

Mr Chair,

This of course would have sounded much better in French, or in Spanish for that matter, but my delegation would like nonetheless to congratulate you, in English, for your efforts and your personal commitment, those past four days. Thanks to you and to the bureau, this Group has kept on functioning as an open gathering of like-minded Member states, NGOs , human rights institutions and agencies – all equally concerned and devoted to the full enjoyment by older persons of their human rights.

It's good that, at the end of this 7th session, five years after the open-ended working group on ageing first met, we finally recognize that we don't need the perspective of a new human rights convention – to keep on exchanging on what should be our priorities of action when we look at the current situation of older persons' human rights. It's good that we collectively decided, from now on, to focus on the substance, rather than the form, in order to identify, as this group mandate requires, best practices, and possible gaps in the existing human rights instruments, when it comes to senior citizens.

It's good that, in an open and frank discussion, we finally went past this somehow artificial opposition between, on one hand, MS campaigning for a supplementary layer of norms cherry-topping existing ones, and, on the other hand those MS that would rather propose effective, realistic, experience-proofed practices and actions.

For solutions do exist, and quite a number of ways to effectively address the issue of older persons human rights have been put forward, notably by the European union and its member states. And France naturally aligns itself with the EU consensus on that matter.

We'd like thus to recall what has been proposed by the EU as early as 2012, and constantly repeated ever since :

- the next step for us all should be to identify and analyse any protection and implementation gaps. Discussions in the OEWG

should facilitate a clearer, shared understanding among all parties of the issues involved, which could form the basis for identifying appropriate measures to address them more effectively.

- Since 2012, this Group has identified and discussed a number of thematic priorities already, covering a number of challenges faced by older persons in the realization of their human rights. In her initial report to the Human Rights Council, the Independent Expert has also identified specific thematic priorities that require thorough analysis. During her first mandate, she was able to report to the Council only once, in September 2015, on autonomy and care.
- These substantive works should now highlight the areas in which more in-depth analysis and continued monitoring of developments is required.
- Further to that, the potential for future standards-setting could be considered, including by looking at the UN Principles for Older Persons, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1991. The Principles remain a relevant instrument specifically addressing the rights of older persons, but they are relatively little-used and need to be updated. The compilation of a comprehensive set of existing standards in one document would be a concrete and swift way of improving the accessibility of the existing norms.

It is important to emphasize though that many protection gaps and measures are already being considered, in an exhaustive and inclusive manner, under the umbrella of the Madrid International

Plan of Action on Ageing, signed by 156 countries. The Madrid plan has not lost its actuality and remains the point of reference.

We thus suggest that we take the occasion of its third global review next year, to invite the chairs of the different regional MIAPA working group, to a dedicated OEWGA session.

We welcome the further implementation of this action plan, especially concerning the identified priorities : income security, health care, how to counteract abuse and violence and age discrimination.

In accordance with the conclusions and recommendations in the second review and appraisal, and as it was presented by the Head of DESA during this session, we also believe that the new 2030 development agenda can offer Member States and UN system possibilities to anchor the issue of ageing at the core of the global development agenda

Older persons can for example be a potential target group with respect to health and employment, as demonstrated in the European Union 2020 Strategy and also in its current project under discussion between MS and with the EU Commission, of a new “European Pillar for social rights” in Europe . These developments are encouraging and should be taken into consideration at our next session

I thank you, Mr. Chair.