

Statement submitted by the International Federation on Ageing
Fourth Working Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing
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The International Federation on Ageing, a membership-based organisation comprising non-governmental organisations, government, business, academia and individuals in 71 countries is honoured to be an observer at the Fourth Working Session of the Open-ended working group with the opportunity to provide such interventions. We regard this as a privileged position.

We also acknowledge the continued efforts of Members States in sharing and learning new policy and practice related knowledge through these meetings but also the extensive reviews of MIPAA. There is however value in also acknowledging that not all Members States submitted a review and not all member States actively participated in the regional meetings.

In essence the 'picture' of the impact of MIPAA is neither clear nor convincing. While the influence of soft law on the development of customary international law should not be underrated it provides at best a detailed guide on policy matters. Its non-binding legal character makes it more likely to be adopted in local policies but local is not national nor is it regional, nor is it global and most importantly nor is it binding.

The existence of normative gaps and implementation gaps is now without question evident in the international protection system for older persons. Moreover the case, has, we believe been made as it was for women and children that older people as a distinct group deserve special attention and care in human rights law.

The question under discussion is how best to protect the rights of older people globally, so that the stark inequity and discrimination within countries and within region is addressed – social programs are a poor and often unfair solution. Understanding the range of next steps should also not be inhibited by the acknowledged difficulties in defining older persons as a distinct group because of gender, culture and different social constructs.

Arguments can be made against the drafting of a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons including the dilution of the idea of universal human rights, and stress on the current system. Yet while the distinct challenges facing older people including discrimination, poverty, abuse and violence, poor or no access to appropriate health and social services not only exist but are rapidly and seriously impacting on the social and economic contributions that could make in community that intergovernmental dialogue is critical.

At the heart of continue dialogue is partnerships, trust and integrity and a focus on the goal which is to ensure that older people not just live their lives out – but do so with the dignity that we all wish as human being. Civil society has a unique role and responsibility to inform, share and disseminate information gathered on behalf of and with the voices of older people. We also have an obligation to be educators to the general public on the rights of older persons and the shortcomings of the current system, as well as work in partnership with Member States at all levels of engagement.

In closing the International Federation on Ageing wishes to deeply acknowledge the commitment and substantive work of the bureau, the leadership of the Chair and members of the UN Open-ended Work Group and Member States who continue to be actively involved in understanding the best way forward to protect the rights of older people not only in their country but globally.