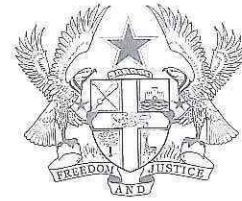


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STATEMENT

BY

MR. WILLIAM AWINADOR-KANYIRIGE
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, PERMANENT
MISSION OF GHANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

THIRD WORKING SESSION OF THE
OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING

ON

AGENDA ITEM 4: EXISTING INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON THE
HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS AND IDENTIFICATION OF
EXISTING GAPS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

NEW YORK, 21-24 AUGUST, 2012

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation, I take this opportunity to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your assumption of office. We assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The issues at stake are very relevant to our respective situations, especially in Africa. The twenty-first century has witnessed a positive revolution in longevity. Global average life expectancy has increased and it is expected to extend further, including developing countries. This means that the number of older persons (60 years and above) will continue to increase. Ghana has not been an exception to this trend. The number of older persons has seen significant increases from 1960 and our 2010 Population and Housing Census indicated (an increase in the population of older persons from 6 percent in 2000 to 6.7 percent in 2010). The economic, social, cultural and other implications of this trend for many of our countries cannot be over-emphasized.

The tragedy of any country is to regard and treat older persons as a spent force. Many countries at this meeting will attest to the fact that older persons continue to make significant contributions in various forms towards the development of our societies, and in Africa this is more prominent at the family and community levels. The major challenge in Ghana has been the need to step up our focus on the promotion and protection of their rights as full citizens. We acknowledge that ageing is both a development and human rights issue: that older persons deserve to live dignified and fulfilled lives.

Mr. Chairman,

On the domestic front, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana also guarantees respect for the social wellbeing of older persons and protection of their human rights. Ghana for some few years now has embarked on actions aimed at recognizing and appreciating the contributions of older persons to her national development and also improving their general wellbeing. Some of these include the commemoration of 1st July as a Senior Citizens Day, exemptions from payment of premium by poor older persons and all those aged 70 years and above under the National Health Insurance Scheme; the inclusion of poor older persons 65 years and above in the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Cash Transfer Programme under our National Social Protection Strategy; and increasing the cash grant to beneficiaries from an average of US\$ 8 to US\$ 24.

Ghana also launched the National Ageing Policy in December 2011 and preparations are almost completed to start full implementation. In all these, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Africa Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing, among other international instruments have been our guiding documents.

Despite these modest achievements, older persons in Ghana continue to face some forms of discrimination and abuse of their rights due to inadequate enforcement of policies on ageing.

Mr. Chairman,

We acknowledge that existing international human rights frameworks have failed to effectively address the right of older persons. In this light, specific international standards on older persons' rights and a new protection regime are necessary to address these gaps. Ghana supports the idea of establishing new international legally binding instruments, mechanisms or standards aimed at better promoting and protecting the rights of older persons. We fully endorse the comprehensive approach and the leading role of the United Nations and support the continuous effort by the international community to develop the appropriate legal framework and tools to effectively deal with challenges faced by older persons.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, many options have been put on the table at previous meetings, including the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur and a UN Convention on the rights of older persons. The Government of Ghana reiterates its support for United Nations efforts and will remain steadfast and undaunted in its contribution to international efforts to achieve the best results. Ageing is universal.

Thank you.