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Statement of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Ageing at the fourteenth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

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Population aging is an irreversible global trend. By 2050, one in six people worldwide will be aged 65 and above, compared to one in ten in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the prevalence of *Ageism*. It revealed economic issues for aging individuals, such as financial insecurity and increased healthcare costs, as they unveiled deeper economic challenges like heightened pension liabilities and an ageing workforce.

As seen in this example, this demographic shift underscores persistent inequalities and gaps in laws, policies, and programs aimed at promoting well-being, protecting rights, and addressing the economic and social needs of Older Persons. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies to support older persons and manage the broader economic impacts on society.

Therefore our collective actions and policy decisions can significantly influence its trajectory and outcomes. Delaying crucial measures that enable societies to leverage and adjust to population aging would result in substantial social, economic, fiscal, and health-related burdens, affecting both present and future generations.

It is important that we also recognize that despite the enormity of challenges related to aging populations, there has been significant progress.

The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, adopted in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, has sparked actions among a wide range of stakeholders to form partnerships and advocate for change. Member States have developed new policies, strategies and frameworks, established new mechanisms and strengthened data collection on healthy ageing.

At the UN leadership level, there has been renewed attention to the importance of population ageing and the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. A concrete step has been taken by formalizing the Inter-agency Group on Ageing which is tasked to mainstream issues related to population ageing, older persons and their human rights across all levels of the United Nations.

In line with the United Nations Charter and the Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights, all parts of the United Nations system have responsibilities to uphold and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, addressing ageism including age-based discrimination and other barriers that older persons face in the enjoyment of their human rights, including intersecting discrimination based on age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity and other grounds.

However, as the discussions under the Working Group, and contributions from Member States and stakeholders including UN entities that are members of the Inter-agency Working Group on Ageing – as these discussions and contributions have shown, the existing human rights framework for older persons is wholly inadequate, providing fragmented and inconsistent coverage of their human rights, both in law and in practice.

During the Fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing last year, many Member States from all regions have noted that the development of an international legal instrument on the human rights of older persons would complement and reinforce the Plan and would be key to promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of older persons.

Greater political will is essential to recognize and address the gaps in the current international framework concerning the rights of older persons. This includes considering the elaboration of a legally binding international instrument that comprehensively protects the human rights of all older individuals.

The United Nations system is prepared to offer support and facilitate dialogues, partnerships, and expedited actions aimed at fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and age-friendly society rooted in human rights.