RECORDED STATEMENT BY EMEM OMOKARO Ph.D DIRECTOR GENERAL NATIONAL SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRE NIGERIA, DURING THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS’ MEETING IN GENEVA AUGUST 30, 2022

**PROTOCOLS**

Let me appreciate the Human Rights Council for this opportunity extended to Nigeria’s National Senior Citizens Centre, the first Federal focal agency on Ageing to add to this significant multi-stakeholder conversation. The three sessions preceding this, witnessed vibrant discussions that explicitly analyzed human rights situation of older persons and x-rayed existing human rights frameworks to see if they are sufficient provisions that strengthen the promotion of the rights of older persons. All seem to agree that there are yawning gaps and that existing instruments are inadequate and fail to protect older persons, everywhere, irrespective of the economic and social situation

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of 206 million and 14.9 million older persons currently living there, with a growth rate at 3,2 % and in spite of the huge and growing youth population, it is projected Nigeria will record 28 .8 million older persons by 2050, But we have a long way to go.

With the establishment of the National Senior Citizens Centre by an Act of the Parliament and the approval of the National Policy on Ageing, Nigeria is now witnessing the compelling force of a national policy on ageing when coupled with legal instrument and the effect, that, it could have in strengthening institutional mechanisms for sustainable inclusion of older persons in development and for effective multi-sectoral coordination for more inclusive multi-sectoral policies and programmes.

However, it is rather saddening as It was soon discovered, that In the take -off of making comprehensive effort to roll back years of neglect and inequities, to build human resource capacity and establish national standard guidelines for healthy ageing and long term care; age friendly environments , life -long learning opportunities, access to justice and to change negative stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, there are no international benchmark statements and minimum standards codified in a single instrument, where references could be made.

Nigeria is a signatory to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the Rights of Older Persons, and is working to ratify it. It should be noted the African Protocol recognizes a number of human rights treaties, as well as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. However, the Protocol refers to the need to comply with **“regional and international standards”** for strengthening its provisions as does the National Senior Citizens Centre Act but where are these regional and international standards? They just don’t exist!

Let’s think about the significant impact that CEDAW, the Convention on Child Rights and Convention on the rights of Persons with disabilities have had on the lives of women, children and persons with disabilities.

These three human rights instruments not only impacted the lives of women, children and persons with disabilities, in terms of legislation, policies and programmes that were established around the world, but these conventions also have had a huge impact on public understanding, perceptions and attitudes.

There cannot be less for older persons. (Why do older persons deserve less!!)

Furthermore, those conventions have also had a huge influence on many subsequent intergovernmental negotiations and outcomes at the global level, in terms of a human rights approach for women, children and persons with disabilities, in the context of sustainable development goals, financing for development, climate change, science, technology and innovation, peace and security, governance, health, education, employment, etc. etc.

Older persons are humans and investments in the strengthening the protection of their rights is worthy investments and not a waste of time and resource

I wish to conclude by stating these facts; that there is need to

* View older persons as rights-holder;
* Codify the rights of older persons in one single document;
* Establish a common, global understanding of definitions and minimum standards of practice;
* An Act that is an anti-discriminatory tool to challenge prevailing negative stereotypes about old age;
* Require governments to collect data, develop indicators, establish laws and policies, implement programmes that take fully into account the rights and concerns of older persons;
* Improve State accountability and transparency;
* Raise public awareness of the rights of older persons;
* Create societies and environments for all ages, where older persons are also able to contribute, prosper and enjoy their rights.

I therefore urge the Human Rights Council to call on Member States to heed the recommendations of the UN Secretary General to accelerate the efforts of the General Assembly Open-Ended Working Group to develop proposals for an international Legal instrument to protect rights of older persons

***Let me reiterate Nigeria’s statement in support of a purposeful leap –forward, that would clearly elevate the current level of discourse and utilize already*** accumulated evidence to start drafting a convention to protect the human rights of older persons.

Thank you