

Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean¹

MAIN TRENDS AND OUTCOME

The Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Asunción, from 27 to 30 June 2017. The Chair of the Conference is Paraguay and Vice-Chairs are Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

The Conference was attended by representatives of 18 States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. A representative of Curaçao, an associate member of the Commission, was also present. Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and other non-governmental organizations, universities and academic centres also attended the session.

During the Conference the representatives of the following countries made statements setting out the main national developments in implementing the San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.

The Conference adopted the Asunción Declaration “Building inclusive societies: ageing with dignity and rights”.

Key national developments 2012-2017

The participants agreed that significant progress had been made in the period 2012-2017 at the national and regional levels. At the national level, they identified areas of work that had been promoted or strengthened based on efforts to build institutions that dealt with matters related to older persons in the different countries, which included adopting laws on older persons; developing national plans on the matter; institution-building for local governments; preventing and punishing violence against older persons; facilitating their access to justice; treating mental illnesses, including Alzheimer’s disease; and improving long-term care services, among other things. At the regional level, Argentina, Costa Rica, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay reported that they had ratified the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, while other countries detailed the steps that had been taken towards that end.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia and Peru had passed Older Persons Acts, Laws Nos. 369 and 30,490 on 1 May 2013 and 21 July 2016, respectively. Action plans on the matter had been drawn up in Barbados, Colombia and Uruguay, with the Colombian plan covering the period 2014-2024 and the Uruguayan one, 2016-2019. In Argentina, the 2017-2020 action plan was being drafted. Colombia and Uruguay had also devoted efforts to improving data production. In Colombia, the national survey on health, well-being and ageing (SABE) had been carried out in 2015, and in Uruguay, the National Institute of Older Persons (INMAYORES) compiled information on ageing and old age, which was included in the national statistical system. In Mexico, the National Council for the Prevention of Discrimination (CONAPRED) and the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) had developed an approach to identify discrimination, which included a section on the discrimination faced by older persons.

Local institutions had also been strengthened. In Brazil, 2,868 subnational councils for older persons’ rights had been set up at the state, district and municipal levels. In Argentina, 92% of local governments had institutions dedicated to caring for older persons, most of which had the status of a provincial department or the equivalent. Meanwhile, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the departmental autonomous governments were spearheading actions in favour of older persons.

With regard to access to justice, Paraguay and Peru had taken steps to eliminate barriers to older persons’ access to justice in criminal and civil cases. The Attorney General of Paraguay had issued a specific instruction in August 2016 and a warning system had been established in Peru in June 2016 that alerted judges to legal proceedings

¹ For more information, see: <https://conferenciaenvejecimiento.cepal.org/4/en>

involving older persons. On the matter of violence, a specialized unit had been created in the Dominican Republic in 2015 to prevent violence against older persons that worked in coordination with the National Council for Older Persons (CONAPE) and other agencies, such as the National Directorate for the Comprehensive Care of Victims, public prosecutors' offices and other specialized offices. In Chile, Law No. 21,013 of 6 June 2017 made elder abuse an offence, which protected older persons from violence outside the family unit, including care outside the home, or from abuse in long-term residential care centres. That complemented Law No. 20,609 of 2012 on discrimination, which made it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of their age.

On the matter of mental health care, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba and Peru had developed national care plans. In Peru, Law No. 30,020 had been passed, establishing the National Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias. In Cuba, where population ageing was more advanced than in the rest of the region, older persons had been provided with comprehensive health care following the implementation of strategies in all areas of society that addressed every aspect of ageing, including issues related to long-term care, social security and a culture of respect for older persons. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health of Barbados had expanded its HIV care and treatment programme to include older persons, who could be treated at community polyclinics, as well as the Ladymeade Clinic, which was the central hub of clinical HIV care in the country.

With regard to caring for people in disaster situations, the National Emergency Commission (CNE) of the Dominican Republic had set up a gender- and age-sensitive protection advisory team to develop a protocol to care for older persons in emergency situations and disasters. In Barbados, the Vulnerable Persons Committee met on a monthly basis and was in charge of vulnerable persons, including older persons, during and after natural or man-made disasters.

Long-term care was an area of work that countries were developing, albeit with differences among them. In addition to the progress made in Argentina and Costa Rica, Uruguay had set up the National Comprehensive Care System in 2015, which provided tele-assistance services as part of home-based care, day centres, long-term care centres and personal assistance services, among other things. In Chile, 15 communes offered home care services and, in 2017, four new long-term care centres and four day centres had been built. Paraguay had opened the Residential Centre to Support and Help Older People in December 2016 which provided social and health care to 175 retirees and recipients of benefits from the Social Security Institute (IPS), who lived there permanently. The Undersecretariat of Intergenerational Care of the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion of Ecuador provided direct care to older people in 14 geriatric care centres.

The Unit for Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation of Colombia had developed a new practice that sought to further mainstream the differential approach when implementing the Victims and Land Restitution Act of 2014, through activities to help older victims that allowed them to face the consequences of the armed conflict. The Plurinational State of Bolivia was implementing the principles of preferential treatment in 80 public institutions, which, in addition to managing care time and staff training efficiently, included using the mother tongue of older people who came to request help, among other measures.

Asunción Declaration "Building inclusive societies: ageing with dignity and rights"

We, the representatives of the countries gathered in Asunción from 27 to 30 June 2017 at the Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean,

1. *Reaffirm* the commitment of our Governments to promote, protect and respect the human rights, dignity and fundamental freedoms of all older persons, without discrimination of any kind, and ratify the responsibility of States to ensure ageing with dignity and rights, with the greatest possible quality of life and full enjoyment of the rights of older persons;

2. *Recognize* the importance of the Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean as a forum that facilitates the systematic review and evaluation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the situation of older persons and their human rights at the regional level, on the basis of national reporting and experience-sharing, which in turn helps to fulfil other regional and international commitments on the matter;

3. *Reiterate* that the San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean offers a regional framework for public policymaking that States continue to adopt, that complements the work of other mechanisms at the regional and international levels, and that helps to strengthen protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of older persons;

4. *Emphasize* the important and diverse contributions that older persons can continue to make to the functioning of society and recognize that particular difficulties and obstacles remain in the regional context that undermine the participation of older persons in political, social, economic and cultural life;

5. *Urge* the Governments to build the issue of ageing into their development policies, plans and programmes in a cross-cutting manner, and to implement specific policies for older persons that recognize gender inequalities and promote their autonomy and independence, as well as intergenerational solidarity, bearing in mind that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a historical opportunity for the international community to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions and considering the worrying incidence of poverty among older persons in the region, especially those in the most vulnerable situations;

6. *Recognize* the importance of the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, and signal that its States parties reaffirm their commitment to its further divulgation and to advancing with the ratification procedures that will enable the establishment of its follow-up mechanism;

7. *Highlight* the efforts undertaken by Governments and civil society, including older persons' organizations and the private sector, to promote cooperation and integration and to raise awareness about issues related to ageing and older persons' human rights, and recognize that major challenges remain to achieving the empowerment of older persons and their full and effective enjoyment of human rights;

8. *Emphasize* that old age is a time in the natural life of human beings involving full experience of the biopsychosocial dimension that must be underpinned by a rights-based approach, for which it is necessary to generate healthy, accessible and enabling environments so that people may age in an appropriate setting that fosters the pursuit of their activities;

9. *Urge* the Governments to take specific measures and intensify existing measures to combat age-based and multiple discrimination, abandonment, mistreatment and violence towards older persons, affording particular attention to those in situations of greatest risk and social vulnerability, and to provide comprehensive health services, care, social protection and access to food, housing, employment, social occupation and justice, among others;

10. *Reaffirm* our commitment to the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and underscore the need to start drafting a specific multilateral legal instrument that is binding in nature and comprehensive and integrated in approach, to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 67/139, with a view to strengthening the international regime for protection of older persons and reducing the existing normative fragmentation;

11. *Welcome* the work of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and, in accordance with the priorities established by national States, ask her to act in coordination with all bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as well as national institutions for older persons and older persons' organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the pursuit of her mandate;

12. *Encourage* the Governments of the region to consider the situation and interests of older persons, including also the ethnicity, race, gender, disability and generational perspectives, in the design and implementation of national plans and programmes to promote achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, and the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030;

13. *Recommend* that States strengthen the capacity of their national institutions that govern matters relating to old age and ageing, endowing them with the competencies and attributes necessary to contribute to ensuring the full exercise of all human rights of older persons, as well as to facilitate the collection of data, the preparation of statistics

and the management of qualitative information, broken down by relevant factors, according to their specificities and national context, in order to improve the evaluation of the situation of older persons and strengthen the formulation of policies sensitive to their needs;

14. *Call upon* all States and the international community to cooperate, support and participate in the global efforts towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to mobilize all necessary resources and support in that regard, according to national plans and strategies, including through an integrated and multifaceted approach to improving the well-being of older persons;

15. *Urge* the Governments of the region, as a complement to national development efforts, to continue promoting and deepening South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives, bearing in mind that these efforts complement but do not substitute North-South cooperation, and to share good practices in relation to the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons;

16. *Request* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen its activities on the matter of ageing and older persons' rights in order to help Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean adopt measures that ensure the full exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the dignity of older persons, with the participation of civil society;

17. *Encourage* the participation of civil society organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies relating to the human rights of older persons;

18. *Take note of* the document *Challenges to the autonomy and interdependent rights of older persons*,² prepared by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;

19. *Note* the recommendations issued by the Caribbean subregional preparatory meeting for the Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Port of Spain on 1 and 2 June 2017;

20. *Encourage* the inclusion and participation of older persons in the design, adoption and implementation of disaster management and mitigation plans and strategies, with particular attention given to those living in remote areas; the implementation of measures that provide specific assistance to older persons in risk assessment, preparedness, prevention, response and reconstruction; and their participation in education and training programmes and data collection activities;

21. *Encourage* the implementation of policies and programmes for the prevention, care and palliative care and treatment or management of non-communicable diseases, including Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, and for the promotion of healthy ageing in order to improve quality of life and reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases on the population, the economy, health services and health systems;

22. *Thank* the Government and people of Paraguay for organizing and holding the Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

² LC/CRE.4/3.