

**Canada's statement to the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing**  
**(August 1, 2011)**

**OPENING SESSION STATEMENT**

Thank you Chair for this opportunity to address the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. Canada looks forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with all delegations and experts during this second session. We are pleased to be here and hopeful that on-going dialogue will serve to strengthen the protection of senior's rights.

In a time of fragile global economic recovery and increasing demographic pressures, governments have an unprecedented challenge to find effective solutions with limited resources.

Canada wishes to underscore the importance of promoting, protecting, and implementing the existing framework of human rights of older persons. We believe that this framework both supports meaningful participation of seniors within community life and contributes to the strength of our economies. Indeed, policies and programs which address issues of discrimination, elder abuse, health, social protection, and exclusion of seniors serve to benefit seniors, their families, communities, and the economy.

Over the past 5 years the Government of Canada has progressively improved the manner by which it studies and brings seniors issues to Cabinet, Parliament and all Canadians. This has been accomplished through the appointment of a Minister of State for Seniors, the creation of a National Seniors Council, and the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging.

Canada works collaboratively with provinces, territories and other stakeholders to advance the issue of active aging by supporting initiatives that contribute to healthy aging, help overcome ageism, combat abuse and neglect, support volunteerism and address the health and income security of our most vulnerable seniors. Such measures include compassionate care, caregiving, tax, and other income security benefits. Overall, our seniors are more financially secure than ever before.

Over the past three decades the proportion of seniors that live below the low-income threshold has decreased dramatically from 21.3% in 1980 to 4.8% in 2007. Recently, the Government of Canada announced the largest enhancement

within the past 25 years to the Guaranteed Income Supplement. This will help many of Canada's most vulnerable seniors have access to a secure retirement.

Canada supports removing barriers to seniors' participation in economic and community life. For example, the New Horizons for Seniors Program aims to overcome such challenges by providing seniors with community-based opportunities for volunteerism, mentorship and social participation. This program also provides an effective network which serves to increase awareness of elder abuse through community-based capacity building so that these organizations can raise awareness among seniors and other local organizations.

In closing, Canada believes that many other successful programs are being implemented by numerous countries and we anticipate that such examples will be captured within national reports as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Moreover, we anticipate that subsequent regional and global reports will serve to identify implementation gaps, highlight best practices, and inform the Working Group on the best way forward to mainstream and implement the existing rights of older persons.

Canada looks forward to the upcoming discussions of this session. We are hopeful that together, we can strengthen the recognition, implementation and protection of the existing framework of human rights of older persons in all countries.

*Merci.*