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Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Fourteenth session

New York, 20–22 and 24 May 2024

Agenda item 8

Adoption of the report

Report of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing on its fourteenth session

Rapporteur: Mr. Issa Idowu **Olanrewaju** (Nigeria)

I. Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing held its fourteenth session at United Nations Headquarters from 20 to 22 May and on 24 May 2024. The Working Group held 8 meetings.

2. The session was opened by the temporary Chair of the Working Group, the Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, John Wilmoth.

B. Attendance

3. The session was attended by representatives of States Members of the United Nations. Representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and observers for intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also attended. A list of participants is available at <https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/fourteenthsession.shtml>.

C. Election of officers

4. At its 1st meeting, on 20 May, the Working Group considered nominations for the Bureau of the Working Group and elected, by acclamation, Ricardo Ernesto Lagorio (Argentina) as Chair; Maria Roseny Baltazar Fangco (Philippines), Tomáš Grünwald (Slovakia) and Béatrice Maillé (Canada) as Vice-Chairs; and Issa Idowu Olanrewaju (Nigeria) as Rapporteur.



5. The Bureau of the fourteenth session of the Working Group was composed as follows:

Chair:

Ricardo Ernesto Lagorio (Argentina)

Vice-Chairs:

Maria Roseny Baltazar Fango (Philippines)

Tomáš Grünwald (Slovakia)

Béatrice Maillé (Canada)

Rapporteur:

Issa Idowu Olanrewaju (Nigeria)

D. Agenda and organization of work

6. At its 1st meeting, the Working Group considered and adopted the provisional agenda, as contained in document [A/AC.278/2024/1](#). The agenda read as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Participation of national human rights institutions in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.
4. Participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.
5. Measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons.
6. Follow-up to resolution [78/177](#): measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons: best practices, lessons learned, possible content for a multilateral legal instrument and identification of areas and issues where further protection and action are needed.
7. Other matters.
8. Adoption of the report.

7. At the same meeting, the Working Group considered and approved the proposed organization of work for its fourteenth session, as set out in [A/AC.278/2024/CRP.1](#).

E. Participation of national human rights institutions in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

8. At its 1st meeting, the Working Group was informed of the participation of 36 national human rights institutions in the fourteenth session, in accordance with decision 7/1 on the modalities of participation of national human rights institutions in its work (see [A/AC.278/2016/2](#), para. 10).

F. Participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

9. At its 1st meeting, the Working Group considered and decided to grant accreditation to the following 10 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to participate in its work:

Alzheimer's Disease Association of Nigeria (ADAN)
 Centre for Human Rights and Development Mongolia (CHRD)
 Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC)
 COSCO Seniors Health and Wellness Institute
 Fundación Iberoamericana de Derechos Humanos de las Personas Mayores
 Geriatric Society of Nepal (GSN)
 Independent Living and Graceful Aging (ILAGA) Yohan's Vimukthy International (YVI)
 United Way British Columbia
 65+Yaşlı Hakları Derneği
 Global Initiative on Ageing – GIA

G. Documentation

10. The list of documents before the Working Group at its fourteenth session is available at <https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/fourteenthsession.shtml>.

II. Measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons

11. The Working Group considered item 5 of the agenda at its 1st and 2nd meetings, on 20 May 2024, and held a general discussion on the item.

12. At its 1st meeting, the Working Group began its general discussion on the item and heard statements by the representatives of Guatemala (on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons), the European Union, Sweden (on behalf of the LGBTI Core Group), Brazil, Kenya, Canada, Nigeria, Spain, Israel, Austria, Germany, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Malawi, France, El Salvador, Portugal, Egypt, Iraq, Malta, Belgium, Peru, Colombia, Bangladesh and Ukraine.

13. At its 2nd meeting, the Working Group continued its general discussion and heard statements by the representatives of Nepal, India, Morocco, Cuba, Yemen, Slovenia, the Dominican Republic, Algeria, Kyrgyzstan, Chile, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Greece, Argentina, Mexico, the United States of America, Cyprus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ecuador, Slovakia, Paraguay, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Japan, the Philippines, Viet Nam, China, Australia, Belarus, Ghana, Burundi and Uruguay, as well as by the observer of the Holy See. In addition, statements were made by representatives of the World Health Organization (on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing), the national human rights institutions of the Republic of Korea, Poland (also on behalf of other national human rights institutions), Ukraine and Jordan, and the following NGOs: DIS-MOI (on behalf of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People, Asociación Cubana de las Naciones Unidas (Cuban United Nations Association), International Federation on Ageing, International Longevity Centre Canada, German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organizations, HelpAge International, HelpAge Deutschland and Amnesty International.

III. Follow-up to resolution 78/177: measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons: best practices, lessons learned, possible content for a multilateral legal instrument and identification of areas and issues where further protection and action are needed

14. The Working Group considered item 6 of the agenda at its 3rd, 5th and 6th meetings, on 21 and 22 May, and held interactive discussions on the item.

Interactive discussion on the follow-up to resolution 78/177

15. For its consideration of the item, the Working Group had before it a document submitted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) entitled “Substantive inputs in the form of normative content for the development of a possible international standard on the focus areas ‘Right to health and access to health services’ and ‘Social inclusion’” (A/AC.278/2024/CRP.2).

16. At its 3rd meeting, on 21 May, after hearing a presentation by the Chief of the Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section of OHCHR on its focus areas, “Right to health and access to health services” and “Social inclusion”, the Working Group held an interactive panel discussion on the focus areas and heard presentations by the following panellists: Division Director in the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China, Zhang Xiaobin; Senior Policy Officer in the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria, Christoph Angster; Human Rights Manager at AGE Platform Europe and Adjunct Lecturer at the National University of Ireland, Nena Georgantzi; Human Rights Ombudsman of Guatemala, José Alejandro Córdova Herrera; and Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Odelia Fitoussi.

17. The Working Group then held an interactive discussion, during which the panellists responded to the comments and questions posed by the representatives of El Salvador, Nigeria, Brazil, Kenya and Morocco. In addition, statements were made by the representatives of the national human rights institutions of Cameroon, Nepal and India and by the representatives of the following NGOs: International Longevity Centre (Canada), RTOERO, Human Rights Watch, Silver Inning Foundation, German National Association of Senior Citizens’ Organizations, International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing, Generationsbrücke Deutschland (Generations Bridge Germany) and Josef und Luise Kraft-Stiftung.

Interactive discussion on accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)

18. For its consideration of the item, the Working Group had before it a document submitted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs entitled “Substantive inputs on the focus area ‘Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)’” (A/AC.278/2024/CRP.3).

19. At its 5th meeting, on 22 May, after hearing a presentation by the Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the focus area “Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)”, the Working Group held an interactive panel discussion on the focus area and heard presentations by the following panellists: Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler; General Director of the Institute of Senior Citizens and Social Services of the Ministry for Social Rights, Consumers and 2030 Agenda of Spain, María Teresa

Sancho Castiello; First Deputy Public Defender of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia, Tamar Gvaramadze; founder and Chair of the Agewell Foundation of India, Himanshu Rath; and President of the International Longevity Centre of Brazil, Alexandre Kalache.

20. The Working Group then held an interactive discussion, during which the panellists responded to the comments and questions posed by the representatives of the United States, Kenya, Argentina, Brazil, Burundi, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. In addition, statements were made by representatives of the national human rights institutions of Nigeria, Malawi and Honduras and by representatives of the following NGOs: National Older Women's Network Inc., Silver Inning Foundation, Japan Support Center for Activity and Research for Older People, AGE Platform Europe, Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia (COSCO BC), HelpAge España, 2 Young 2 Retire – Europe/Cercle des Seniors Actifs, Réseau Fédération de l'âge d'Or du Québec (FADOQ), German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organizations, Amnesty International, HelpAge International, National Pensioners Federation, National Association of Federal Retirees, Yemi-Age Nigeria Foundation, Association camerounaise pour la prise en charge de la personne âgée (ACAMAGE), Alzheimer's Disease Association of Nigeria (ADAN), United Way British Columbia, Gray Panthers, Mission to Elderlies Foundation, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Federación Iberoamericana de Asociaciones de Personas Adultas Mayores.

Interactive discussion on participation in public life and decision-making processes

21. For its consideration of the item, the Working Group had before it a document submitted by OHCHR entitled "Substantive Inputs on the focus area 'Participation in public life and decision-making processes'" (A/AC.278/2024/CRP.4).

22. At its 6th meeting, on 22 May, after hearing a presentation by the Chief of the Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section of OHCHR on the focus area "Participation in public life and decision-making processes", the Working Group held an interactive panel discussion on the focus area and heard presentations by the following panellists: Deputy Chief of the Policy Research Section of the Policy Research Department of the China National Committee on Ageing, Dong Pengtao; member of the Cabinet of the Vice-President of the European Commission, Marco La Marca; and board member of the German National Association of Senior Citizen's Organizations, Heidrun Mollenkopf.

23. The Working Group then held an interactive discussion, during which the panellists responded to the comments and questions posed by the representatives of the United States, Chile, Canada, Slovenia and Brazil. In addition, statements were made by the representatives of the national human rights institutions of Australia, Croatia, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the following NGOs: HelpAge Deutschland, Center for Human Rights and Development Mongolia, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA), HelpAge International, Gray Panthers, RTOERO, Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO), HelpAge International España and AGE Platform Europe.

IV. Other matters

Discussion on the way forward

24. The Working Group considered item 7 of the agenda at its 4th, 6th and 7th meetings, on 21, 22 and 24 May, respectively.
25. At the 4th meeting, the Chair introduced draft decision [A/AC.278/2024/L.1](#) and orally revised the proposal.
26. At the same meeting, the representative of Brazil made a statement (also on behalf of Portugal).
27. Also at the same meeting, statements in explanation of vote before the vote were made by the representatives of Cameroon, Egypt, China and Chile.
28. Also at the 4th meeting, the Working Group adopted the draft decision, as orally revised, which read as follows:

Decision 14/1

Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them

The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing,

1. Taking note of its decision 13/1 of 6 April 2023 on the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them, in which the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing requested the Chair to appoint two co-facilitators to facilitate the consideration of the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them,
2. Noting that, between 2022 and 2030, the number of persons aged 60 years or over is projected to grow by 31 per cent and that this increase will be the greatest and the most rapid in the developing world, and recognizing that greater attention needs to be paid to the specific challenges affecting older persons, including in the field of human rights,
3. Recognizing the essential contribution that older persons can continue to make to the functioning of societies and towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ and recognizing also the importance of the full and effective enjoyment of their human rights,
4. Recalling that all human rights are universal, indivisible, inalienable, interrelated and interdependent, and reaffirming the obligation of States to respect, protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of older persons,

Existing international documents on the human rights of older persons

5. Recalls the Universal Declaration of Human Rights² and all relevant international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,³ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural

¹ Resolution 70/1.

² Resolution 217 A (III).

³ See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

Rights,⁴ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,⁵ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁶ and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;⁷

6. Notes the regional developments and normative instruments on the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons, particularly those from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Europe;

7. Recalls the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and stresses the need to ensure that issues of relevance to older persons are taken into account in its implementation in order to ensure that no one is left behind, including older persons;

8. Reaffirms the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002,⁸ and recalls the related review and appraisal processes;

9. Recalls the United Nations Principles for Older Persons⁹ and all previous General Assembly resolutions on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing and all previous Human Rights Council resolutions on the human rights of older persons;

10. Also recalls all relevant World Health Assembly resolutions on ageing, including its decision 73(12) of 3 August 2020, entitled “Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030”;¹⁰

11. Takes note of the findings in the reports of the Secretary-General on the “Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing” and in the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

12. Takes note with appreciation of the work of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, and also takes note of her reports;

13. Takes note of the working paper prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled “Update to the 2012 Analytical Outcome Study on the normative standards in international human rights law in relation to older persons”;

Identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons

14. Recognizes the positive contributions of Member States, as well as relevant bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, including the Human Rights Council and relevant human rights mandate holders and treaty bodies and the regional commissions, as well as national human rights institutions, intergovernmental and relevant non-governmental organizations in identifying and addressing possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons;

15. Takes note of the work of the 13 sessions of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing;

16. Also takes note of the intersessional work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing between its thirteenth and fourteenth sessions and the substantive

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

⁶ Ibid., vol. 2515, No. 44910.

⁷ Ibid., vol. 660, No. 9464.

⁸ Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8–12 April 2002 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

⁹ Resolution 46/91, annex.

¹⁰ See World Health Organization, document WHA73/2020/REC/1.

responses to the questionnaire entitled “Identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them” shared with all Member States, members of the specialized agencies, observers in the General Assembly, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons;

17. Recognizes that ageism is a widely prevalent and prejudicial attitude that may rest on the assumption that neglect of, and discrimination against, older persons is acceptable, and that ageism is the common source of, the justification for and the driving force behind age discrimination;

18. Acknowledges that eliminating ageism, and all forms of violence, discrimination and neglect against older persons, as well as eradicating poverty in all its dimensions, and promoting their dignity and well-being, is fundamental for the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms;

19. Also acknowledges that older women often face discrimination resulting from gender inequality and are at greater risk of social and economic exclusion, as well as physical and psychological abuse and violence, thereby affecting their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

20. Notes that responses to the questionnaire have identified possible normative and implementation gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons, inter alia, in areas related to equality and non-discrimination, violence, neglect and abuse, autonomy and independence, long-term and palliative care, social protection and social security, education, training, lifelong learning and capacity-building, access to justice, right to work, access to the labour market, economic security, contribution to sustainable development, right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and access to health services, social inclusion, accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access), and participation in public life and in decision-making processes;

21. Also notes that additional challenges for the protection of the human rights of older persons may arise, including but not limited to poverty, climate change, armed conflict, risks posed by emerging technologies, financial and economic crises and burdens on health systems, and further notes in this regard that many countries may not be sufficiently prepared to respond to the needs of the rapidly ageing population, including the need for preventive, curative, palliative and specialized care;

How best to address possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons

22. Recognizes that responses to the questionnaire have identified a variety of ways to address possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons, ranging from a specific instrument on the human rights of older persons to better implementation of the existing human rights framework, and that in some areas more concrete actions are needed;

23. Encourages Member States to accelerate their efforts to mainstream the linkages between population ageing and sustainable development into national policies and programmes across all levels of government, where appropriate, and to link ageing to frameworks for social and economic development and human rights;

24. Recommends that Member States raise political commitment at national, regional and international levels on ways to ensure the full enjoyment of the human rights, dignity and well-being of older persons;

25. Also recommends that Member States, in addressing possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons, consider, in a non-exclusive manner, the following options deriving from the responses to the questionnaire:

(a) An international legally binding instrument to promote, protect and ensure the recognition and the realization, on an equal basis, of all human rights of older persons;

(b) Optional protocols to existing human rights treaties on the protection and enjoyment of the human rights of older persons;

(c) Enhancement of the implementation of the existing human rights treaties with due regard for special needs and interests of older persons;

(d) To address the human rights of older persons in relevant multilateral forums, with full respect for their mandates, including in the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies, with a view to providing specific and appropriate safeguards at the international level for the rights of older persons;

(e) The feasibility of an update to the international plan of action on ageing;

(f) To strengthen, as appropriate, cooperation with the regional commissions and other relevant stakeholders in promoting discussions on ageing, including through the increase of technical cooperation efforts, data-sharing and developing partnerships in this regard;

(g) To enhance capacity to more effectively collect age-disaggregated data, statistics and qualitative information, disaggregated also, when necessary, by other relevant factors, in order to improve assessment of the situation of older persons;

(h) To address, where appropriate, the situation of the human rights of older persons in their reports to existing international human rights bodies to which they are parties and encourage treaty body monitoring mechanisms and special procedure mandate holders to pay due regard to the situation of the human rights of older persons in their dialogue with Member States, particularly in their concluding observations and reports, respectively;

(i) To pay regard to specific human rights issues faced by older persons in current and future United Nations intergovernmental processes, as appropriate;

(j) To promote effective measures against ageism and to view older persons as active contributors to society and not as passive receivers of care and assistance and an impending burden on welfare systems and economies, while promoting and protecting their human rights;

(k) To promote and support initiatives to advance a positive public image of older persons and their multiple contributions to their families, communities and societies;

26. Decides to present these recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly with a view to promoting further concrete discussions on next steps on the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons.

29. At the same meeting, statements in explanation of vote after the vote were made by the representatives of El Salvador and Argentina. The representative of the observer of the Holy See also made a statement.

30. At the 6th meeting, the representative of the Russian Federation made a statement in explanation of vote after the vote.

31. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the national human rights institutions of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights

Institutions, Germany (on behalf of other national human rights institutions), Mongolia, the Asia-Pacific Forum (on behalf of other national human rights institutions) and Ethiopia, as well as of the NGO 2 Young 2 Retire (on behalf of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People).

V. Chair's summary of the key points of the discussions

32. At its 8th meeting, on 24 May, the Working Group discussed and agreed to include the Chair's summary of the key points of the discussions in the report of the session. The Chair's summary read as follows:

Introduction

The fourteenth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing began with the election of officers. The Working Group elected, by acclamation, Ricardo Ernesto Lagorio (Argentina) as Chair, María Roseny Baltazar Fangco (Philippines), Béatrice Maillé (Canada) and Tomáš Grünwald (Slovakia) as Vice-Chairs and Issa Idowu Olanrewaju (Nigeria) as Rapporteur of the fourteenth session.

The opening segment of the fourteenth session was chaired by the Chair of the Working Group. The segment started with his welcome remarks, followed by opening remarks by the Chief of the Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section of OHCHR, Rio Hada, who delivered a statement on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and by the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler.

The Chair expressed his sincerest gratitude to the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons for their participation and their message delivered during the segment.

The Working Group then adopted the agenda and programme of work of the fourteenth session.

During the intersessional period, the Bureau proposed an organization of work based on a general debate on the topic "Measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons"; a panel followed by an interactive discussion on normative elements in follow-up to the examination of the focus areas of the thirteenth session, "Right to health and access to health services" and "Social inclusion"; two panels followed by interactive discussions on the focus areas of the fourteenth session, "Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)" and "Participation in public life and decision-making processes"; the consideration of the proposed intergovernmental negotiated recommendations submitted pursuant to decision 13/1, regarding the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and possible gaps, and options on how best to address them; and a discussion on the way forward.

During the intersessional period, members of the Working Group (Member States and observer States) and other relevant stakeholders (national human rights institutions, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies and NGOs) were invited to submit substantive inputs relating to the two focus areas selected for the fourteenth session, on the basis of two questionnaires prepared by OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Working Group received inputs on the focus areas of the fourteenth session from the following contributors: on "Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)", from 22 Member States, 15 national human rights institutions, 4 United Nations system entities and 21 accredited NGOs; and on "Participation in public life and in decision-

making processes”, from 22 Member States, 17 national human rights institutions, 5 United Nations system entities and 18 accredited NGOs.

On the basis of many contributions received, the Bureau, through OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, prepared a conference room paper for each interactive discussion on the focus areas, summarizing the contributions and highlighting areas of common ground and trends identified in the responses to the questionnaires. The Chair wishes to thank, in particular, the Department and OHCHR for preparing those papers, which helped to guide the interactive discussions. The papers are available from the website of the Working Group.

Furthermore, and as agreed at the Bureau level during the intersessional period, the Working Group proceeded during its fourteenth session to hold a panel and an interactive discussion on normative elements to address the issues relating to the two focus areas of the thirteenth session, “Right to health and access to health services” and “Social inclusion”.

In that regard, during the intersessional period, members of the Working Group and other relevant stakeholders were invited to submit normative inputs based on two questionnaires prepared by OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Working Group received inputs from 20 Member States and observer States, 13 national human rights institutions, 6 United Nations system entities and 15 accredited NGOs on the focus area “Social inclusion” and from 20 Member States and observer States, 15 national human rights institutions, 4 United Nations system entities and 19 accredited NGOs on the focus area “Right to health and access to health services”.

On the basis of those contributions, the Bureau, through OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, prepared two conference room papers in order to guide the interactive discussion on normative elements.

Having adopted the agenda and programme of work, the Working Group considered the arrangements of work for the fourteenth session: all meetings and discussion were to be held in person. Regarding the time limit for interventions, statements delivered by Member States in their national capacity as well as those of representatives of “A” status national human rights institutions and NGOs with Economic and Social Council status and previously accredited organizations to the Working Group would be limited to 3 minutes, while statements made on behalf of a group of States would be limited to 5 minutes.

Having adopted the arrangements of work for its fourteenth session, the Working Group considered the participation of “A” status national human rights institutions.¹¹ In accordance with decision 7/1¹² of the Working Group on the modalities of participation of national human rights institutions in its work (see [A/AC.278/2016/2](#), para. 10), adopted at the first meeting of its seventh session on 12 December 2016, requests from 36 “A” status national human rights institutions were circulated to Member States by three weeks prior to the fourteenth session.

The Working Group decided to apply the arrangement outlined by its former Chair ([A/AC.278/2016/2](#), para. 29), whereby accredited national human rights institutions are able to take separate seating after Member States and observer States,

¹¹ National human rights institutions accorded “A” status by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions are considered to be in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles), as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [48/134](#).

¹² Contained in section E of the report of the Working Group on its seventh working session ([A/AC.278/2016/2](#)).

to take the floor, without the right to vote, under any agenda item and to submit written contributions to the Working Group under any agenda item.

The Chair would like to welcome the active participation and meaningful contributions of “A” status national human rights institutions to the discussions and the work of the Working Group. Indeed, the Working Group continued to enhance their participation in its work, according to the mandate given by the General Assembly through its resolution [72/181](#), entitled “National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights”.

The Working Group then proceeded to approve the participation of NGOs without Economic and Social Council consultative status that had requested accreditation. It received 10 such requests, submitted in accordance with the modalities of participation of NGOs in the work of the Working Group, adopted at its organizational session in 2011 (see [A/AC.278/2011/2](#), para. 8). The Working Group approved the participation of the 10 NGOs by consensus.

General debate

Subsequently, at the 1st meeting, held on 20 May 2024 in the morning, the Working Group held its general debate. The Chair appreciates and would like to acknowledge the active participation of the representatives of many Member States and observer States and of groups of States, national human rights institutions, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs in the debate.

During the 2nd meeting, held on 20 May in the afternoon, the Working Group continued its general debate. The Chair would also like to highlight the participation in the general debate of 2 Vice-Ministers, 15 representatives from capitals, 18 permanent representatives to the United Nations, 4 Chargé d’affaires and 10 deputy permanent representatives, as well as 10 other representatives and 1 observer State.

During the interventions, delegations recognized the relevance of the Working Group and expressed support for its work. In addition, they stressed the importance of advancing concrete measures to increase the protection of the human rights of older persons while expressing their commitment to actively engaging in the work of the Working Group.

In the general debate, several delegations highlighted the worldwide demographic trend of an ageing population. Member States underlined the importance of public policies to address the different challenges faced by older persons, described their national legislation, and shared measures and policies at the national level to advance the protection of the rights and well-being of older persons. In addition, Member States referred to the situation of older persons in the context of armed conflict.

Several Member States and most of the other participants highlighted that the existing human rights framework for older persons provided fragmented and inconsistent coverage of their human rights, both in law and in practice, and speakers stressed the need for an international legally binding instrument that specifically addressed the existing legal gaps to fully protect the rights of older persons.

Other Member States underscored the importance of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the 2030 Agenda and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) and referred to the need to further implement the existing international legal framework.

Some Member States highlighted the importance of regional instruments that addressed the protection of the human rights of older persons.

Moreover, several delegations and participants expressed support for the intersessional work mandated under decision 13/1 of the Working Group.

Some delegations underlined the importance of the participation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders and welcomed the inclusive participation of NGOs and national human rights institutions in the fourteenth session of the Working Group.

Following the general debate, the Working Group held one interactive panel discussion on the normative input of the focus areas of the thirteenth session, “Right to health and access to health services” and “Social inclusion”, two panels followed by interactive discussions on the focus areas of the fourteenth session, “Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)” and “Participation in public life and decision-making processes”, and considered the proposed intergovernmental negotiated recommendations submitted pursuant to decision 13/1, regarding the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and possible gaps, and options on how best to address them.

The Chair would like to express his gratitude to the panellists and moderators for their meaningful and substantive interventions, which provoked a fruitful debate among the members, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of the Working Group’s mandate to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older persons. The panellists included representatives of national Governments, OHCHR, national human rights institutions, NGOs and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

The Chair would like to commend the efforts of the Bureau in organizing the composition of the different panels, paying particular attention to geographical balance, gender parity and diversity of stakeholders, which enriched the substantive discussions throughout the session.

Each debate was preceded by a panel discussion featuring presentations by a variety of stakeholders providing insights from different perspectives, such as the human rights, current international human rights law, national and regional experiences, the specific human rights mandates and the national human rights institutions.

Each panel discussion was followed by an interactive discussion involving all stakeholders, guided by the conference room papers prepared by OHCHR and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in which the main trends and areas of common ground that had resulted from the input received prior to the session were summarized.

Follow-up of the focus areas of the thirteenth working session: discussion on normative inputs

Following the general debate, at the 3rd meeting on 21 May 2024, the Working Group held the interactive panel discussion on substantive inputs in the form of normative content for the development of a possible international standard on the focus areas of the thirteenth session, “Right to health and access to health services” and “Social inclusion”.

The panel discussion was moderated by the Chief of the Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section, New York Office, OHCHR, Rio Hada. The panellists were the Division Director of the Department of Ageing Work at the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China, Zhang Xiaobin; Senior Policy Officer at the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection of Austria, Christoph Angster; Human Rights Manager at AGE Platform Europe and Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Galway, Nena Georgantzi; the Human Rights Ombudsman of

Guatemala, José Alejandro Córdova Herrera; and the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Odelia Fitoussi.

In the working document prepared and introduced by OHCHR (A/AC.278/2024/CRP.2), the Office highlighted the gaps in the current international human rights framework in both areas and the need to develop specific standards to fill those gaps.

The panel discussion served to highlight the challenges faced by older persons in accessing adequate and high-quality health services, a problem that was accentuated during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Violence against older persons posed a significant challenge for their enjoyment of human rights, which was a complex issue and was often underreported. One panellist referred to a surge in femicides, with a notable increase in cases involving older women. Another panellist highlighted the impact of intersecting discrimination based on age and disability, as many older persons with disabilities who lacked family support and income ended up in institutions where their autonomy and independence were severely limited.

Panellists shared examples of efforts by national Governments to proactively adopt a national strategy to strengthen the social security and health services for older persons and to build an age-friendly environment in which older persons could actively contribute to and enjoy community life. In another example presented, comprehensive measures and increased funding were put in place to combat violence against women, children and older persons. One panellist emphasized the need to adopt measures to ensure a sense of belonging to the community and to prevent age discrimination.

Ageism and age discrimination were identified by panellists as a major gap in the current national and international frameworks. Ageism not only drove human rights violations but also made such violations seem natural or inevitable. Laws and policies, including international human rights instruments that were age-neutral, as well as institutions and mechanisms that implemented and protected them, often reflected the same biases and ageist assumptions that existed in society. The panel discussion served to emphasize the need to develop international standards that explicitly prohibited age discrimination in all areas of life and to eliminate prejudice based on age.

To address those gaps and strengthen the international framework for the protection of the human rights of older persons, panellists and speakers reiterated the need for an international legally binding instrument that would provide normative standards and guide national efforts in a comprehensive manner and also serve to strengthen the existing mechanism. One panellist presented the outcome of the international conference on the human rights of older persons that the Government of Austria had hosted in November 2023, which had contributed to fostering a deeper understanding of how to enhance the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of older persons within and beyond the existing human rights framework.

Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)

Following the interactive panel discussion on normative input, the Working Group held an interactive discussion on the focus area of the fourteenth session “Accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)”.

The Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, John Wilmoth, introduced the conference room paper focused on accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access), in which the inputs received from Member States, national

human rights institutions, NGOs and United Nations agencies were analysed, highlighting national and international legal frameworks and initiatives addressing the rights of older persons.

While submissions underscored progress in protecting those rights, they also served to outline challenges such as limited transportation access, age discrimination and insufficient infrastructure, exacerbated by flawed perceptions and policy gaps. Data gaps and efforts to combat ageism were also addressed, alongside remedies and redress mechanisms, although challenges remained in ensuring awareness of and accessibility to justice for older persons.

The panel was moderated by the Technical Officer for Age-Friendly Environments at the World Health Organization, Thiago Hérick de Sá, and included the following panellists: General Director of the Institute of Senior Citizens and Social Services of the Ministry for Social Rights, Consumers and 2030 Agenda of Spain, María Teresa Sancho Castiello; Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler; First Deputy Public Defender of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia, Tamar Gvaramadze; President of the International Longevity Centre (Brazil), Alexandre Kalache; and founder and Chair of the Agewell Foundation (India), Himanshu Rath.

Panellists, delegations and participants welcomed the interactive panel expert discussion and highlighted challenges and deficiencies encountered by older persons in realizing their rights to access transportation, housing and essential services. In that regard, the social inclusion of older persons, including in decision-making, and their meaningful engagement in development were noted as essential in realizing their rights to accessibility, infrastructure and habitat, which were seen as indispensable to fulfilling other subsistence rights, including the right to adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing and care.

Panel experts emphasized that accessibility by older persons, including to infrastructure and habitat, was strongly interrelated with the right to independent living in the community and the right to an adequate standard of living. Panellists noted that the promotion of age-friendly environments was one strategy for ensuring that neighbourhoods responded to the needs and preferences of older persons without leading to their isolation or invisibility, and they urged communities to be part of the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. The panellists further expressed that accessibility was one of the seven criteria elaborated by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its general comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing. The right to accessibility was ensured under article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which therefore applied to older persons with disabilities. Panel experts added that human-caused barriers including the lack of elevators or of stairs with handrails in buildings further discouraged independent living and accessibility by older persons.

Panellists highlighted the right of older persons to adequate housing. While older persons were mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of sustainable urban environments, there was a lack of specific focus on addressing all their needs, including housing needs. In that regard, panellists noted the need for specific efforts to address the housing requirements of older persons within the context of sustainable urban development. The need for friendly environments and spaces, including neighbourhoods, was noted as imperative in aiding volunteering and reciprocity between generations.

In her thematic report on the right to adequate housing and older persons ([A/77/239](#)), the Independent Expert stated that the right to adequate housing was part of the right to an adequate standard of living and was well established in international human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That right was underlined in various other international conventions, in which it was applied universally but without explicit age-based distinctions. Therefore, older persons continued to be devoid of that right. Panellists further noted the importance of inclusivity, which implied that the right to adequate housing should be guaranteed to all, without discrimination. However, while the general principle of non-discrimination covered older persons under other statuses, specific challenges related to their housing needs were often not explicitly addressed.

Panel experts noted that older women faced more unique challenges exacerbated by the intersectionalities of gender and old age. In Latin America, women were responsible for caretaking roles but not necessarily from a rights-based approach. In that regard, the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons was highlighted as the one legal instrument guaranteeing the right of older persons to adequate housing. The Convention served to uphold the need for safe, healthy and accessible environments tailored to the needs and preferences of older persons. Without such measures, older persons continued to face discrimination. For example, in Georgia, pensions were administered by commercial banks that charged high interest rates for older persons compared with other segments of the population. With no standardized regulations, commercial banks operated with age thresholds, and older persons continued to face discrimination and ageism in that industry.

During the discussion, panellists stressed the importance of the right of older persons to independence and autonomy. A lack of architectural accessibility and age-friendly housing options prevented older persons from exercising that right. The lack of public transportation and other facilities including parks, recreational facilities and other essential services decreased the quality of life and dignity of older persons. In many cases, the lack of support for older persons also led to the risk of institutionalization.

Panellists stressed that the lack of meaningful participation in decision-making often prevented older persons from engaging in the planning of transportation systems. Instead, transportation systems were designed to target the needs of younger generations, and those of older persons were often neglected. Many urban areas or cities lacked accommodative routes, equipment, and boarding and debarking transportation services necessary for older citizens.

Furthermore, panellists noted that there was a lack of systematically collected data that prevented the development of targets for older persons' needs. The lack of data on the experiences of older persons further prevented policy development and implementation.

Panellists emphasized the need for stronger policy frameworks including a life course approach to help strengthen the rights of older persons to accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access). The lack of age-friendly policies in the areas of social and health services, income and access to technology (digital gaps) was identified as a common barrier and a catalyst for widening inequalities in society. Panellists noted that discrimination against and perceptions of older persons in society required an important shift. Overall, panellists advocated a legally binding instrument to ensure the full protection of the rights of older persons and safeguard their rights to accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access).

Participation in public life and decision-making processes

Following the substantive discussion on accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access), the Working Group held an interactive discussion on

the focus area of the fourteenth session “Participation in public life and decision-making processes”.

The panel was moderated by the Principal Solicitor of Townsville Community Law of Australia, Bill Mitchell, and included the following panellists: Deputy Chief of the Policy Research Section of the Policy Research Department of the China National Committee on Ageing, Dong Pengtao; Member of the Cabinet of the Vice-President of the European Commission, Marco La Marca; Ombudsperson of Colombia and Chair of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, Carlos Camargo Assis; and Board Member of the German National Association of Senior Citizens’ Organizations, President of AGE Platform Europe and NGO Representative to the Bureau of the Standing Working Group on Ageing of the Economic Commission for Europe, Heidrun Mollenkopf.

Panel experts underscored the importance of participation as a fundamental prerequisite for individuals to develop into social beings and full members of society, enjoying all their human rights. They stressed that the right to participation must be guaranteed throughout life, equally for older persons as for other age groups. However, public places, facilities, means of transport and new technologies were often not available, accessible or affordable for older persons. To ensure that all older persons, in their diversity, accessed those services, challenges hindering the enjoyment of their right to participate in decision-making processes must be addressed.

The panel experts emphasized the need to remove all barriers that impeded or denied older persons the right to participate in public life and decision-making processes by tackling age discrimination and ageism. They urged the adoption of globally applicable anti-discrimination strategies and the creation of age-friendly environments designed to guarantee the fundamental human right to participation while ensuring accessibility, equity, inclusivity, support, safety and security. In addition, the panel stressed the importance of older persons’ participation in technological advances and of closing the digital divide.

Furthermore, the panel experts expressed concern that discrimination and ageism were hindering the right of older persons to participate in many areas. They pointed out that some laws, such as age limits for holding public offices and mandates in countries including Germany, contradicted fundamental principles of equality. Notwithstanding legal provisions, those age limits persisted, and panel experts called for their abolition.

During the discussion, panellists highlighted the role of active ageing and the importance of fostering the participation of grass-roots organizations. Some panellists mentioned the efforts made in their countries to mainstream active and healthy ageing, targeting a significant portion of the older population. Governments had undertaken various projects and campaigns to support older persons, encouraging grass-roots participation and assessing their living conditions through surveys to inform policy direction.

Panel experts stressed the need for democratic practices in addressing participation issues. In the European Union, participation in public life was encouraged through various means, including online portals promoting public discussions and information exchange. Older participants were encouraged to engage in public debates, fostering solidarity and peace.

Regarding the digitalization of services, panellists acknowledged its advantages and disadvantages. While it offered convenience, it could also hinder older persons’ autonomy and right to participate in public life, potentially leading to social exclusion. There was therefore a call for measures to guarantee the right of older

persons to participate in analogue form if they chose to do so, alongside efforts to ensure diverse and intersectional approaches to achieving meaningful participation.

Consideration of the proposed intergovernmental negotiated recommendations submitted pursuant to decision 13/1, regarding the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and possible gaps, and options on how best to address them

At the 4th meeting, held on 21 May, the Chair introduced draft decision [A/AC.278/2024/L.1](#) and orally revised the proposal. Pursuant to decision 13/1, consultations of the draft were facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Brazil and Portugal to the United Nations, Sergio França Danese and Ana Paula Zacárias.

The Chair would like to express his gratitude for the commitment and effort of the Permanent Representatives of Brazil and Portugal, who carried out an extraordinary intergovernmental process, which was open, transparent and inclusive, all in accordance with the mandate of decision 13/1 of the Working Group in 2023.

At the same meeting, Member States shared their perspectives on the consideration of the proposed intergovernmental negotiated recommendations submitted pursuant to decision 13/1, regarding the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and possible gaps, and options on how best to address them.

The Working Group adopted draft decision [A/AC.278/2024/L.1](#), as orally revised by the Chair, without a vote.

Some delegations made statements in explanation of vote before the vote. Other delegations made statements in explanation of vote after the vote.

In the explanations of vote, delegations emphasized that the mandate of the Working Group was rooted in human rights, noted their constructive participation in the negotiations and expressed support for the draft decision, which had been aligned with the mandate of decision 13/1. The inclusivity of the recommendations and the process undertaken in its preparation were also recognized.

Some delegations disassociated themselves from some recommendations, highlighted the need for a thorough analysis of existing gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and welcomed further deliberations by the General Assembly on the matter.

Way forward

During the discussion on the way forward, at the 7th meeting, held on 24 May, several delegations welcomed the adoption of decision 14/1 and expressed the view that the adoption of the decision fulfilled the mandate of the Working Group. They also emphasized the need to present the recommendations to the General Assembly for further consideration, pursuant to paragraph 26 of the decision, in order to move forward with protecting the human rights of older persons.

Delegations highlighted the importance of protecting the human rights of older persons, addressing ageism and ensuring access to essential services such as housing, transportation and digital services, and committing to collaboration with Member States and civil society to ensure the fulfilment of those human rights. Some delegations also highlighted the importance of addressing the gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons through a legally binding instrument.

Other participants in the meeting highlighted the tangible outcomes achieved through decisions 13/1 and 14/1 and stressed the urgent need for action to address ongoing violations of older persons' rights worldwide, urging the prompt presentation

of recommendations to the General Assembly and advocating a legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons, as well as emphasizing the importance of the meaningful participation of older persons in the process.

At its 8th meeting, on 24 May, the Working Group discussed and agreed to include the Chair's transmission of decision 14/1 to the President of the General Assembly in the report of the session, within the framework of paragraph 26 of decision 14/1 of the Working Group and without setting a precedent.

To conclude, the Chair would like to express his deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Secretariat for its constant support to the Working Group; to the Chief of Programme on Ageing Unit and United Nations Focal Point on Ageing, Amal Abou Rafeh, and her team, Julia Ferre, Shatho Nfila, Amine Lamrabat, Aliye Mosaad, Meriam Gueziel and Miyeon Hwang, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for their outstanding professionalism and collaboration; and to the Chief of Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section, New York Office, OHCHR, Rio Hada.

The Chair also expresses his gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary of the Working Group, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Wannes Lint; the Associate Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Rommel Maranan; and the whole team for their very hard and excellent work and their constant support.

The Chair would like to reiterate his deep appreciation to the distinguished panellists for their substantive and inspiring contributions to the work of fourteenth session of the Working Group as well as to the representatives of national human rights institutions, the United Nations system and civil society for their active participation and constructive engagement.

Lastly, the Chair would like to express his sincerest gratitude and profound appreciation to the distinguished Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, María Roseny Baltazar Fangco (Philippines); Béatrice Maillé (Canada), Tomáš Grünwald (Slovakia) and Issa Idowu Olanrewaju (Nigeria). Without their valuable support, commitment, hard work and professionalism in conducting the work of the Bureau of the Working Group, the session would not have been possible.

VI. Chair's transmission of decision 14/1 to the President of the General Assembly

33. At its 8th meeting, on 24 May, the Working Group discussed and agreed to include the Chair's transmission of decision 14/1 to the President of the General Assembly in the report of the session. The Chair's transmission of decision 14/1 reads as follows:

Transmission dated 5 June 2024 from the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In the framework of paragraph 26 of decision 14/1 of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing and without setting a precedent, I have the honour to transmit herewith the enclosed decision for the consideration by the General Assembly with a view to promoting further concrete discussions on next steps on the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons.

(Signed) Ricardo Ernesto Lagorio

VII. Adoption of the report

34. At its 8th meeting, on 24 May, the Working Group was informed that the Chair's summary of the key points of the fourteenth session would be finalized at a later stage by the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Bureau.

35. At the same meeting, on 24 May, the Working Group adopted the draft report on its fourteenth session, as contained in document [A/AC.278/2024/L.2](#) and entrusted the Chair and Bureau with finalizing it with the incorporation of the Chair's summary and of the transmission of decision 14/1 to the President of the General Assembly.
