

Statement by
the Group of Friends of Human Rights of Older Persons
at the
41st Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights

Geneva, 10 July 2019

Mr President/ Vice-President,

I am reading the statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Human Rights of Older Persons which consists of Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Montenegro, Namibia, Portugal Singapore, Tunisia, Uruguay, and my own country Slovenia.

Our group understands rapid ageing as one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. In 2018, for the first time in history, there were more people aged 65 or over than children under 5 years of age. Between 2019 and 2050, the number of people aged 65 or over is projected to more than double worldwide.

Everyone is entitled to the recognized rights and freedoms, including older persons. Change in demographics requires from states to adapt to new realities and ensure that older persons can fully participate in all spheres of life, and are not left behind. This can be achieved only through promotion, protection and fulfilment of their rights, without discrimination.

United Nations needs to play a more active role in this regard. While we recognize existing policy and frameworks such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the OHCHR's report for this panel has noted the absence of a dedicated human rights treaty. In these circumstances it may be useful to update the 2012 OHCHR Outcome Paper on normative standards in international human rights law in relation to older persons to provide further legal analysis of the applicable normative standards at the international level, taking into account the work of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and in particular her comprehensive report on the rights of older persons.

Such document can provide further guidance to states and other stakeholders in upholding rights of older persons, including the OEWG's work in New York.

Further efforts are necessary to raise the visibility of rights of older persons within the UN system in order to provide more coherent and coordinated support to member states.

Our group would strongly advocate for greater attention to the particular challenges faced by older persons including by the international human rights mechanisms, such as treaty bodies and the special procedures of the HRC. Also Human Rights Council itself should contribute more to tackling these challenges. The member states of this group are ready to engage on this issue also in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review.

Our delegations welcome today's panel, as well as recent panel on the rights of older women and their economic empowerment. The United Nations needs to remain an active platform for exchange on these issues also in the future.

Thank you!