

WHO Headquarters – Statement

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Dear colleagues and distinguished delegates,

Let me start by thanking the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for organizing this seminar, and the panellists who contributed to this stimulating session on challenges and discrimination faced by young people.

Today, there are more young and older people in the world than ever before. This demographic reality creates unprecedented opportunities for social and economic progress. Yet, our ability to enjoy these opportunities at any age will depend on the removal of one important barrier: ageism.

Ageism refers to how we think, feel and act towards others or ourselves based on age. It is everywhere. As showcased in the first UN Global report on ageism, launched on 18 March 2021, half of the world's population is ageist against older people, and in Europe, the only region for which data is available on all age groups, younger people report more age discrimination than other age groups.

Ageism limits our potential when we internalize certain stereotypes about what we can and cannot do. It is also very present across institutions including our workplaces, health and political systems, where it systematically hinders our ability to access services, contribute and be heard.

Ageism is very harmful to our health and well-being when we're older. It is also very costly to our societies and it imposes great barriers to developing good policy because it limits the questions that are asked and the solutions that are offered.

We know today, thanks to the UN Global report on ageism, that we can put an end to ageism through policy and law, educational activities and intergenerational interventions. We welcome you to join the Global campaign to combat ageism to turn these three strategies into action. Let us all join the movement to create a world for all ages.

Thank you very much for your attention.