### **Check against delivery**



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Mr. Chairperson,

Excellences,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear participants,

I am honored to address you for the third time in my capacity as Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. I look forward to the continued exchange with States, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, United Nations agencies and all stakeholders during this interactive dialogue. From the outset, I would like to thank all the stakeholders who have engaged with me over the past year. I also would like to express my warm thanks to those who have shared their contributions to the call for inputs for the preparation of the thematic report on the right of older persons to adequate housing.

While some meetings remained online during my second year as Independent Expert, I participated in person in several events on different topics related to the human rights of older persons, including the twelfth session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. Resuming in-person engagement also allowed me to meet with older persons, making it possible to hear about their lived realities and human rights concerns more directly.

As stated in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the right to adequate housing forms part of the right to an adequate standard of living.

It is crucial for States to ensure that everyone is able to fully enjoy their right to adequate housing since housing has such great influence of the quality of one’s life in any country. If the right to housing is violated, other human rights may also be compromised, for example, the rights to health, to independent living, to family life, to participate or even the right to life. Emergencies crisis such as those related to climate change, natural disasters and armed conflict also pose a threat to the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing of older persons and displace every year millions around the globe. The intersection of age and other types of discrimination, such as sex, gender, ethnicity or disability, remains a compounding factor and barrier to the full enjoyment of the right to adequate housing of older persons.

Research has shown that worldwide, older persons were overrepresented among those whose right to adequate housing was violated. Also, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the higher mortality rate among residents of long-term care homes is partly explained by the failure of such homes to adequately protect their residents. All of this indicates the need for States to increase their efforts to guarantee older person’s right to adequate housing.

Mr. Chairperson,

Housing is the basis of stability and security for an individual. As such, the right to adequate housing does not only entail having a roof over one’s head but comprises a significant number of additional elements.

My report examines concerns relating to the legal security of tenure and affordability. Older persons are among the groups more likely to be subject to forced evictions than others. One of the reasons can be that their pension is not high enough to cover their rent. Often programs providing affordable social housing or loan programs for low-income groups have an age limit for eligibility.

The right to housing does also entail the freedom of older persons to choose where, with whom and how they want to live and what they want to do with their property.

Excellences,

Housing should also guarantee the physical safety of inhabitants. Older persons living in informal settlements are not adequately protected from the weather and natural hazards. This can have a negative impact on their health. Furthermore, a lack of accessibility hinders older persons from living independently and choosing where to live. It reinforces the social exclusion and marginalization of older persons with disabilities or reduced mobility.

Housing is also not adequate if it does not respect or allow for the expression of cultural identity.

Even though increasingly viewed as a commodity, housing is most importantly a human right. States have the responsibility to ensure that older persons fully enjoy their human rights, including the right to adequate housing.

To this effect, I identified in my report new age-friendly and inclusive housing solutions. Different examples of housing options that have been implemented by several countries. These range from the financial support of adaption of housing to permit older people to remain autonomous in their homes, over intergenerational housing and supported housing to age-friendly cities and communities and the inclusion of smart and digital solutions.

To ensure the enjoyment by older persons of their right to adequate housing, I call upon States to further promote inclusive, age-friendly communities and environments and to provide a range of support services that promote older persons’ dignity, autonomy and independence and enable them to remain in their home, taking into account their will and individual preferences.

I urge States to combat ageism, age-discrimination and intersecting forms of discrimination, ensuring that such discrimination is prohibited, including in housing-related laws and to adopt laws that guarantee supported decision-making.

I further call upon states to provide adequate funding to ensure the availability of age-friendly support and services at home and within the community, to establish effective redress mechanisms, and to ensure access to justice for older persons as well as the meaningful participation of older persons and of their representative organizations.

Older persons with disabilities must not be forcibly institutionalized or placed in institutions for the purpose of care. I call upon States to take appropriate steps to transform institutional forms of care into settings that allow for older persons to retain their right to decide for themselves, as well as their autonomy and independence, with the objective of ending care institutionalization. States should invest in accessible, affordable, integrated and quality infrastructure and services for all forms of care.

Considering the increased risk of poverty of many older persons and the cost of housing in urban areas, I call upon States to take proper action to improve the affordability of housing.

Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates,

Being the fastest growing age group worldwide, older persons’ demands for adequate housing must be a priority for Governments and more needs to be done to meet the different criteria of the right of adequate housing.

The adoption of an international legally binding instrument on the human rights of older persons, developed through the meaningful participation of older persons, can close the identified protection gaps for older persons, including in relation to their right to adequate housing.

I thank you for your attention.