

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

New Zealand Statement

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Check Against Delivery

We thank you for the opportunity to engage in this week's discussion on the important issue of ageing. This forum has identified a number of positive suggestions of interest to New Zealand. These include encouraging current treaty bodies to investigate rights-based issues for older people and commissioning research on specific issues. The development of a data base on national focal points on the human rights of older people would identify gaps and could support the development of links between such focal points.

Over many years, New Zealand has put considerable effort into developing mechanisms to promote the rights of older persons. We are pleased that some of these suggestions have been included in the Madrid Program of Action's Guiding Framework and Toolkit. I would like to highlight some of the major elements of New Zealand's policy approach this morning. In 1990, a Minister for Senior Citizens was appointed for the first time. The role of the Minister is to advocate for older people at Cabinet and in other government policy forums, and to represent their views and concerns across government.

The *New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy* is a whole of government framework for policy development that was developed with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing clearly in mind. The Strategy guides central and local government policies, to improve opportunities for older people to participate in their communities. Central government agencies are required to report on the policies and programmes they undertake to progress the goals. While local government agencies are not required to report their initiatives, many do so.

The Human Rights Act 1993 legislates against discriminatory practices, including age discrimination. The Human Rights Commission enforces this Act. The New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Act 2001 provides for a retirement income for all New Zealanders who meet the residence and age criteria to receive it. The amount paid to individuals is not dependent on contributions or length of time in the workforce.

All New Zealanders have access to a wide range of health and disability services. The Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner protects the rights of health and disability services consumers.

The rights of older people are most likely to be met when governments and communities work together with a holistic vision. New Zealand's Positive Ageing Strategy has goals related to income, health, housing, transport, enabling older people to remain in their homes and communities safely, cultural diversity, living rurally, attitudes, employment and opportunities.

New Zealand acknowledges that it is important to increase awareness internationally regarding the rights of older people and the need to protect these rights. Current instruments provide protection for the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of older people. Further consideration of these instruments could provide assurance regarding their adequacy, and it would be helpful for this to take place ahead of any consideration of a new convention. In this regard, we look to the ten-year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing that will begin in 2012.

We will continue to work toward improving the lives of older persons so that they can lead full, active, safe and dignified lives in our society.