United Nations Human Rights Council

42nd Session (9-27 September 2019)

Side-Event:

**Context Gaps and the Human Rights Imperative for Older Persons -**

***in & beyond humanitarian emergencies***

Friday, 13 September 2019 - 12h00-13h30
Geneva, *Palais des Nations*, Conference Room XXIII

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**GoF-HROP**

**Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons**

# ***Context Gaps and the Human Rights Imperative for Older Persons –***

# ***in & beyond humanitarian emergencies***

1. **Background**

By 2050, there will be - for the first time - more older persons than children under the age of 15 worldwide. This unprecedented demographic shift has far-reaching implications for society at all levels. As the world population continues to age, the human rights dimension of ageing becomes an ever-growing concern.

Conversely, structural deficiencies and lacks including on data collection, planning, monitoring, reporting and management, depict a reality in which older persons remain virtually invisible to policymakers and legislators.

When data are collected, older persons are either overlooked or are treated as homogenous population, while the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of the old and the older-old (those 80 years of age and over) differ considerably. This is further compounded by the relativity of the notions of age, depending on the context. Age as a social construct involves far more life-course factors and conditions than just chronological or numerical age, such as biological and socioeconomic determinants, which are also subject to change.

Moreover, even in those instances where policies may be inclusive of older persons, the specific needs, challenges and barriers that older persons face in exercising their rights are often not recognized in practice.

In addition, discrimination against older persons at the individual level due to prejudicial assumptions regarding age and older persons leads to inadequate, unequal or otherwise lacking age-appropriate support services or treatment. This complex process involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services as people age, and the inability to participate in the societal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people across the varied and multiple domains of society. It affects both the quality of life of older persons and the equity and cohesion of an ageing society as a whole, with significant implications for the enjoyment by older persons of their human rights.

The recent report of the Independent Expert illustrates the systemic issue on the example of the human rights of older persons in emergency situations (A/HRC/42/43) and stresses the imperative need to adopt a human rights-based approach to ageing. This entails active measures against ageism and reconceptualising the way in which societies view older persons, from passive receivers of care and assistance and an impending burden on welfare systems and economies, to active contributors to society.

The event is organized by the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons – Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, Argentina and Slovenia as well as the Geneva Group of Friends on human rights of older persons (GoF-HROP).

1. **Participatory panel discussion**

The event will take place on Friday, 13 September 2019 - 12h00-13h30-

Geneva, *Palais des Nations*, Conference Room XXIII.

This side event will discuss the Context Gaps and the Human Rights Imperative for Older Persons - a key issue in addressing existing protection gaps, thereby focusing on concrete rights-based solutions. Furthermore, in light of Rosa Kornfeld-Matte’s last presentation to the UN Human Rights Council, it is a timely opportunity to look back and acknowledge the achievements made as well as to identify common challenges and to reaffirm the cross-regional commitment towards overcoming existing divergences in strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons.

Participatory panel discussion of various representatives from States, International Organizations, UN agencies and civil society

*with*

Rosa KORNFELD-MATTE,

UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

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