy initiatives to deal with issues such as elder abuse, support for care and carers, poverty or housing, typically fail to address gender and root causes, and are limited in time and budget. They are reactive responses that lack sustainability and have limited impact – if impact is measured at all. These initiatives are not founded on the premise of enduring and comprehensive human rights.

A dignified life should apply to everyone throughout the life course. But in reality, upper-age limits prevent older persons from exercising their rights, whether it is employment, access to income, to education, to health, rehabilitation and care services, training, housing or participation in decision-making processes.

Age is the only basis for discrimination that is still accepted and enshrined in legislation and policies. Older persons, including, or particularly older women, older LGBTQI, migrants, refugees and other groups, are denied their basic rights.

Ageism is at the root of the discrimination and challenges older people face. Ageist attitudes lead to lack of respect for individual choices, to deprivation of independence, autonomy, privacy, liberty and other abusive practices.

While The Agenda 2030, the ICPD and most international human rights treaties apply in principle to people of all ages, agreed standards on the human rights of older persons are needed to ensure that older persons become visible and indeed considered equal rights holders.

We call on Member States to work across the silos and ministries and engage in meaningful efforts towards the required legal framework in the form of an international binding Convention, to protect the human rights of all older persons.

Thank you