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**Concept note for drafting a Political Declaration of the UNECE Ministerial
Conference on Ageing, 2012**

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with inputs from Declaration drafting group

A. Background

At the proposal of the Government of Austria, the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing will be convened in Vienna, Austria, in September 2012. The Conference will be organized in the context of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), and will mark the tenth anniversaries of the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, Spain, 2002) and the Berlin Ministerial Conference on Ageing (Berlin, Germany, 2002), and the thirtieth anniversary of the first World Assembly on Ageing (Vienna, Austria, 1982). Two satellite forums, research and NGOs, would also be held the day before the Conference.

At its third meeting in November 2010,¹ the UNECE Working Group on Ageing (UNECE WGA) voted on a motto for the conference and discussed the themes of expert panel sessions proposed by the Bureau of the UNECE WGA. The motto for the 2012 Ministerial Conference chosen by a majority vote of the UNECE WGA is “Ensuring a society for all ages: promoting quality of life and active ageing». It was agreed that the UNECE WGA would act as the Preparatory Committee for planning the 2012 Ministerial Conference on Ageing, and that the Bureau of the UNECE WGA would be responsible for drafting a (political) declaration to be made at the Conference.

The issue of drafting the declaration for the 2012 Ministerial Conference on Ageing was specifically addressed by the Bureau of the UNECE WGA at its third meeting in March 2011.² The Bureau has agreed that the representatives of Germany, Malta, Georgia, Belgium, and Austria, with the assistance of the NGO representative, would form a *Working Party* to draft an outline structure of the elements of the (political) declaration. The Bureau has also decided that a draft (political) declaration is to be modelled upon the elements of the conference programme.

This Concept Note is intended to serve as the basis for drafting the Political Declaration of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, 2012 (Political Declaration 2012) and aims at assisting the Working Party in its deliberations. It includes proposals for the structure and elaboration of the possible content of the draft Political Declaration 2012, as well as notes on the procedure of the drafting process.

¹Report of the Working Group on Ageing on its third meeting (ECE/WG.1/2010/2): <http://live.unece.org/pau/age/wg3/welcome.html>

²Report on the third meeting of the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing (ECE/WG.1/2011/3): <http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/images/ECE-WG.1-2011-3-advance.pdf>

B. Proposal for the structure of the Political Declaration 2012

In reference to the decision of the Bureau of the UNECE WGA at its third session, a draft (political) declaration is to be modelled upon the elements of the programme of the Ministerial Conference. Taking into consideration the most recent draft of the Conference programme (September 2011), the following structural components of the draft Political Declaration 2012 are proposed:

1. Introductory section

- 1.1. Major global and regional economic and social developments since 2007 *vis-à-vis* population and individual ageing**
- 1.2. Areas of the most significant progress and principal challenges (dilemmas), needs and opportunities during the second cycle (2008-2012) of implementation of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPAA (UNECE RIS/MIPAA)**

2. Policy goals and priorities for the third cycle (2013-2017) of implementation of the UNECE RIS/MIPAA

2.1 Policy goals

- a. Active ageing is the central concept and operational approach of national and regional policies on ageing**
- b. Longer working life is encouraged and work ability is maintained**
- c. Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons are promoted and ensured**
- d. Independent ageing in health and dignity is promoted and safeguarded**
- e. Inter-generational solidarity is maintained and enhanced**

2.2 Priorities of the implementation process during its third cycle (2013-2017)

3. Concluding section

- 3.1 National and regional capacity on ageing and international cooperation for implementing UNECE RIS/MIPAA**
- 3.2 Expression of appreciation to the hosting government**

C. Elaboration of the possible content of the draft Political Declaration 2012

The Political Declaration 2012 should aim at motivating for and supporting the appropriate policy action on ageing in the countries of the UNECE region. The policy oriented content of the future Declaration should strive to achieve the three essential goals of this principal outcome document of the Ministerial Conference and consequently of the review and appraisal exercise: summarize the main achievements and obstacles of the second cycle (2008-2012) of the implementation of the UNECE RIS/MIPAA; acknowledge major challenges (dilemmas), needs and opportunities persisted during the second cycle of the implementation process; and define future policy goals and priorities for policy action during the third cycle (2013-2017) of the implementation process. In addition, the Declaration would specify the necessary prerequisites of national and regional capacity on ageing for furthering the UNECE RIS/MIPAA implementation process during its third cycle.

Thus the future Political Declaration 2012 would serve as the principal reference document for designing, implementing and monitoring national and regional policy on ageing during the years 2013-2017. In addition, it would provide a background for reviewing and appraising the implementation process at the end of its third cycle in 2017.

The following proposals for the content of the draft Political Declaration 2012 are presented for review and further elaboration.

1. Introductory section

1.1 Major global and regional economic and social developments since 2007 *vis-à-vis* population and individual ageing

*Issues for possible inclusion into introductory paragraphs:*³

- The implementation of the MIPAA in the UN ECE region during the second cycle has occurred in the environment of a continuing financial crisis that has been

³ The formulations of this sub-section originate from several UNECE publications, including the following: *The MDGs in Europe and Central Asia: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward*. United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2010:

http://unece.org/publications/oes/2010_MDG_Optimized.pdf

Annual Reports of the UNECE (2010, 2011):

http://unece.org/publications/AnnualReports/topics/annual_reports.htm

accompanied by economic instability and, in some areas of the immediate geopolitical neighbourhood, by social disorder and civil unrest.

- Increasing unemployment caused by global economic crisis has affected families and communities, particularly its older members.
- Economic growth, distribution of wealth and societal development have been uneven in the UNECE region, with large and persistent disparities between sub-regions and countries, as well as between geographical areas and population groups within countries thus leading to imbalanced allocation of resources in social areas in different countries. Whereas in some member states older persons have had access to social security and well established systems of health and long-term care, and also enjoyed opportunities for political and social participation, in some other member states policy responses to individual and societal needs of ageing populations have remained insufficient.
- Rising inequalities, a setback in social protection, problems of nation-building and governance, an expanding informal sector, and high migration flows in countries with economies in transition have created a feeling of insecurity and frustration in large segments of the population.
- Ever greater proportions of people in the UNECE region are living well into their seventh decade and beyond: currently, 14.5% of the region's population is aged 65 years or above, and this proportion is expected to exceed 20% by 2030. Over the last five years, the increase in life expectancy at birth and at the age beyond 65 was notable across the region, adding on average one year and a half-year, respectively. However, in some countries in transition the recent gains in longevity have not yet been able to fully offset the significant losses in life expectancy of their citizens, particularly male, during the earlier years of transition.
- The enduring demographic changes have been generating both opportunities and challenges in the UNECE countries. The opportunities have included the growing potential of senior citizens, which can benefit their societies. This potential can be enlarged and utilized by facilitating personal fulfilment in later years. Individual and societal challenges triggered by ageing have to be met through sustainable measures of financial security in old age, age adjusted continuum of health and social care, and provision of opportunities for life-long participation.

1.2 Areas of the most significant progress and principal challenges (dilemmas), needs and opportunities during the second cycle (2008-2012) of implementation of UNECE RIS/MIPAA

The attempts should be made to clearly define the areas where the achievements and challenges were seen during the second cycle of the implementation process. The source of information for this section would be the future national reports of the UNECE Member

States on their implementation activities,⁴ including information on the contribution of civil society, particularly NGOs, social partners and research community. It is anticipated that the UNECE secretariat would prepare a summary report on the implementation of UNECE RIS/MIPAA in the UNECE region, as was done in 2007.⁵

It would be useful to compare the areas of achievements with the priorities for policy action on ageing during 2008-2012 as those were outlined in the Ministerial Declaration of León.⁶

The following achievements and challenges (dilemmas) have been identified by the members of the Working Party in their proposals submitted by 12 October 2011:

Achievements:

- Issues of population and individual ageing have been given increasing attention by policy makers, media and general public thus facilitating both the mainstreaming of ageing into national strategic planning and the development of sectoral policy responses aimed at adjusting to ageing societies.
- Greater recognition has been made of the role and function of civil society, in particular associations of older persons, and their involvement in policy action addressing the needs and expectations of older persons.
- Innovative approaches to providing health and social care services have expanded, including the approaches utilizing ICT and other technological and organizational innovations, and those promoting stronger involvement of private sector in developing care facilities.
- Measures aimed at promoting positive images of ageing and older persons have led to an increased awareness of the potential of senior citizens and their contribution to economic growth, solidarity between generations and harmony within society.
- A greater awareness is being generated and recognition made of the older persons' rights and dignity.
- Action on Solidarity between generations has been started during the last ten years.
- Important steps have been undertaken for strengthening regional cooperation for implementing the UNECE RIS/MIPAA emphasized in the establishment of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing.

⁴ The national reports for the second review and appraisal in the UNECE region are due by 31 October 2011. See: *Guidelines for Reporting on National Follow-up to the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)*:

http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/docs/age/2011/Policy-briefs/Guidelines_on_National_Reporting_in_the_Context_the_2nd_R_A_Cycle_EN.pdf

⁵ Summary report on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the UNECE region (ECE/AC.30/2007/4):

http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/docs/ece/2007/ECE_AC30_2007_4_e.pdf

⁶ http://live.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/docs/ece/2007/ECE_AC30_2007_2.e.pdf

Challenges (dilemmas):

- The advancement towards a society for all ages promulgated by the MIPAA has been slow globally and uneven across the UNECE region. While globally the humanity has succeeded in 'adding years to life', it has not yet succeeded in 'adding life to years' thus depriving older persons of enjoying their later years as a time of fulfilment. The ageing societies of today are still full of man-made barriers and prejudices making the achievement of inter-generational reciprocity difficult.
- In some policy action on ageing, the humanitarian approach focused on health and welfare needs of older persons still prevails while the developmental approach aimed at harmonizing societal ageing and development and the rights based approach determined to empower older persons, particularly older women, as valued members of society are often going by default. Policies promoting active ageing are a rare find.
- Special attention should be devoted to the situation of older women who face inequalities as a result of their gender-based roles in society. The impact of gender equalities becomes most pronounced in old age. As a result, older women are more likely than older men to be poor. Older women often take on greater responsibilities for family care while managing inflexible working conditions, mandatory retirement ages and inadequate pensions and other social security benefits.
- The issue of growing abuse of older persons is a great challenge.
- It is important to constantly bear in mind the heterogeneity of the UNECE region as it consists of societies at vastly different levels of economic and social development with a number of countries that are less equipped to face the challenges of population ageing. Special attention is to be given to countries with economies in transition.
- The national efforts to reform and adjust the systems of social protection have been exposed to political and financial challenges triggered by the on-going economic crisis and lack of political determination. The progress in adjusting national legislation concerning the work and retirement has been slow.
- The growing demand for long-term care has posed additional challenges for public systems of care provision as well as for care in the family. An adequate recognition of the work of family carers is uncommon while well-designed public services required for supporting the family carers in accomplishing their demanding tasks are lacking. The situation and work conditions of regular and irregular migrant carers have to be specifically addressed by appropriate policy measures.
- For strengthening solidarity between generations within families and in society, on the working-place, in social insurance systems and public awareness building, cooperation of young citizens organisations and senior citizens organisations has to be improved.

2. Policy goals and priorities for the third cycle (2013-2017) of implementation of the UNECE RIS/MIPAA

The formulations of this section are based on the inputs of the Working Party submitted by 12 October 2011. Additional inputs will be provided by the deliberations of the UNECE WGA at its meeting on 21-22 November 2011. After approval of the Concept Note by the UNECE WGA, inputs to the text of the Political Declaration from all major stakeholders, including NGOs and the research community, in the region will be sought.

The Political Declaration will be finalized at the Conference's sessions in September 2012 with contribution of civil society, including recommendations of the Conference panels as well as those of the civil society and research forums.

The deliberations of the panels, as well as research and civil society forums, should provide essential input for formulating *policy goals* for the third cycle of the implementation process of UNECE RIS/MIPAA. The essential input for this section of the Political Declaration should come from Member States, civil society, and research community, and will also be sought from the substantive policy documents of the UN programme on ageing⁷ and the EC secretariat responsible for organizing the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.⁸ In addition, as soon as the moderators, keynote speakers and other members of the Conference panels and satellite forums are identified and their participation confirmed, they should be approached for proposing essential policy recommendations, specifying policy goals in relation to the themes of corresponding panels in due time for updating the draft Declaration before the Ministerial Conference.

It is suggested that the political Declaration should not be longer than the Leon Ministerial Declaration.

2.1 Policy goals

The formulation of these goals and corresponding actions should be finalized on the basis of conclusions of the expert panels, as well as the Ministerial panels of the Conference.

The following groups of policy goals with corresponding actions can be considered:

a. Active ageing is the central concept and operational approach of national and regional policies on ageing

Actions:

- i. *Ensure lifelong access to education and training as an essential prerequisite of the productivity of both individuals and societies.*

⁷<http://social.un.org/index/Ageing.aspx>

⁸<http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp?langId=en>

Education is a crucial basis for an active and fulfilling life. Training, retraining and education are important determinants of a worker's ability to perform and adapt to workplace changes.

- ii. *Promote participation of older persons in all areas of society – economy, politics, education, social, research, culture, etc., - to their own benefit and satisfaction as much as to the benefit of a society at large.*
- iii. *Facilitate participation of older persons in decision-making processes at all levels, inter alia, both directly and through organizations of older persons and of national committees on ageing which represent them in decision-making.*
- iv. *Optimise opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.*
- v. *Raise awareness among the population of measures to promote active ageing and allocate sufficient resources for it.*

b. Longer working life is encouraged and work ability is maintained

Actions:

- i. *Support longer working lives built on healthy working conditions and healthy ageing promoted through the entire working career.*
- ii. *Remove obstacles and disincentives to extend working lives, including those related to taxation, social security systems and conditions at the work place.*
- iii. *Make transition to retirement and retirement opportunities for engaging in productive work more flexible. This can be achieved by introducing (amending) the legislation with a view of, inter alia, improving the working conditions of older persons.*
- iv. *Carry out pension reforms responding to increasing life expectancy and the extension of working lives.*
- v. *Achieve higher employment rates of older men and women through appropriate incentives and adequate offers of adapted workplaces.*
- vi. *Promote health and safety at work for safer, healthier and more productive workplaces which is crucial to retain workers longer in employment. Healthy working conditions are the basis for a longer and healthier working life.*

c. Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons are promoted and protected

Actions:

- i. *Maximise an older person's dignity and senses of belonging and self-worth perception through measures aimed at combating any form of discrimination and abuse based on age and by promoting solidarity between generations.*
- ii. *Ensure easy access of older persons to information about their rights and obligations in order to facilitate their full participation in their societies.*
- iii. Strengthening the human rights of older persons and to enhance more effective data collection, statistics and qualitative information in order to better assess the situation and rights of older persons.
- iv. *Take into account the diverse health, economic, cultural and social needs of a growing number of the various older ethnic minorities and migrants.*
- v. *Promote culturally respectful concepts and policy measures for the integration of older persons with a "migrant background".*
- vi. *Promoting and encouraging voluntary activities of young and older persons for participation in social and cultural life.*

d. Independent ageing in health and dignity is promoted and safeguarded

Actions:

- i. *Strengthen health protection measures, measures of disease prevention, thus lowering the probability of diseases and disability and ensuring high physical and mental functioning and active engagement in life.*
- ii. *Promote age-adequate access to services and goods.*
- iii. *Improve mobility through an age-friendly environment and transportation system.*
- iv. *Promote information and communication technologies for facilitating independent living of older persons.*
- v. *Develop new methods and technologies for improving the support and care for older persons at home.*
- vi. *Bridge the gap between the countries of the UNECE region of different levels of development in quality of care and support of older people.*
- vii. *Ensure a continuum of care for older persons in need of support and assistance, ranging from arrangements for "ageing in place" to various forms of quality home and institutional care.*
- viii. *Improve the situation of formal and informal carers, including the specific needs of migrant care personnel.*

e. Inter-generational solidarity is maintained and enhanced

Actions:

- i. *Promote the understanding of ageing as an issue of concern to the entire society. Promote and strengthen solidarity between generations and mutual support as a key element for social development.*
- ii. *Encourage the media to highlight the positive aspects of ageing and disseminate information about ageing as a natural phase in one's life course and transition into old age as a gradual process. Develop non-discriminatory portrayals of older persons. Facilitate involvement of older persons themselves in the planning and running of such media programmes.*
- iii. *Better combine the specific capacities of young, middle-aged, and older persons in various societal activities. Identify and promulgate ways and means to reconcile the needs, aspirations and skills of both the younger and older person so that policies for a society for all ages can receive support of all generations*
- iv. *Encourage continuing multigenerational dialogue by all stakeholders, including governments, municipal authorities, non-governmental organisations, and general public.*
- v. *Provide greater support to families and family members caring for dependent older persons to ensure that the family is enabled [strengthened] to continue responding to the needs of its older members*
- vi. *Develop and implement socially responsible and future-oriented economic and financial strategies encompassing the needs, capacities and expectations of current and future generations.*

2.2 Priorities of the implementation process during its third cycle (2013-2017)

Paragraphs of this section would list policy actions for 2013-2017 aimed at reaching the goals formulated in the preceding section. The already planned panels prompt to several possible formulations. Priorities for future policy actions could stem from the themes of the panels of the Ministerial Conference as well as from conclusions and recommendations of the research and civil society forums. Additional useful references could be found in the recommendations of the recent (2008-2011) reports of the UN Secretary-General on ageing⁹ and the reports on the deliberations of the UNECE WGA.¹⁰

The following policy priorities are suggested for consideration of and further elaboration:

- **Harmonizing population ageing and societal development.** Adequate financial security, accessible to all citizens systems of health and social care, timely and effective prevention of discrimination against older persons and of their social exclusion are the political objectives which have to be relentlessly reviewed and

⁹<http://social.un.org/index/Ageing/Resources/UNReportsandResolutions.aspx>

¹⁰http://live.unece.org/pau/age/wg/wg_ageing.html

adjusted to societal trends and demographic changes in order to maintain cohesion within society and between its various age groups.

- **Achieving balance of policy measures for guaranteeing wellbeing of older persons and those for promoting active ageing.**
- **Promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons.** Social and political participation of older persons prevent their isolation and offer them opportunities to organise various aspects of their lives in accordance with their needs and expectations. Simultaneously, all other members in a society can become acquainted with the needs and opinions of senior citizens, and, as a result, benefit from their engagement in various spheres of societal life.
- **Mainstreaming ageing into national and regional political processes.**
- **Sustaining equilibrium between the interests of different generations,** including considering the rights and needs of future generations.
- **Promoting quality of life in all ages.** Ensuring a society for all generations means guaranteeing quality of life, social security, independence, non-discrimination, social integration, participation and dignity in all situations of life for persons of all age groups.
- **Creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity.**
- **Supporting healthy working conditions to keep workers longer in the work process**

3. Concluding section

National and regional capacity on ageing and international cooperation for implementing UNECE RIS/MIPAA

The following recommendations for strengthening national capacity on ageing are suggested for consideration of and further elaboration by the Working Party:

- i. *Strengthen national capacity on ageing by supporting the national coordinating mechanisms and focal points on ageing. Develop (strengthen) and put into effect coordinated responses to ageing across all government ministries and agencies and invest in capacity building to respond to the demands of the demographic transition.*
- ii. *Increase the role of national organizations of and for older persons in policy action on ageing.*
- iii. *Ensure mainstreaming of ageing into national policy process by incorporating the life course, rights based, multigenerational and gender-sensitive approaches.*
- iv. *Facilitate collaboration of government and civil society policy experts, policy makers and researchers, scientists for designing, implementing and monitoring evidence based policy on ageing.*
- v. *Encourage and advance comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and specialised research on ageing.*

- vi. *Integrate participatory approach in policy action on ageing by involving civil society, particularly organizations of and for older persons, in the policy process.*
- vii. *The important work of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing as a long term institutional body for the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and as an institutionalized framework for exchange of information and best-practices among the UNECE member states has to be emphasized. WGA has proven a useful framework to structure and coordinate the process of MIPAA/RIS implementation and monitoring and should be consolidated as the institutional backbone of the process. UNECE member states are fully committed to the work of UNECE WGA.*
- viii. Capacity building activities undertaken in the UNECE region by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, affiliated with the United Nations, and the International Institute on Ageing (INIA), United Nations-Malta have significantly contributed to the implementation of the UNECE RIS/MIPAA. The financial support from Austria, Malta and the United Nations Population Fund to these institutions is acknowledged with appreciation.
- ix. The activities of the UNECE secretariat supporting the development of national capacity on ageing, such as developing roadmaps for mainstreaming ageing, preparing policy briefs, and conducting training workshops, are acknowledged and encouraged. The cooperation between UNECE and its major partners within the UN system, such as the UN DESA hosting the UN Programme on ageing, and UNFPA should be strengthened.

As established, the very last paragraph of the Declaration would include the **expression of appreciation to the hosting government.**

D. Notes on the drafting process

This concept note has been made available by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Consumer Protection to the Working Party of the UN ECE WGA Bureau for drafting an outline structure of the elements of the Political Declaration 2012.

This draft outline is to be shared electronically with the whole Bureau members by 19 October 2011. Bureau members will then be able to seek comments from their ministries and submit their proposals to the UNECE by 4 November 2011.

After the 4 November 2011, the concept note should be ready for dissemination among all members of WGA. The WGA members will discuss the content of the concept note and the future political declaration at the WGA meeting on 21-22 November 2011.

After approval at the WGA meeting, the concept note can be made available to other stakeholders, including civil society and the research community. Stakeholders would then provide inputs towards the future Political Declaration.