

UN Independent Expert calls for action to protect the human rights of older persons

International Day of Older Persons 2024

Geneva, 1 October 2024 – The Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler, marks the International Day of Older Persons with a call for urgent global action to safeguard the rights of older persons in the face of an ageing world population.

On 3 October, the Independent Expert will present her report on the rights of current and future older generations at the United Nations General Assembly. The report addresses the expected demographic shift toward an ageing population: by 2050, the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to more than double. This demographic shift presents both challenges and opportunities, such as the benefits of adopting a lifecycle approach: the needs, rights, and challenges of individuals at every stage of their life need to be addressed, from birth to old age.

The Independent Expert highlights the persistence of ageism and discrimination as crucial barriers for older persons' access to essential services, and their full participation in society. "During my recent country visits, I have witnessed how ageism continues to impede older persons' rights," the Independent Expert said. "For those experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, such as older women, LGBTIQ+ persons, migrants, persons with disabilities and those belonging to minorities and Indigenous Peoples, these challenges are even more pronounced."

The current international human rights framework remains insufficient to fully protect the human rights older persons. "The existing commitments by Member States are not enough. If we fail to act now, the rights of older persons will continue to be disproportionately affected by global challenges, such as climate change, digitalization, conflicts, and pandemics," the Independent Expert warned.

This year's theme, "*A Crucial Time for the Rights of Older Persons*", as designated by the Human Rights Council, reflects the urgency of the situation. The Independent Expert emphasized the importance of addressing today's challenges to secure the future rights of older persons, highlighting the need for a legally binding international instrument dedicated to the protection of these rights.

"Governments must prioritize the fight against ageism using legal, political, and social tools. For example, society as a whole would benefit from fostering intergenerational solidarity and exchanges in order to build mutual understanding. Civil society organizations also need more support to work with older persons in all settings," the Independent Expert stated. "The documents that reflect the international community's commitments, such as the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, the Declaration on Future Generations or the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, need to integrate better the human rights of older persons."

The Independent Expert concluded by urging stakeholders to take decisive action, noting that the future enjoyment of human rights by older persons, and by society as a whole, depends on the steps we take today, so that the youth of today can also benefit from the protection of their right when they are older.

ENDS

[Ms. Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.](#)

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