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Economic and
Social Affairs



Sixty-first Session of the Commission for Social Development

High-level panel discussion on the

Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Wednesday, 8 February 2023, 10:00am – 1:00pm, Conference Room 4

Chair's Summary

On 8 February 2023, the Chair of the sixty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, **H.E. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, convened the High-Level Panel discussion on the **Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing**. The meeting aimed to provide more information, from a regional perspective, than could be shared in the report¹ of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and to stimulate an interactive discussion and facilitate an open exchange of views between all participants including Member States and Non-Governmental Organizations.

Opening remarks were provided by **H.E. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations and Chair of the sixty-first session, as well as **Mr. Li Junhua**, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. A keynote statement entitled “MIPAA+20: Looking Back, Moving Forward” was delivered by **Mr. Alexandre Sidorenko**, Senior Advisor, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research and former Chair of DESA Programme on Ageing. The panel was moderated by **Mr. Daniel Zavala Porrás**, Minister Counselor, Permanent

¹ [E/CN.5/2023/6](#) and Corrigendum [E/CN.5/2023/6/Corr.1](#)

Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations and Vice-Chair of the sixty-first session. The panelists were **Ms. Emem Omokaro**, Director General, National Senior Citizens Centre of Nigeria; **Mr. Alfredo Ferrante**, Chair of the ECE Standing Working Group on Ageing, from Italy; **H.E. Paula Narváez Ojeda**, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations and Vice President of ECOSOC; **Mr. Mohammad Meqdady**, Secretary-General, Council of Family Affairs of Jordan; **Ms. Aishath Mohamed Didi**, Minister of Gender and Social Affairs of Maldives and Chair of the Intergovernmental Meeting for the Asia-Pacific Review and Appraisal; **Ms. Carole Osero-Ageng'o**, Representative of a Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP), Member Organization, HelpAge International; and **Ms. Heidrun Mollenkopf**, Sociologist and Gerontologist from Germany.

Older persons in an ageing world

Demographic trends underline the urgency of raising the ambition of current commitments for older persons. By 2050, the number of older persons is projected to be more than three times the number of children under age 5, and to be almost two-thirds higher than the number of young people worldwide. Longevity has also increased in almost all countries. Globally, babies born in 2022 are expected to live 72.3 years on average, 25 years longer than those born in 1950. Speakers from all regions noted that, while the age structure profile varies within their region, the ageing of the population has become a reality that can be no longer overlooked. In Asia and the Pacific, the transition from an ageing to an aged society is taking 20 to 30 years, while in European and North American countries, the transition took over a century. Given this speed, countries have less time to adapt and implement policies to address the challenges and opportunities of population ageing.

Trends on changing age population structures will impact all policy areas and thus must be mainstream at all levels. It is crucial to understand and emphasize that inequality is at the heart of the challenges and the opportunities surrounding population ageing. Indeed, one of the most salient conclusions from the fourth Review and Appraisal exercise is that great disparities among and within regions exist in the rate of implementation of MIPAA, in the focus of countries and regions around the issue of population ageing, and on what constitutes emerging issues and ongoing challenges in each context.

Several speakers addressed the unequal access of older persons to social protection systems, quality health care services and care and long-term care services and identified such as pivotal in explaining the higher rates of economic insecurity experienced by older persons when compared with other age groups in many countries. Older persons remain at risk of poverty, poor health, social exclusion, and discrimination, with women at higher risk of experiencing poverty and other challenges in old age. The challenges faced by older persons around the world, and the inadequacy of existing national systems to address their needs was laid bare during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the ECE region, States have focused over the last 5 years on extending the working life of older persons in their countries, while speakers from less developed regions noted that older persons are often unemployed but seeking work or are economically active in the informal sector without access to formal social protection systems. It was noted that infrastructure is also not adapted to older persons in many countries, such as in the Arab region, where public transport and institutions are not able to ensure accessibility for older persons and persons with disabilities.

Speakers shared some initiatives at national level to address existing challenges, particularly in the area of social protection, including bridging the gender pension gap, employment promotion, and long-term care. The impact of population ageing on broad issues such as climate change, gender equality, intergenerational solidarity, and access to ICTs and the digital divide were also brought up in the discussion. Several speakers also reflected on the situation of older persons in humanitarian situations and the lack of attention devoted to their needs in such contexts.

It is crucial to break down traditional notions of ageing as a time of decline and loss by promoting a positive yet realistic image of ageing, and, most importantly, by guaranteeing the human, social and economic rights of older people. Changing narratives around old age and older persons remains key, recognizing the contributions of older persons to our societies and economies instead of envisaging population ageing solely as a challenge to be solved and older persons as a burden.

Several speakers addressed age-based discrimination and ageism as key barriers to the full participation of older persons in their societies, and to the promotion and protection of their human rights. Violence against older persons, especially older women, was also brought up in the discussion about the need to protect and promote the human rights of older persons. In the ECE region, awareness-raising and training initiatives have been implemented by a number of countries with the view to better respond to cases of violence and abuse against older persons, including through improved legislation and measures to protect victims.

MIPAA at 20

MIPAA marked a turning point in how the world sought to foster and achieve a “society for all ages” when adopted in 2002. In its Political Declaration, Member States recognized that concerted action is required to transform the opportunities and the quality of life of men and women as they age, and thus throughout the life-course. In this Fourth Review and Appraisal exercise, and despite the uncertainty and increased pressure on resources caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, four out of seven Member States participated in this cycle, representing 84 per cent of where older persons reside worldwide, stressing the pertinence and legitimacy of the Madrid International Plan of Action.

Speakers confirmed the active engagement of Member States and other stakeholders in the regional process of the 4th Review and Appraisal of MIPAA, as well as some of the progress and challenges reported in those exercises. The importance of regional cooperation and exchange of experiences at the regional level was noted (Asia and Pacific region), as well as progress in the development of national policies on ageing (African region), recognition of the importance of mainstreaming ageing in public policies (ECE region), and advocacy for the need to strengthen the multilateral regime for the protection of older persons (Latin American and Caribbean region).

Challenges in the implementation of MIPAA were also discussed. Insufficient implementation of MIPAA or lack of awareness of the plan, weak institutional and human resources capacities, lack of disaggregated data and research targeted to older persons, and financial constraints were some of the challenges identified by speakers. In the regional process at the African region, it was recommended to develop a specific monitoring and evaluation tool for MIPAA to ensure consistent

implementation and reporting at national, regional and global level. The importance of strengthening data systems and the disaggregation of data by age and other relevant information was repeatedly identified as essential in better understanding the situation of older persons, their needs, contributions, and challenges and as the basis for evidence-based policy making. Several speakers called for the adoption of a legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons to complement MIPAA. Further, it was noted that the full implementation of existing legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons Disabilities, would also support implementation of MIPAA.

Several speakers addressed the synergies between MIPAA, the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, and stressed the need to integrate population ageing into all development frameworks. Speakers called upon the United Nations to better mainstream ageing and the rights and needs of older persons into its work. As Member States move forward in deliberations for upcoming milestones, including the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Summit of the Future in 2024, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing will have a key role to play to ensure that the interests, needs and contributions of current and future generations of older persons are adequately addressed and included.