

NGO POLITICAL DECLARATION

UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing
19-20 September 2012, Vienna, Austria

1. We, the NGOs contributing to the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Vienna, 19-20 September 2012;
2. Recognising that much has to be done to achieve the aims and objectives of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and insisting that fiscal uncertainty is not an excuse for inaction;
3. Recalling the León Ministerial Declaration in which NGOs were recognised as playing “a significant role in representing people and their needs in society and thus can contribute to policy making”;
4. Reaffirming that MIPAA and its political declaration constitute a forward-looking response on the part of governments to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing in the twenty-first century and that if MIPAA is to succeed, Member States need to implement the three priority actions of MIPAA that they themselves have agreed: older persons in development; advancing health and wellbeing into old age; ensuring enabling and supportive environments;
5. Noting with concern problems with the effectiveness of MIPAA as a political tool given the non-binding nature of the agreement, its lack of concrete time-bound targets and comprehensive accountability;
6. Further noting with disappointment: i) the lack of awareness of MIPAA; ii) the failure of over one third of UNECE Member States to complete reviews of MIPAA in the current cycle; and iii) the lack of implementation of the ‘bottom-up’ review process across UNECE Member States resulting in the almost total absence of civil society involvement in the review at the national level, where such discussions would have had greatest impact;
7. Reaffirming the rights of older persons and the obligations of Member States to protect those rights;
8. Recognising that efforts to address the needs and aspirations of older people require on-going intergenerational dialogue, cooperation, communication and the full participation of all age groups;
9. Further recognising the need to value older persons and their multiple contributions to society, and rejecting any notion of discrimination based on age;
10. Insisting that assured social, physical, material and financial security is a fundamental pre-requisite for ageing in dignity in all societies and at all times;
11. In the interests of achieving the aims and objectives of MIPAA, urge UNECE Member States to:
 - a. Protect the rights of older persons by: i) enforcing legislation that already exists; ii) promoting good practice that enables older persons to understand and claim their rights; iii) strengthening national, regional and international human rights legislation including the continuation of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing; and iv) appoint ombudspersons in every UNECE Member State in order to offer older persons greater legal recourse;
 - b. Strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and review of MIPAA by: i) setting time-bound targets and commitments; ii) developing specific indicators with the involvement of older persons and NGOs for monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of MIPAA; iii) supporting the submission of NGO shadow reports at MIPAA reviews; and iv) establishing a schedule of interim meetings between NGOs and relevant national ministers in the years between the mandatory five-year reviews of MIPAA;

- c. Eliminate poverty and inequality among older persons by: ensuring adequate incomes, including universal access to non-contributory pensions and equal access to essential goods and services;
- d. Facilitate access to decent work and adequate pay for persons of all ages by: i) abolishing mandatory retirement ages; ii) eliminating discrimination on the basis of age for access to work and pay across the life course; iii) implementing flexible working practices that meet the needs of older persons; iv) supporting retraining programmes for older workers; and v) supporting older workers in the informal sector;
- e. Recognise, make visible and support the multiple contributions of older people to society and to the benefit of people of all ages, including knowledge and life experience, caring, educating, homemaking, working and volunteering;
- f. Guarantee access to lifelong learning across the life course, recognising that access to affordable high-quality education, informal and non-formal learning for people of all ages is necessary for strengthening older persons' participation in society, increasing social inclusion and reducing discrimination;
- g. Strengthen the autonomy of older persons and their inclusion in the community by investing in age-friendly environments, including: local infrastructure, transport, adaptable housing and products, social and personal support services, and local facilities;
- h. Provide free access to: i) high-quality and gender-specific health and social care services, including investment in gerontological training of care personnel and their adequate remuneration; ii) mental health and dementia services, including preventative and rehabilitation services; and iii) adequate pain management and palliative care;
- i. Put in place national quality standards to regulate health and social care services in both community and institutional settings involving older persons in the monitoring, evaluation and review of those standards;
- j. Take action to prohibit, prevent and redress acts of abuse, neglect and violence by: i) reviewing laws and policies and implementing existing legislation; ii) raising awareness and providing appropriate social support systems; and iii) implementing transparent complaint mechanisms;
- k. Take action on the gender-specific rights and needs of women and men, including: addressing the vulnerability of older women who often live in greater poverty; and meeting the specific needs of older vulnerable men living in isolation;
- l. Recognise the vulnerability of older migrants and other marginalised groups and put in place measures to assure them adequate social protection and equal access to services;
- m. Take forward the commitments and values of MIPAA in eliminating poverty and meeting the needs of older persons internationally by: i) mainstreaming ageing in development cooperation; ii) strengthening age and sex-disaggregated data collection globally; and iii) ensuring that issues relating to ageing and older persons are fully integrated into the post-2015 Development Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- n. Ensure that the commitments and values of MIPAA are carried forward in other international agreements, including, but not limited to: the UN Principles for Older Persons of 1991; the Declaration on the Right to Development; the Millennium Declaration; and all relevant human rights instruments;
- o. Engage and collaborate actively with civil society and older persons to ensure that the commitments made at the present Ministerial Conference are fully realised.

12. In conclusion, we the NGOs expect the UNECE Member States to: i) recognise fully the role of NGOs in achieving the commitments entered into both at the present Ministerial Conference and in the original MIPAA agreement; ii) convene planning meetings with organised civil society at the national level in each Member State by March 2013 to take forward those commitments; and iii) report publicly, both nationally and regionally, on the results of those meetings by the end of June 2013.