

Chair’s summary of the key points of the discussions at the eighth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing established for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

Introduction

The eighth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) set a milestone by allowing for the participation of “A” status National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)¹ in their own capacity, according to the modalities for their participation established by Decision 7/1 of the OEWGA adopted by consensus during its seventh session in 2016. In that regard, the OEWGA became the first subsidiary body of the General Assembly in New York (other than the Human Rights Council in Geneva) which allowed for the participation of NHRIs in their own capacity, following the mandate given by the General Assembly through its resolution 70/163, of 17 December 2015, entitled “National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights”.

In that framework, 8 NHRIs from 3 different regional groups registered and attended the session, having an active participation and making meaningful contributions to the discussions and the work of the OEWGA.

Furthermore, 513 representatives from 160 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were accredited to participate in the session, of which 69 representatives from 33 NGOs attended.

The eighth session began with the election of officers. The OEWGA elected Ms. Katharina Konzett-Stoffl of Austria to represent WEOG; Ms. Lahya Itedhimbwa Shikongo of Namibia to represent the African Group; and myself to represent GRULAC in the Bureau of the OEWGA. Furthermore, I had the honour to be elected as Chair of the Open-ended Working Group. Regarding the composition of the Bureau, allow me to express my great satisfaction with the fact that once again all regional groups are represented in the Bureau. Furthermore, it is to be highlighted that the Bureau is currently comprised in 80% by women representatives, which represent a very significant and positive sign in the efforts by Member States and regional groups in achieving gender parity within the United Nations. I very much welcome this development and hope it can be replicated throughout different Bureaux.

Consequently, the OEWGA adopted the agenda and the programme of work for the session. It is to be highlighted that during the eighth session, the OEWGA organized its work accordingly to the decision taken during the discussion on the way forward held during the seventh session, in December 2016. In that regard, during the inter-sessional period, the Bureau proposed an organization of work based on a general debate on the topic “*Measures to enhance the contribution of older persons to social development*”; two interactive discussions on the focus areas of “*Equality and non-discrimination*” and

¹ “A” status NHRIs are accredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and are in full compliance with the Paris Principles, as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993.

*“Violence Neglect and abuse”*²; an interactive debate on conclusions on the two focus areas; and a discussion on the way forward.

Regarding the two focus areas selected for the eighth session, during the inter-sessional period, the Chair requested Members of the Group (Member and Observer States) and other relevant stakeholders (National Human Rights Institutions, Intergovernmental Organizations, UN Agencies and Non-governmental Organizations) to submit substantive inputs based on two questionnaires prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). In that sense, the OEWGA received inputs from 32 Member and Observer States, 22 NHRIs, 14 entities of the United Nations System, and 37 accredited NGOs. This high number of substantive contributions was a clear display of the relevance of the issue of the human rights of older persons, as well as the importance of the two particular selected areas.

On the basis of the large number of inputs received, the OEWGA prepared two discussion papers for each interactive discussion on the focus areas, making a summary of the contributions and highlighting the commonalities and trends identified in the responses to the questionnaires. I want to particularly thank OHCHR and DESA for preparing those analytic documents which helped guiding the interactive discussions that the OEWGA held on the two focus areas.

The documents inclosing the substantive inputs received, as well as the analytic discussion papers for the two interactive discussions held on the focus areas are available at the OEWGA’s website.

After the adoption of the agenda and the programme of work, the Group proceeded to approve the participation of NGOs without ECOSOC consultative status which requested accreditation; and then it held its general debate, on the topic “Measures to enhance the contribution of older persons to social development”. I want to acknowledge and appreciate the active participation of a large number of Member and Observer States that made interventions during the general debate, as well as groups, NHRIs, IGOs and NGOs.

General Debate

During the general debate, delegations made reference to the important contributions that older persons can make to the development of their respective societies. As a growing segment of the population, older persons constitute a social group which is expected to have the highest rate of growth in the next decades. The number of older persons is expected to grow from 901 million in 2015 to 1.4 billion by 2030, outnumbering youth globally, and 2.1 billion by 2050, outnumbering children globally, and the highest rate of growth is going to be registered in developing countries. Population ageing was identified as a mega trend, which poses a series of new challenges to both social and sustainable

² During the discussion on the way forward of the seventh session of the OEWGA, the Group decided to focus its future sessions on concrete issues that affect the enjoyment of the human rights of older persons. A list of the focus issues proposed by the Members of the Group was included in the segment devoted to the Chair’s summary of the Report of the seventh session (Document A/C.278/2016/2).

development of all societies. In that regard, delegations highlighted the importance of considering older persons as an active group, which can make significant contributions to social development, as long as certain guarantees are in place to allow for their full participation in society. Older persons were identified as both agents and beneficiaries of change, and in that sense delegations made reference to the need to fully empower older persons as a means to allow and promote their full participation and contributions to sustainable development.

Furthermore, a large number of delegations made reference to the fact that, in order to fully empower older persons so as to allow them to actively and effectively contribute to development, it is fundamental to consider older persons as specific right holders and agents of change, and to provide guarantees with respect to the full and effective enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to allow for their participation in social, economic, cultural, civil and political life, and to seize their experience and potential for contributing to all areas of development.

Finally, many delegations from Latin America and the Caribbean region made reference to the *“Asunción Declaration - Building inclusive societies: Ageing with dignity and rights”* of the Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Government of Paraguay in the City of Asunción, from 27 to 30 June 2017.

Interactive discussions on the focus areas

Following the general debate, the OEWGA held two interactive discussions on the focus areas of the eighth session, namely “Equality and non-discrimination” and “Violence, neglect and abuse”. At this stage I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the panelists for their excellent and very substantive interventions, which provoked a deep and fruitful debate among the Members of the Group, really allowing it to become closer to fulfilling its mandate of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons. The panelists included the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons, representatives from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), representatives of NHRIs, representatives from national Governments, and the former Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Each interactive discussion on the focus areas was preceded by a panel which featured presentations from different stakeholders who provided their insights from different perspectives, such as the human rights treaty body system, the current framework of international human rights law, the national and regional experiences, the specific human rights mandates and the national human rights institutions.

Each panel was followed by interactive discussions among all stakeholders, guided by the discussion papers prepared by OHCHR and DESA, which summarized the main trends and commonalities from the inputs received prior to the session on the two focus areas.

a. Equality and non-discrimination

On the interactive discussion on “Equality and non-discrimination”, panellists, delegations and participants welcomed the substantive discussion on an issue which is a cornerstone of the human rights framework and directly affect the enjoyment of the human rights of older persons. In that sense, views were expressed in the sense that, although the Universal Declaration on Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal, it is evident that the enjoyment of all human rights diminished with age, due to the negative notion that older persons, are somehow less productive, less valuable to society, and a burden to the economy and to younger generations. Also, there’s this notion that they constitute a vulnerable group, a passive target of special “protection” and paternalistic measures. This structural ageism and prejudice against older persons is perceived in society, in law, in policies and in practice, and leads to the exclusion and discrimination of older persons, and must be combatted. Older persons are active subjects, both agents and beneficiaries of change and they make a substantive contribution to the development of their societies, and in that sense should be considered as specific right holders, in order to be able to fully participate in their social, economic, cultural and political life. In parallel to the fact that population ageing is a mega trend, development leads to people living longer, and thus contributing to their respective societies longer. Furthermore, the majority of older persons are able to live their lives autonomously.

In that sense, ensuring that older persons can equally enjoy their human rights and are not subject to any form of discrimination on the basis of their age is a fundamental factor to foster their active participation in society.

When it comes to the international legal framework with regards to the right to equality and non-discrimination, although the general principle is included in most (but not all) of the constitutions and national laws, as well as in several human rights treaties, in almost no cases are there specific references to the right of equality of older persons and to non-discrimination on the basis of age. Furthermore, where those specific provisions do exist, they are usually limited in the scope of application, such as in employment, or in the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers.

Although there are cases of specific provisions in national and regional legislation (such as the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and in the European Union), the standards applied vary from one case to the other, showing a clear lack of normative coherence, which leads to the fact that there are no international, universally applicable standards that could serve as a reference not only for developing legislation at the national, regional and international level to protect such right, but also for providing a basis for effective monitoring, compliance, accountability and redress mechanisms, allowing also the production of comparable data on the issue.

Most delegations agreed on the fact that there is a systematic failure in the current international human rights law framework to explicitly recognize age as a prohibited ground for discrimination, which constitutes a clear gap in the current system and leads to the invisibility of numerous serious human rights violations against older persons due to the lack of specific research, information, disaggregated data and systemic analysis.

Many delegations also referred to the fact that no instrument of the current legal framework, such as the main human rights treaties or the Madrid International Plan of Action, provide the much needed set of universally applicable standards to protect the right of older persons to equality and non-discrimination, to provide guidance for the development of specific legislation at the national and regional levels, and to provide for effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, those delegations stated that, even if the existing instruments were fully implemented all over the world, and the rights of older persons were mainstreamed into all existing treaty bodies and reporting mechanisms (such as the Universal Periodic Review), there would still be a normative dispersion and a lack of consistency in the approach of the international human rights legal framework to the rights of older persons due to the inconsistency and inadequacy of the current system and the lack of specific references. A clear example of this is the fact that, although the number of recommendations concerning older persons under the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council more than doubled between its first and second cycle (from 49 to 116), they still represent a minimum percentage of the recommendations. Other indicator is the fact that, out of the 2500 recommendations of the human rights treaty bodies, only 0.8% are related to older persons, and 2,8% include references to older persons or people of all ages. Furthermore, only 1% of the Targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development include references to older persons, the fastest growing segment of the population.

Delegations also held a discussion regarding the pros and cons of developing a new international legally binding instrument. While some delegations presented best practices at the national and regional level towards the protection of older persons, particularly with regards to their right to equality and non-discrimination, several participants, including Member States, NHRIs and NGOs, stated that developing a specific protection regime of the rights of older persons at the international level would provide coherence to an otherwise fragmented, uneven and incomplete landscape of legal norms, as well as international universally applicable standards related to the human rights of older persons, which would contribute to, inter alia, clarifying State's obligations with regards to the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons, developing effective monitoring mechanisms for ensuring accountability and redress, and providing consistent and systematic protection against discrimination, violence and abuse that affect a large number of older persons globally.

Finally, references were made to the fact that, a comprehensive and systematic approach to the protection of the human rights of older persons, backed by international legal standards and mechanisms, would promote to enhancing the visibility of older persons and the promotion of their rights, ensuring their active participation and meaningful contributions to society.

b. Violence-neglect and abuse

Preceding the interactive discussion on "Violence, neglect and abuse", the panellists made presentations highlighting the importance of the issue, as well as its prevalence and the fact that there is no much information available due mainly to underreporting and to the lack of standardized criteria and legal provisions for measuring these violations.

According to estimates of the World Health Organization, 1 in 6 persons aged over 60 years is suffering from abuse. That means nearly 141 million people globally, and this number might be much higher due to the fact that violence, neglect and abuse against older persons is one of the most hidden and underreported violation. The same WHO estimates indicate that nearly 80% of the cases are not reported due to shame and lack of awareness or information. Furthermore, with projections indicating that the number of older persons will almost double by 2050, the prevalence of this scourge could represent more than 320 million people worldwide. This is a clear display of the relevance and urgency of the matter, and the need to devise immediate concerted actions to prevent and combat those violations. Also, the lack of specific data on the prevalence of the issue prevents us from accurately determining the actual scale of the problem and the development of effective measures of response, prevention and redress.

Nonetheless, from the data available, it is clear that violence, neglect and abuse against older persons can take many forms (physical, financial, psychological, social, sexual, etc.), can take place in different settings (within families, in homes, in the workplace, in care institutions, in public spaces, in media, in cyberspace, etc.), and can be perpetrated by a wide range of actors (family members, care givers, legal guardians, health professionals, government workers, financial representatives, etc.). In that context, the existing framework of international human rights law and human rights mechanisms has consistently identified older persons as a vulnerable group, requiring special measures of protection against violence and abuse. However, the dispersion and lack of coherence of the current system makes it very difficult, and in some cases, impossible, to report and seek accountability for cases of violence, neglect and abuse against older persons. An example is given by one of the most prevalent forms of elder abuse, which is financial abuse. If an older persons suffers from financial abuse, the only possible way to report and seek reparation from that violation under the current treaty body system would be address the Working Group on Business and Human Rights (if the violation was perpetrated by a bank of financial institution) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (if the violation was perpetrated by a family member of any other private citizen). It is clear that neither the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, nor the UN Principles on Business and Human Rights have specific provisions to protect older persons from this very prevalent form of abuse.

Regardless of the fact that more efforts are needed to further mainstream older persons in the work of the existing human rights mechanisms, and that the current status of the human rights treaty body system is overloaded, the lack of specific provisions and standards regarding the protection of the human rights of older persons contributes to that overloading, incoherence and ineffectiveness of the human rights mechanisms.

In that framework, many delegations expressed the need to develop a new set of universally applicable normative standards for the protection of older persons against violence, neglect and abuse, which would contribute to providing a comprehensive response to the problem, as well as to provide clarity and coherence on the State's responsibility with regards to the protection of older persons against such violations, which will also contribute to develop legislation and measures to address the problem at the national level. Such standards would also provide guidance for the development of a reporting, accountability and remedy mechanism for this violations suffered by older persons.

Many delegations also referred to the case of violence against older women, who suffer from multiple, intersecting and exacerbated forms of violence and discrimination, and the fact that there is such a dispersion in the current status of the human rights mechanisms that provokes that many times some of the overlapping causes of violence and abuse against older women are just not recognized. A clear example of that is the fact that until very recently, violence against women was measured only until the age of 49.

Other delegations pointed out that in the particular case of violence and abuse there are specific human rights instruments which protect specific groups of the population against such violations (such as CEDAW, CRPD, CRC, etc.), but still no specific international legally binding instrument exist that protect older persons from violence, neglect and abuse. The lack of a specific instrument does not mean that the existing ones should not be implemented, or that older persons should not be mainstreamed into their implementation. On the contrary, both efforts should be complementary, and until there is a devoted instrument to protect older persons from violence, neglect and abuse, there is an urgent need to work within the scope of the existing framework to develop legislation, policies and measures to protect older persons from such violations.

Many delegations expressed that the discussions on the feasibility and possible elements of a new instrument shall not prevent States from complying with their existing international obligations on human rights. In the same line, other delegations highlighted that these violations are universal, and as such they require a universal response and the development of a specific, consistent and comprehensive instrument that protect the right of older persons to live free from violence, neglect and abuse.

In that framework, many participants indicated that the prevalence of these violations deprive older persons of their dignity and are not sufficiently provided for in the existing framework of human rights law, which constitutes a normative gap that needs to be addressed with the utmost urgency. In that sense, delegations embarked on a discussion on what type of content and definitions should the development of international standards have. In that regard, some delegations expressed that not all forms of elder abuse, for instance, should be criminalized, but all of them should be prevented and discouraged, and specific measures for each type of abuse shall be developed. In order to do so, it would be necessary to provide a clear definition of violence against older persons, elder abuse, and neglect of older persons. A single, dedicated international instrument would provide standards related to the human rights of older persons, as well as guidance for the development of national legislation, policies and programmes to prevent and combat violence neglect and abuse against older persons and specific and adequate mechanisms for protection and accountability at the national and international levels.

Furthermore, the development of normative standards should provide a comprehensive definition of violence, neglect and abuse, including all the forms they might take, the different settings where it could happen, and all the perpetrators that can commit such violations, as well as the special measures to counter each typo of violation or abuse (whether it is criminalized or not). Such standards should also stipulate State's obligation to respect, protect and promote the right of older persons to live free from violence, neglect and abuse by developing and enforcing effective legislation, policies and measures to prevent such violations, providing support and remedies to the victims, and regularly monitoring and

reporting on the problem by collecting and analyzing disaggregated data on the prevalence of the phenomenon.

Finally, some participants shared with the Group concrete normative elements to bear in mind when designing international standards for the protection of the rights of older persons to equality and non-discrimination and to live free from violence neglect and abuse. With regards to the right to equality and non-discrimination, it was highlighted that such standards should prohibit all forms of discrimination on the basis of age in all areas of life, without limitations, and including intersecting and cumulative discrimination. Such prohibition should not be subject to any form of exception to the principle of equal treatment other than the ones permitted for any other ground, and such exceptions should be specifically justified according to the State's obligation to ensure equality to its citizens and carefully considering the differential impacts of any decision on older persons. Furthermore, the standards for the protection of such right to equality and non-discrimination for older persons should provide for discrimination against any individual as well as structural and systemic discrimination, and require States to prevent and eliminate systemic ageism. A fundamental normative part of the standards to protect such rights would be to obligate States to assist older persons in seeking accountability, measures of redress and reparation, and access to justice; as well as to provide information, research, data and public awareness around the issue of the right to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of age for older persons.

With regards to the normative elements for the development of international standards for the protection of the right of older persons to live free from violence, neglect and abuse, participants highlighted that such rights should provide for the protection of older persons against all forms of violence, neglect and abuse in both public and private settings, and perpetrated by both public and private actors. In that sense, States should have the obligation to take comprehensive measures to prevent violence, neglect and abuse against older persons; to ensure access to a variety of support services for victims; to collect, disaggregate, analyse and shared data; to ensure access to justice, remedies and redress; and to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish such acts.

Discussion on the way forward

During the discussion on the way forward, delegations expressed their satisfaction with the development of the session under the new format proposed during the seventh session of having substantive discussions revolving two focus areas which directly affect the enjoyment of the human rights of older persons. In that regard, in my capacity as Chair, I proposed to the Members of the Group to continue working under this format, fostering substantive discussions on issues which affect the human rights of older persons. Regarding the selection of focus areas for the ninth session, I reminded the Members of the Group that during the seventh session we identified a series of issues or areas which deserve the attention of the OEWSGA, and invited delegations to add more issues to that list, which is reflected in the Report of the seventh session.

In that framework, the majority of the delegations expressed their interest in selecting “Autonomy and independence” and “Long term and palliative care” as the two focus areas for the ninth session. Furthermore, one delegation expressed its preference in discussing on focus areas related to social issues, such as social development, social security, social protection, and the contribution of older persons to sustainable development.

Following that discussion, the Group made an oral decision and selected “Autonomy and independence” and “Long term and palliative care” as the two focus areas for the ninth session. As done in preparation for this session, during the inter-sessional period the Bureau will make a call for inputs on the two focus areas of the ninth session, which will then be summarized and analyzed by the Secretariat (DESA and OHCHR) in order to guide our discussions on the selected areas.

Immediately after the decision, delegations made reference to the need to not losing sight of the fact that the mandate of the OEWGA is related to human rights, as established by General Assembly resolution 65/182³, and that, although the mandate of the OEWGA needs to have a holistic approach to the issue of the human rights of older persons, which shall include the social and developmental dimensions, the analysis of the social dimensions of the ageing as a phenomenon, as well as the follow-up of the Madrid International Plan of Action and the consideration of the social situation of different social groups, including older persons, is part of the mandate of the Commission for Social Development. Therefore, those delegations made reference to need to keep the scope and focus of the work of the OEWGA under the human rights approach, in order to enable the Group to fulfill its mandate.

It is also important to highlight that many delegations and participants made specific references and expressed their dissatisfaction throughout the session regarding the lack of progress achieved by the OEWGA with regards to the mandate provided by General Assembly resolution 67/139⁴ to start, from its fourth session on 2013, considering proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and

³ OP 28: *Decides* to establish an open-ended working group, open to all States Members of the United Nations, for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons by considering the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and identifying possible gaps and how best to address them, including by considering, as appropriate, the feasibility of further instruments and measures, and requests the Secretary-General to provide all necessary support within existing resources for the duration of its mandate;

⁴ OP1: *Decides* that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, which shall be open to all Member States and observers of the United Nations shall, as part of its mandate and starting from its upcoming fourth session, to be held in 2013, consider proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, based on the holistic approach in the work carried out in the fields of social development, human rights and non-discrimination, as well as gender equality and the empowerment of women, and taking into account the inputs of the Human Rights Council, the reports of the Working Group and the recommendations of the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the contributions from the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002,7 to be held during the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development;

OP 2: *Requests* the Working Group to present to the General Assembly, at the earliest possible date, a proposal containing, inter alia, the main elements that should be included in an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, which are not currently addressed sufficiently by existing mechanisms and therefore require further international protection;

protect the rights and dignity of older persons and to present to the General Assembly, at the earliest possible date, a proposal containing, inter alia, the main elements that should be included in an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, which are not currently addressed sufficiently by existing mechanisms and therefore require further international protection.

Although there is still no unanimity with regards to the need to develop a new international legally binding instrument specifically devoted to the rights of older persons, we must not allow that difference of opinions from moving us away from our duty to fulfill the mandate of the OEWSGA of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons by analyzing the existing international legal framework, identifying gaps, and devising alternative ways to address them, including considering the feasibility of further instruments and measures. It is my intention as Chair to work on the basis of consensus, but also to move rapidly towards fulfilling the mandate of the Group, after its 7 years of life.

Additionally, I also proposed the Group to continue working during the inter-sessional period and the next session on the basis of the substantive discussions held during this session on the two focus areas of "Equality and non-discrimination" and "Violence, neglect and abuse". In that regard, during the inter-sessional period the Bureau will make a call for substantive inputs in the form of normative content for the development of an eventual international standard regarding the protection of the rights to equality and non-discrimination and the right to live free from violence, neglect and abuse. Then, during the ninth session the Group will consider and discuss such normative elements received.

In sum, the Bureau will prepare programme of work for the ninth session during the inter-sessional period, which will include a segment for discussing on the normative inputs received with regards to the focus areas for the eighth session, as well as two interactive discussions on the new focus areas selected for the ninth session, and the typical discussion on the way forward.

Finally, many delegations spoke of the need to have sufficient time and conference resources in order to hold those substantive discussions and to fulfill the mandate of the Group. In that regard, those delegations proposed to have more predictability and stability regarding the dates, duration and provision of services of the annual sessions of the OEWSGA. They expressed the absolute need to have 4 days annual sessions on a fix date in the calendar to be repeated every year, to include the sessions in the official calendar of meetings of the United Nations, and to be able to count with full conference and interpretation services for each session.

Given the fact that currently the provision of interpretation services is provided to the OEWSGA on an "as available basis", which means that the annual sessions are not included in the official Calendar of UN Conferences and Meetings and that no fixed date can be announced for each session, many Member States referred to the need to address the situation through the annual General Assembly resolution which renews the mandate of the OEWSGA, requesting the OEWSGA to meet annually for 4 days, with full support from the Secretary General in the provision of conference services, including interpretation services, until its mandate is fulfilled.

It is necessary to highlight that during the sixth session of the OEWGA in 2016, 3 out of the 7 meetings of the session did not count with interpretation services, which seriously hampered the success of the meetings and the fruitful deliberations by the Members of the Group. Furthermore, during the current session, the Bureau was constrained to amend the proposed organization of work and reduce the duration of the session from 3 to two and a half days, due to the availability of interpretation services.

I sincerely hope that the efforts of those Member States during the negotiation of the General Assembly resolution next fall count with the support of the entire Membership, in order to be able to finally allocate all necessary conference resources so as to fully enable the Group to fulfill its mandate.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Secretariat for their constant support to the Working Group, as well as to the UN Focal Point on Ageing, Ms. Rosemary Lane; to Mr. Alberto Padova, Ms. Amal Rafeh, and Ms. Lisa Ainbinder, from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and to Ms. Kellie Ognimba, Mr. Rio Hada and Mr. Christian Courtis, from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. My special gratitude goes also to the Secretary of the Working Group, Ms. Lana Emelina-Sarte. Additionally, I would also like to thank the Office of the President of the General Assembly for providing support with regards to the provision of interpretation services for this session, and to all the conference officers and interpreters who professionally serviced the session of the OEWGA.

Finally, I would like to once more express my appreciation to the distinguished panelists for their substantive contributions to the work of this session of the Group, as well as to the representatives from NHRIs, UN System and civil society for their active participation and constructive engagement. We hope to continue to count with your most valuable presence and contributions in future sessions in order to allow the Group to achieve its mandate, and we look forward for your enhanced participation in this regard.

Last, but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and profound appreciation to the distinguished Vice-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group, Ms. AlAnound Qassim Al-Temimi of Qatar, Ms. Lidija Dravec of Slovenia, Ms. Katharina Konzett-Stoffl of Austria and Ms. Lahya Itedhimbwa Shikongo of Namibia, without whose most valuable support and hard work and professionalism in conducting the work of the Bureau of the Working Group, this session would not have been possible.