

**Statement by Slovenia**

**at the**

**Multistakeholder meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons**

**Concluding Remarks by Ambassador Anita Pipan**

***Geneva, 30 August 2022***

Excellencies, delegates,

Dear excellent panellists, who shared your knowledge and insights with us in the past two days,

Indispensable partners from the civil society, NGOs, national human rights institutions,

It is an honour to take the floor at the wrap up of this multi-stakeholder meeting.

My country, Slovenia, is of firm belief that strengthening protection and promotion of human rights of older persons is a must.. And this meeting has been **an important step in our further work in this regard**.

This meeting comes after a series of, never linear, but equally important steps in the field of protection of older persons - from the **Madrid Plan of Action** 20 years ago, that offered a bold agenda for handling the issue of ageing in the 21st-century, yet is not legally binding, to the establishment of the **Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing** 12 years ago, establishment of the **independent expert on human rights of older persons** 9 years ago and first **substantive resolution on human rights of older persons** a year ago, just to name a few.

The contributions of many actors during the past few days, including the UN High Commissioner Madame Bachelet, Under Secretary General Volker Turk, my dear friend and president of the Human Rights Council Federico Villegas, a group of more than 20 member states and numerous international non-governmental organizations, have shown that it is time for the next important step - **the process towards an international legally binding instrument.**

Allow me to take a look at the past two days and reflect upon the important messages that I have heard from the rich discussions.

**The first session** defined and expressed concern around a number of human rights protection gaps across different aspects of older people’s lives. The speakers acknowledged that these human rights protection gaps **are not only due to operational or implementation issues,** but also more fundamental conceptual limitations in the way human rights are understood and applied to older persons.

Dr Rebheru has reminded us of the sobering reality of the **right to health** and the related challenges faced by older persons. Dr Mollenkopf has emphasized the crucial importance of **full inclusion and meaningful participation of older persons** in all public matters. She draw an image of the reality of today - the rapid move of our lives to the digital sphere and the dire need **for digital skills and digital inclusion** among older persons. Prof. Doron exposed the shortcomings of the existing international framework which addresses primary and secondary education, yet completely leaves out **adult education** and **life-long learning**, limiting the **right to education** of older persons.

**The second session** has shown us the immense importance of the existing mechanisms including **treaty bodies**, such as Human Rights Committee, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, CEDAW and CRPD. The panel has highlighted the importance of **regional conventions**, and the work and the role of the **national human rights institutions**.

The session has illustrated how the thematic conventions have contributed not only to the normative standards and international protection, but also to **the cultural transformation** of how we perceive and protect children, women and persons with disabilities.

Committee members Shin, Fefoame and Sancin have offered us an insight into the existing efforts of their respective treaty bodies, while their message has been loud and clear - more can and has to be done to properly protect this important segment of the society - **potentially through a joint general comment on this topic**.

The calls from the member states and civil society have echoed the importance to take a closer look at the intersectionality and cumulative discrimination and to put more effort into the collection and research of **relevant, high-quality and disaggregated data**.

Finally, we have heard the call from the civil society to strengthen and further support the UN independent expert on the human rights of older persons. On behalf of the core group, consisting of Argentina, Brazil and Slovenia, I can confirm that we are already working on a resolution related to the **mandate renewal of the independent expert for the period of 3 years** at the upcoming 51st session of the Human Rights Council. We are counting on a broad, cross-regional support for this important goal.

I would like to use this opportunity to refer to an important message I have heard from my colleague and fellow Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Israel in Geneva. Human rights of older persons do not belong exclusively to the Human Rights Council, but have the place in every single organization in the International Geneva - from WHO to ITU, from disarmament efforts to environment protection and fight against climate change.

And this message has been reflected also in the **third session**. The speakers have show-cased how the **absence of standardized definitions and minimum standards** impacts the coordinated action.

The need for clear **human rights language** and standards would guide all frameworks across the UN and beyond, to adequately implement plans of action, promote policy coherence and help design and implement human rights based ageing policies.

The session has also shown a clear need for increasing our constituency. This particularly refers to the need for enhanced engagement and commitment by a broader number of governments. While co-chairing the Group of Friends of Human Rights of Older Persons in Geneva, I would like to welcome the national, regional and international activities that the Member States announced in this regard - the announcement of an **international conference hosted by Austria** in 2023 and the **proposal of Germany to organize an informal meeting** of the member states on the activities of the OEWG in New York.

Finally, the **fourth session** has thoroughly addressed the steps needed in the future, including in the work of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing.

In my opinion, a particularly important element of the discussion has been the question of the role of international Geneva. Geneva, the home of the Human Rights Council has an important role to play in making sure that the **human rights based approach is at the centre** of any action we take.

We are delighted to hear a number of concrete proposals and recommendations. In this regard, I can hereby confirm that the core group consisting of Argentina, Brazil and my own country Slovenia will be working **towards** the **next substantive resolution** of the Human Rights Council in early 2023.

Ladies and gentlemen,

the protection of rights of older persons should of course **combine normative and non-normative instruments**. Slovenia clearly sees the need to better implement the existing norms and standards, but we also see a pertinent need to upgrade the respective international legal framework.

To conclude, my government is ready to work tirelessly to contribute to this process, while ensuring the full and equal participation of older persons and all relevant constituencies in the process.

As president of the HRC said at the February event on promotion of Rights of Older Persons in UN fora: We need to be optimistic to be successful.

I would like to believe we can leave this two-day event with strategic optimism regarding the steps ahead for the internationally binding human rights instrument for older persons.

Thank you.