

Joint statement for the 11th Session of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Poland (A Status NHRI) and the group of National Human Rights Institutions and Civil Society Organizations 29th of March 2021, General Discussion.

Speaker: Anna Chabiera, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Poland.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

first let me thank you for the opportunity to address you on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Poland and on behalf of group of 51 stakeholders, including 14 national human rights institutions and 37 civil society organizations from many different parts of the globe.

Our institutions and organizations are of the firm view that a comprehensive, binding international instrument would provide the strongest protection for the rights of older persons.

Following discussions at the previous sessions of the UN OEWGA, the decision to invite relevant stakeholders to submit normative content on the thematic areas discussed, has increased understanding of how human rights apply in older age. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on older persons worldwide has made it clear that we need to accelerate our efforts to strengthen the international framework for the protection of human rights in older age. We endorse the UN Secretary General's call to "*Build stronger legal frameworks at both national and international levels to protect the human rights of older persons, including by accelerating the efforts of the General Assembly's working group to develop proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons*".¹ Building on the voluminous material that has already been presented to the UN OEWGA, we believe **it is time for the OEWGA to formally decide to commence the drafting of a new international instrument** which should be elaborated as a binding convention on the human rights of older persons.

We wish to highlight the importance of referring in the new instrument to the dignity, autonomy and independence of older persons, equality and participation in society. These principles should be affirmed in the preamble and in the text of the new convention that should also identify the necessary steps to ensure the protection from ageism, the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by older persons.

Moreover, a new convention should satisfy the following conditions:

¹ United Nations, *Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Older Persons*, May 2020, p. 14, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/news/2020/05/covid-19-older-persons/>

- a) Not lower the highest existing international human rights standards.
- b) Stress the positive potential of older persons and guarantee their enjoyment of capabilities and human rights on an equal basis with others, without discrimination.
- c) State that the rights holders are older persons, who constitute a heterogeneous group of persons of various capabilities and needs, who may also play multiple roles in the society. It should take into account the necessity of an intersectional approach as well as the perspectives of the most vulnerable groups.
- d) Indicate that the changing technologies and climate change affect the lives of older persons and ageing societies and it should frame them in the context of human rights.

Thank you.

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The list of Signatories:

National Human Rights Institutions of A Status

1. Croatia – Ombudswoman
2. El Salvador - Procuraduría Para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
3. Georgia - Public Defender of Georgia
4. Germany - German Institute for Human Rights
5. Netherlands - The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
6. Philippines - Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
7. Poland - Commissioner for Human Rights
8. Serbia - Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia
9. Slovenia - the Human Rights Ombudsman
10. Ukraine - Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights
11. United Kingdom - Equality and Human Rights Commission

National Human Rights Institutions of other Status

1. Belgium - Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities) – B status
2. Romania - Romanian Institute for Human Rights – seeking accreditation in GANHRI
3. Slovakia - Slovak National Centre for Human Rights – B status

Civil Society Organizations accredited to OEWGA

1. Bangladesh - Resource Integration Centre (RIC)
2. Belgium/EU - AGE Platform Europe
3. Germany - HelpAge Deutschland
4. India - Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS)

5. India – HelpAge India
6. Ireland - Age Action Ireland
7. Liberia - Center for Community Advancement and Family Empowerment (CECAFE)
8. Mauritius - DROITS HUMAINS OCEAN INDIEN (DIS-MOI)
9. Nepal - Ageing Nepal
10. Philippines - Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSE)
11. Russia - Regional Public Foundation Assistance for the Elderly "Dobroe Delo"
12. Spain - Spanish Confederation of Older People's Organizations (CEOMA)
13. Uganda - Reach One Touch One Ministries (ROTOM)
14. United Kingdom - Age International
15. United Kingdom - Older Women's Network, Europe
16. Vietnam - Vietnam Association of the Elderly (VAE)
17. Zambia - Senior Citizens Association of Zambia

Civil Society Organizations

1. Global - HelpAge International
2. Germany - BAGSO - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen
3. India - Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS)
4. Kyrgyzstan - Public Association "Resource Center for Elderly" (RCE)
5. Poland - Alzheimer Polska
6. Poland - "AT OUR HOME" Association
7. Poland - Fundacja Activus
8. Poland - Fundacja Nowe Centrum
9. Poland - Fundacja Ukryte Skrzydła
10. Poland – Podlascy Seniorzy
11. Poland - "Pro Salute" Association
12. Poland - Shipyard Foundation
13. Poland - Siedleckie Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Osobom z Chorobą Alzheimerera
14. Poland - Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Iskierka
15. Poland – Stowarzyszenie Uniwersytet III wieku w Łazach
16. Poland - The Union of Polish Metropolises
17. United Kingdom - National Pensioners Convention
18. United Kingdom - NAWO - National Alliance of Women's Organisations
19. United Kingdom - Older People's Commissioner for Wales
20. United States of America - Human Rights Watch