Thank you, Madame Moderator.

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to organizers of this meeting and their kind invitation. I hope this meeting will bear a fruitful outcome.

To answer the questions from the moderator, I will start by discussing challenges that I face in the course of the work.

As some of you may know, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, so called GANHRI, launched a working group on ageing and the human rights of older persons in 2016 and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea has been leading the work as a Chair of the Working Group.

To promote the human rights of older persons at NHRI level, members of the Working Group wanted to cooperate with more NHRIs, but, there were only a few NHRIs which actually has time and resource to work on the human rights of older persons. Whenever GANHRI WG has a meeting and invite other NHRIs, I can see many NHRIs are interested in this topic, but even some of us have interest, that does not lead them to actual work.

Why is that so?

In many cases, NHRIs categorize their work by international human rights treaties and establish divisions in charge of such convention. In Korea or the Philippines, we have divisions and teams dedicated to monitor the implementation of international human rights conventions ratified by the Government.

But, because we don’t have any convention on the rights of older persons yet, in many cases, the work of the human rights of older persons are embedded in other topics or issues within NHRIs.

For example, even though NHRI Korea receive and review complaints related to older persons and ageism, we do not categorize older persons complaints as a separate subject but rather including them in broader category, which is age discrimination or sometimes in a completely different category if the case has intersectionality.

So, last year, we got approximately 91 cases regarding age discrimination but we do not collect the statistics by ageism and so on so, we do not know exactly how the human rights of older persons are violated in the country or how many cases we have at the commission. For example, a complaint regarding the use of kiosk has been received and as many of us know, this is one of typical cases that shows how digitalization affects the human rights of older persons. But, the complaint is now being reviewed by the division in charge of the discrimination against persons with disabilities. So, even though we have concrete cases that prove human rights violation of older persons we are not able to identify them in the current system.

I strongly believe this can be changed with a new convention. If a convention on the rights of older persons is established and even though the government does not ratify it, NHRIs can claim the human rights of older persons are as important as others such as persons with disabilities, women, child and migrants who have their own conventions and suggest guidelines or make a policy recommendation based the international standards and encourage the Government to legislate relevant national laws.

So now, what about national advocacy? At a national level, unfortunately, even though Korea is one of the fastest aging countries in the world and the poverty rate and suicide rate of older persons are highest among OECD countries, it was hard to find national partners.

For example, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea launched an Advisory Committee with a group of experts and an internal task force team to draft a convention on the rights of older persons. To establish the Advisory Group, we tried to find experts who has specialty on the human rights of older persons and contacted major human rights advocacy groups in the country, but,

it was challenging to find specialized experts as many civil society groups deal with older persons issue as one of social rights issues and there is no dedicated civil society group that advocates the promotion of human rights older persons.

Although there are associations and civil society organizations working on the older persons care and social welfare but human rights advocacy is another issue.

Apart from civil society groups, we have a number of international and governmental organizations working on older persons issues. UNFPA has an office in Korea, and Statistics Korea collects and analyzes data on older persons. But, it is a pity that we did not have communications before and I am not sure the human rights perspective is reflected in their work. Because UNFPA’s work refers to MIPAA and the Statistics Korea’s report shows the economic situation of older persons or aging situation in the country.

It’s not surprising because MIPAA is the most well known tool for older person’s policy and we do not have a standard for the human rights of older persons yet. But if we can collaborate in a harmonized way and incorporate human rights based approach in the work, I believe we can create the synergy.

Another challenge is the low public awareness on the human rights of older persons, even among older persons themselves. Due to lack of an international agreement on the human rights older persons, we do not have a clear guidance about who are older persons, what rights they have, and how their rights are violated or what to do to restore the violation of human rights of older persons. And this is one of reasons why we have low participation in the advocacy work from various stakeholders.

To tackle this challenge and boost dialogue on the human rights of older persons, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea is cooperating with the ASEM Global Ageing Center. One of important roles of the Center is promoting the human rights of older persons. So, on 6 and 7 of September, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea is co-hosting an international conference with the Center. I would like to draw your attention to this hybrid meeting and will be happy to share information later on.

With all that mentioned earlier, this is why a new convention on the rights of older persons is needed to promote their rights and it will change the lives of older persons as CEDAW, CRC and CRPD did.

Against this backdrop, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea is working on a draft convention.

The Advisory Committee had meetings several times already and now they are sorting out which elements should be included in the draft. It is our plan to prepare the draft before November to be circulated among Member States, civil society, experts, and NHRIs for comments and feedback.

And then, the draft will be officially discussed at the International Conference on the Human Rights of Older Persons which will take place in Seoul on 23 November. At the conference, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea would like to invite various stakeholders including Government representatives, civil society, UN agencies, and NHRIs of course. I can send you a concept note of the conference if anyone is interested so, please let me know after the meeting.

After the draft is discussed at the conference and all the comments are reflected, the revised draft will be sent to GANHRI and get the final review to reflect human rights perspective.

We will be happy to share the final version with Human Rights Council, OEWGA and any relevant stakeholders for their reference to formulate a convention on the rights of older persons.

In this regard, I call upon the Human Rights Council to be more engaged with drafting of the convention on the rights of older persons. As many experts indicated before yesterday, the OHCHR report in 2022 reveals the current system is not sufficient to protect the human rights of older persons as they only provide fragmented and inconsistent protection.

I also call upon the Human Rights Council to convene another multi-stakeholder’ meeting to check how much progress has been made to draft a convention on the rights of older persons. With that, I believe we can continue our journey to the final destination where older persons can fully enjoy their human rights.

Thank you.