

USA

OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING

August 1-4, 2011

U.S. Statement, delivered by David Hohman, HHS/OGA

*The Bureau + the Secretariat*

Thank you, and thanks to Argentina, for convening this Open-Ended Working Group session. While I am now Deputy Director in the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Global Affairs, I have had the privilege of working on ageing issues for many years. I was a member of the U.S. delegations to the First World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna and the Second World Assembly in Madrid. I am pleased to return to these issues again as member states, through this forum, consider how best to improve the situation of older persons.

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The United States attaches great importance to the ten-year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing that will take place in 2012 and continue into 2013. This meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group, with its panel discussions on subjects directly affecting older persons, will gather information on existing gaps on upholding the rights of older persons. This will inform a decision about whether new measures – be that a UN convention; a Special Rapporteur; an independent expert; other implementation efforts at the national, regional, or international levels; or some other mechanism – are needed. In our view, this decision would be best made after the Madrid review.

Some delegations have suggested looking at a Special Rapporteur as an option. The United States, in considering the various alternatives, believes this option merits consideration. The Secretary-General has called Special Procedures, including Special Rapporteurs, the crown jewels of the UN's human rights system. A Special Rapporteur would be able to draw attention to ageing issues and make recommendations for action. Moreover, that individual could begin work quite

quickly to bring about improvements in the lives of older persons where improvements are most needed.

For the upcoming Madrid review, member states have been asked to report on actions they have taken in the last five years to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action. We encourage countries to comment particularly on the topic of “realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all older persons,” one of Madrid’s ten priority areas. This will also inform the discussion of whether a convention, a Special Rapporteur, or other measures are the best ways to proceed.

My delegation looks forward to hearing member state views over the next several days. Thank you.