**Session 4: Towards strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons**

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Thank you for giving me the floor.

Bearing in mind that our discussions will inform recommendations on the way forward, it is important to clarify whether the title of this session is talking about strengthening existing frameworks? or are we talking about strengthening the protection through a new thematic treaty on the human rights of older persons?

A good starting point, that is quite telling, are some interventions by Member States at the 12th session of the General Assembly Working Group earlier this year. Given the time limit, I will highlight two:

**First**

Out of all Member States, who had made national statements in support of a new convention over the course of the decade, less than one third expressed this support at the 12th session. This is deeply concerning, especially that the session was held against a backdrop of a pandemic that has so far directly or indirectly cost the lives of close to 15 million people in 24 months (82% of which – let me repeat, 82% of the 15 million deaths – were older people, with more than half in lower middle-income countries).

**Second**

Some Member States noted that older people’s rights should be addressed through the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), and here I would like to make three points:

*First:*

This is a good opportunity to recall the political declaration accompanying MIPAA in which 159 Government representatives reaffirmed the commitment to “spare no effort” to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*Second:*

In the current fourth review and appraisal cycle of the implementation of MIPAA, all regional exercises have highlighted, to various extents, the importance of a human rights approach. For example, in Africa, where the number of older persons is projected to increase by 286% by 2050, the review highlighted the need to promote regional support for a Convention, as it would reinforce the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Older people.

*Third:*

MIPAA highlighted the importance of older persons’ expectations and preferences.

* At its 75th anniversary, the Secretary-General provided as many people as possible the chance to have a conversation with the United Nations. To share their hopes and fears, and to learn from their experiences. Calling on Governments to take steps to promote the creation of an UN Convention to protect the rights of older people, was captured in the final report as a key finding that reflects the priorities voiced by hundreds of thousands of people from over 100 countries.
* More recently, in the run-up to the 12th session of the Working Group, over 200 organizations representing older persons, from 78 countries, signed an open letter calling for clear action for the drafting a new instrument before the 13th session next year.

And these expectations matter, not only for older persons – they also matter for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as for implementing Our Common Agenda.

To recover from the pandemic and deliver global sustainability, we not only need to understand where we are, but also where we are headed. If you can imagine it, by 2030, the target date of the Global Goals, older persons worldwide are projected to outnumber youth and will be more than twice the number of children under age 5. Yet, such compelling figures fell short of anchoring the issue of ageing in the global development agenda.

By 2050, the number of older persons worldwide is projected to be more than three times the number of children under age 5; to be more than the number of children under age 12; and to be at a level about 64 per cent higher than the number of youth worldwide. Yet, such compelling figures fell short of prioritizing older persons in discussions envisioning the future within Our Common Agenda.

The last point we should keep in mind is that people are living longer. If you already survived to age 65, you could now expect to live on average an additional 17.5 years. Current underlying societal, legal and policy structures are not aligned with the realities of extended longevity. A Convention would not only contribute to strengthening the implementation of MIPAA but would also help forge new grounds and require new thinking toward innovative solutions to reap the benefits of longevity.

Even more important to keep in mind, is that by 2050, the gap between the country with the highest and the lowest life expectancy at birth is around 32 years – a 3 decade difference... At a time of persistent inequalities, should the major constraints on the further implementation of MIPAA remain the same for the 4th global review and appraisal in 2023, as those identified during the third, second and first reviews – this would signal that business-as-usual has failed older persons. In establishing the obligation to explicitly and directly address existing structures of inequality that are deeply rooted in ageism, a Convention would provide the standardization of the rights of older persons to facilitate and strengthen coordinated actions to ensure that older persons can enjoy a life of fulfilment, health, security and participation on equal terms with others.

I thank you.