

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR APAKAN
OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGING
THIRD WORKING SESSION
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Mr. Chair,

At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation for the opportunity to address the third session of the open-ended working group on aging. We commend the leadership of Argentina as the Chair of the working group. We also congratulate the efforts of all the members of the Bureau in organizing such a relevant meeting.

As all of us are aware, current aging policies focus on increasing the life quality of the elderly population. We can attain that by having productive, independent and healthy old persons. Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging was a cornerstone in that respect. Since it was adopted in 2002, progress has been achieved across a broad range of issues for the protection and promotion of the elderly. We attach great importance to the ten-year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging.

Yet, as the recent report of the Secretary General has shown us, there remain formidable challenges before us like improving health care, preventing violence against older persons, participation of older persons into the decision making processes, reducing poverty among older persons, to name a few. We have a long way to go to achieve and to promote “a society for all ages” at a global scale.

Ageing seems more relevant for developed countries. However, ageing affects developing countries as much as it affects developed ones. Research shows that developing countries will experience an exponential increase in their older population, whereas developed countries will see a linear increase.

Turkey, for instance, is known for its young population; but it is not known for being the second fastest ageing country in the world. In my country, population projections indicate that “the constantly increasing young structure of the population” is changing. It has become similar to the population structure of the developed countries, especially in terms of fertility and age structure.

In fact, Turkey ages faster than developed countries. Demographic changes in developed countries witnessed in the span of 100 years, will take place in

Turkey in only 30 years. Turkish population of age above 65 constituted 5% in 2000. By 2050, this group is expected to reach 23%.

Likewise, developed countries firstly developed and then aged. They had the chance to accumulate the capital to finance the burden of aging, whereas Turkey has to manage its development and aging processes in parallel.

At the same time, both urbanization and economic development have changed traditional family structures. “Intergenerational solidarity”, as the main provider of “community care”, has weakened. This gap can only be filled by reinforced public services as well as civil society initiatives.

Furthermore, by 2050, while the old population will increase by 3 times, the number of the “oldest old” (80+) will multiply by 7,5 folds in Turkey. In view of this change, current health policies are devised to aim not only at the “older” but also the “potential older”, by implementing “preventive health care”.

This demographic transition provides both opportunities and risks that Turkey has not confronted before. By taking these demographic changes into consideration, Turkey is reviewing its economic and social policies for elderly. In this framework, we adopted the Madrid Plan of Action according to our set of national priorities. This work yielded in the National Plan of Action on Aging in 2007, which sets the legal and policy framework of equality necessary for a comprehensive approach to elderly rights. What makes this Action Plan more important is that it was drafted with the active participation of Turkish NGOs.

As a result of constitutional amendments in 2010, Article 10 of the Constitution was revised to stipulate that the measures to be taken in favour of children, the elderly, the disabled, widows and orphans of martyrs and veterans shall not be considered to be in violation of the principle of equality. With this amendment, the inclusion of positive discrimination in the Constitution is a significant improvement to strengthen the protection of constitutional rights of the elderly.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the commitment of my country to actively contribute to the exchanges in this working group as it continues to scrutinize international, regional and national standards and policies in order to ensure that older persons fully and equally enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you Mr. Chair.