

## **Informal notes of Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA) Side Event 9 July 2019**

**1:15 - 2:45 pm Conference Room 1 “Confronting Ageism and Empowering Older People”**

**Moderator: Mr. Paul Ladd, Director of UNRISD**

**Welcome: Ms. Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of Programme on Ageing, UNDESA**

- 85 of all VNR included references to ageing. Their report will be included in SG’s report. However majority portrayed older persons as vulnerable group and as a burden that “limits long term economic growth”. This is in contrast to the G20 Osaka Declaration which recognized healthy and active ageing.
- Population ageing should not only to be framed as a burden; that is ageism. Issue is how to seize the opportunities of ageing. People retain the right to live in dignity as they age. UNDESA is calling for a paradigm shift - older persons as active agents who already make contributions.

**Panellists:**

**Ambassador Martin Garcia Moritan, PR of Argentina to the UN and co-chair of the Group of Friends of Older Persons.**

- Older persons face multiple challenges which impact on their wellbeing and contribution to development. By 2050, older persons will be the highest growing group with those 80+ projected to triple from 143 million to 426 million in 2050. Older people must be included as active agents of change. While it is good there are references to older persons in the SDGs overall the SDGs on health, education, employment do not have specific references to older persons.
- Member states must ensure effective enjoyment of rights of older persons. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte – Independent expert on the rights of older persons – has noted that lack of a convention has strong practical implications. It is difficult to establish responsibilities for Member States on ageing without a legal regulatory framework. The Open Ended Working Group on Ageing – OEWG, open to all, is strategic and important to be engaged in, and provides a role for civil society who are key actors in identifying gaps in existing international frameworks and how best to address them.
- Only through full exercise of their rights can older persons participate fully in society which can only be done via a legally binding instrument. This will empower older persons to become specific rights holders and independent autonomous agents of change.

**Ms. Nasly Bernal Prada, First Secretary, Mission of Chile to the UN**

Chile has taken progressive steps to turn the agenda into a development road map. Along with most ageing countries in LA region Chile is trying to achieve development as well as ensure human rights of older persons. Alongside the 2030 Agenda there is the 2015 signed Inter American Convention for the Rights of Older Persons which provides a good framework for strengthening public policies. In the pipeline is a bill to provide framework to strengthen areas with gaps in the Convention. The First Lady supports Positive Ageing and improving public attitudes toward older persons.

Chile’s ageing policies focus on:

1. Health – via the national health plan and increased number of geriatricians and care units. Aligned with WHO’s Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030

2. Security - social security reform is being discussed; strengthening national network of day centers and long term care
3. Participation - programmes to promote their autonomy and space for participation and real formal labor participation
4. Institutionally - strengthen Ministry of Social Development and Family and thinking of an ombudsperson working with the Ministry

**Ms. Ashton Applewhite, author of *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism***

- Emergence of 4-5 generations is a profound shift. We cannot afford to add age to the mix of racism, etc. We must challenge the systems that benefit from Intergenerational conflict.
- Commitment to a life course approach to implementing the SDGs means ending “ageism” for all the goals. Ageism is any judgement on the base of age, although older people bear the brunt of discrimination, further compounded by class.
- Need for more explicit action on ageing in all goals under review in 2019. None of their targets specify older people. In relation to goal 4 all continue to learn with a need and a right to do so. In relation to SDG 8 decent work for all the Euro Barometer shows stereotypical negative views of older workers - none has any basis in fact. Older people have harder time to get loans for businesses. Age discrimination in China means not hiring those over 30. All have a right to healthcare. Why should there be different standard of health as we age?
- Absence of international standards on ageing makes it harder to prosecute. At what age does one stop becoming an adult and is older? Laws don’t shape behavior; the real problem is age discrimination. Need a mass movement to make ageism unacceptable. Every Age Counts in Australia began last year. [www.oldschool.org](http://www.oldschool.org).
- SGA position paper has recommendations and best practices <https://www.stakeholdergrouponageing.org/File%20Library/Position%20Papers/Final-SGA-Position-Paper-HLPF-2019.pdf>. Cornell University showed that anti-ageism campaigns are low cost and are effective. When we make the world a better place for older people, it is a better one for women, for LGBTQI, for children, for those with disabilities, for all.

**Mr. Elie Mugabowishema, ED and founder of NSINDAGIZA, Rwanda**

In Rwanda, SDGs means youth, children, women and people with disabilities and that is all. An older rural woman in Rwanda with a disability described it as a “multiple burden”. An older person without sufficient medicine went to the hospital was told by the doctor that it should be given to a younger person. ‘I’m left behind when it comes to technology. In Rwanda, young people use technology but nothing organized for older people. Without information, they are isolated and depressed.

Solutions are partnerships - NCHR, older people’s support groups and associations, media, academia, government ministries and departments, etc and skills development – in the absence of formal education support to form groups and organize meetings with key policy makers to share their views.

**Ms. Karoline Schmid, Chief, Fertility and Family Planning Section, UNDESA Population Division (member of the Titchfield Group on ageing data)**

Key points derived from findings of pilot project of the MISA, a multiple indicator survey on ageing conducted in Malawi 2 years ago with people aged 65 plus.

1. Older persons are not economically dependent. They contribute work and labour - 70% were engaged in agricultural work. Over 2 in 3 persons reported in poor health worked. 34% helped families

2. 80% of older persons provided care for other older persons - did not need care themselves. 7 in 10 older persons were primary care givers for HIV/AIDs. Offered care to grandchildren
3. 40% in good health; 15% in very good health and 3% in excellent state of health.
4. Education and poverty - gender gaps exists. More women than men are poorer.
5. 41% of older persons had no education with a gender gap.
6. Older persons suffer from food insecurity - 93% households with older persons skipped or limited number of meals as a coping strategy. More than 50% said that they ate less food than they should; More than 50% could not occasionally afford food.
7. Health service and care provision at times not appropriate - distance getting there; inadequate cart.
8. Various forms of abuse is prevalent - same share of older men as older women;

What is to be done?

1. Need to include older persons in evidence collection
2. Include older persons in the conversation
3. More research
4. Must understand social, cultural, and economic background
5. No one size fits all

#### **Ms. Moana Genevey, Equinet, European Network of Equality Bodies**

Equinet is comprised of 49 member organizations, a mix of civil society, human rights organizations, ombudspersons etc, tailored to achieve SDG 10. Main task is to assist victims of discrimination including on the grounds of age in employment and to foster social change. March 2019 report on fighting discrimination on the ground of age is based on case laws, studies and surveys. A key question is how Member States can recognize human rights of older persons.

Findings from the report:

1. Lack of comprehensive legal protection including housing just employment law
1. Age discrimination in Belgium identified as high risk
2. Court can be ready to accept generalizations
3. Ageism is often present in legislation or public policies
4. Prevalence of multiple discrimination particularly differences for women than for men
5. New technologies - opportunities and threats

#### **Some conclusions**

- Ageing has implications for the whole life course. Need for different thinking - including attitudes and policies - to combat ageism, social exclusion and economic insecurity in older age, noting that pensions may not be available for young people today.
- Not acceptable to prioritize dignity of one group over another. Life long learning, inclusive education (formal and informal), action on inequalities and data collection must be inclusive of older persons
- Specific case based evidence needed, ie on education, denial of which in older age often goes unreported, access to health and implications of poor data
- Disability movement is ready to help achieve and international instrument for the rights of older persons
- Partnerships necessary with wider civil society in contact with and holding trust of older persons to advance legislation and for attitude change
- Expectation that by April 2020 there may be an outcome on the international instrument; but more lobbying from civil society and from developing countries to support the process needed.

<https://www.stakeholdergrouponageing.org/>