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**Meeting with the Chairperson of the Working Group on Ageing
Report from the Chair**

Report from the Chairperson of the Working Group on Ageing

I. Improving policymaking in compliance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Population ageing is a major trend in the UNECE region impacting its economic and societal development. Guiding and strengthening policymaking by member States in response to population ageing and other demographic changes are among the core activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

2. The work is governed by the Working Group on Ageing (WGA), composed of National Focal Points on Ageing nominated by the respective governments of UNECE member States. The UNECE Population Unit acts as the secretariat to the WGA and enables the preparation and implementation of the WGA Programme of Work.

3. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing older persons and/or working in ageing-related areas and the scientific community participate as observers to the Working Group and are represented in the WGA Bureau. The international organizations with programmes related to population ageing such as the European Commission, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO) also take part in the Working Group as observers.

4. The Working Group supports the fulfilment of the policy principles set out in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) among the UNECE member States and conducts review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation every five years. In 2017, the third review and appraisal exercise was completed and the MIPAA/RIS framework was reaffirmed by the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration “A Sustainable Society for All Ages: Realizing the potential of living longer”. For the fourth implementation cycle (2018–2022), the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration calls for policy measures and activities in three priority areas, namely:¹

- I. Recognizing the potential of older persons.
- II. Encouraging longer working life and ability to work.
- III. Ensuring ageing with dignity.

5. The Lisbon Ministerial Declaration and the WGA work programme seek to strengthen the interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG1), ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG3), achieving gender equality (SDG5), promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8) as well as access to lifelong learning opportunities (SDG4), reducing inequalities (SDG10) and making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG11).

6. This report highlights the work undertaken by the WGA over the last 12 months and major activities planned for 2019 and beyond. Further details can be found in the report of the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Ageing, ECE/WG.1/2018/2.

¹ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/Ministerial_Conference_Lisbon/Documents/ECE.AC.30-2017-2-E-Rev.1.pdf

II. Achievements over the past twelve months

A. Policy seminar “Ageing and the Sustainable Development Goals”

7. The first UNECE Policy Seminar on Ageing focused on the linkages between ageing-related policies and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Policy Seminar took place on 21 November 2018, back-to-back with the annual meeting of the Working Group on Ageing. It was attended by over 50 participants, including representatives from 30 UNECE member States, civil society and international organizations. The seminar provided a dedicated space for an in-depth discussion on how ageing-related policies and programmes uphold progress towards SDGs. It allowed for experience exchange and peer learning in ensuring that cross-sectoral inputs are taken into account when developing national sustainable development strategies and assessing 2030 Agenda implementation through voluntary national reviews. The Seminar helped to increase awareness of the linkages between MIPAA/RIS and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The participants’ responses to the questionnaire at the end of the Policy Seminar were highly positive and supported inclusion of this new activity item in the WGA Programme of Work for 2018–2022.

B. Policy Briefs on Ageing with good practice examples

8. In 2018, two new Policy Briefs were prepared: “**Innovative social services and supportive measures for independent living in advanced age**” and “**Combatting ageism in the world of work**”. The latter addresses a call of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration for “combatting ageism in its many forms” in combination with the goal to encourage longer working life and ability to work. Development of these two Policy Briefs was financially supported by Germany. Preparations also started for the next Policy Brief dedicated to informal carers. Its focus and content were discussed by the WGA at its eleventh meeting in November 2018.

9. Policy Briefs on Ageing are prepared on the topics selected by the members of WGA. They suggest policy measures and promote the exchange of good practice examples among member States. Many of the briefs are translated into several languages (French, German, Russian, Serbian, and Spanish) by the member States.

C. Capacity-building: Roadmap on mainstreaming ageing in support of developing a national strategy on ageing in Belarus

10. At its eleventh meeting the WGA agreed to commence a new Roadmap project in support of the development of a national strategy on ageing in Belarus. The first five-day field mission was carried out on 10–14 December 2018 by the Population Unit staff. The team held meetings and focus group discussions with key stakeholder groups, including representatives of relevant line ministries, parliamentarians, the National Statistical Committee (BelStat), representatives of civil society, academia and research centres, service providers, local government and older persons themselves. The funding for the field visit was provided by the UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO). The second field study is planned in spring 2019 and may include some WGA experts.

D. Monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking

11. An important area under the WGA Programme of Work is monitoring the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking. Two main activities fall under this item:

(a) The Working Group supports the use and further development of the **Active Ageing Index (AAI)**.² The index provides a composite measure for active ageing outcomes and the capacity/enabling environment for it and is used as a tool to monitor the impact of active ageing policies. In 2018, the guidelines for calculating the AAI in non-EU countries and at the subnational

² <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/AAI/Active+Ageing+Index+Home>

level were developed. A research study analysing AAI results for population subgroups was carried out in Italy. Findings from this study showcased the AAI relevance for more targeted policy measures. The AAI project team (ECE and European Commission) in collaboration with the University of the Basque Country and the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, and with the support of the Government of Biscay (Spain), organized the Second International Seminar on the AAI in September 2018 in Bilbao, Spain. It attracted around 145 participants from 37 countries, international and regional organizations and NGOs.

(b) The **Generations and Gender Programme (GGP)** is an important data source for the analysis of intergenerational and gender relationships within the family and society. The Programme includes national longitudinal surveys that are repeated in about three-year intervals. Kazakhstan and Latvia have recently joined the GGP. The Belarus Generations and Gender Survey data were released for analysis in spring 2018. The Programme is governed by the Consortium Board, of which the UNECE is a member. The UNECE Population Unit coordinates the GGP network of national teams (Council of Partners) and has an important role in bridging the Programme governance with national teams responsible for GGP implementation. As survey data custodian, the ECE processes applications submitted by scientists and experts who wish to use GGP data for their research.

E. Other activities: Regional Conference on ICPD+25

12. The findings of the third review and appraisal of the MIPAA/RIS implementation outlined in the 2017 Synthesis report and its statistical annex were used in the preparation of the UNECE Regional report “Fulfilling the potential of present and future generations” – a major document of the 25-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The report served as a background document for the UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD+25 “Enabling Choices: Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development” held on 1–2 October 2018 in Geneva. The concerns and potentials of ageing societies outlined in the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration found their reflection and support throughout the deliberations of the Conference. The ICPD+25 regional review was carried out together with the UNFPA EECARO. The Conference gathered 275 participants including national official delegations from 40 UNECE member States.

III. Major planned activities for 2019 and beyond

13. The Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat will continue working towards its main objective to enhance the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in ECE member States and meet the goals of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration. The WGA activities and outputs for 2019 and beyond will fall under the main elements of the Programme of Work for the fourth cycle of MIPAA/RIS (2018–2022) adopted by the Working Group in November 2018. The following key constituting elements were included:

A. Policy seminar on ageing

14. The policy seminars or “master-classes” that focus on specific policy challenges and responses developed by member States will be organized back-to-back with annual Working Group meetings to facilitate participation. The topic for the policy seminar in November 2019 will be decided at the WGA Bureau meeting in May 2019 in consultation with the member States based on an online questionnaire. Germany is providing the necessary funding to ensure interpretation (English-Russian) and expert support.

B. Policy Briefs on Ageing

15. Policy Briefs remain an important element of the Programme of Work for 2018–2022, as they provide evidence-based policy advice on specific aspects of MIPAA/RIS and showcase good practices from across the region. The Policy Brief on informal carers will be developed in cooperation with the European Centre for Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna and issued by June 2019. The next Policy Brief will focus on ageing in urban environments. The UNECE member

States are invited to translate Policy Briefs into national languages to make them accessible to a wider circle of professionals, policymakers and NGOs/volunteers.

C. Capacity-building on ageing-related issues

16. The Working Group in cooperation with the experts from academia and civil society organizations will develop practical **guidelines for mainstreaming ageing in all relevant policy areas**. The recommendations will build on the expertise acquired through the Road map projects and will be designed to integrate the objectives of 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Portugal will lead on and provide the financial support for the preparation of the guidelines. An informal task force of some 10–15 WGA members and observers is being created to work on the guidelines (mainly through electronic means). The draft guidelines are expected to be submitted for discussion at the twelfth meeting of the Working Group in November 2019.

17. In 2019, the Working Group on Ageing will be also supporting the development of the Roadmap on mainstreaming ageing in Belarus – to be tentatively completed in September and may initiate the Roadmap project in Kazakhstan (pending final confirmation) in the second part of the year.

D. Monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking

18. The work on advancing the use of the **Active Ageing Index** to monitor the implementation of MIPAA/RIS will continue with financial support from the European Commission (the AAI project was extended through August 2019). A number of important events and studies will be carried out over the next nine months. Among them: an analytical report on AAI trends 2008–2016; a pilot study at the subnational level in Romania; some national seminars and a stakeholder meeting in June 2019 as well as the launch of a new web-based tool for visualization of the AAI results.

19. The **Generations and Gender Programme** will continue to be an essential component of data collection and research for the ECE work on population issues. More harmonized data will be forthcoming from Kazakhstan and Latvia where the GGP survey has been carried out in late 2018 for the first time. The GGP survey is also planned for 2019 in the Republic of Moldova. The secretariat will continue coordinating the GGP as an important source of evidence for policymaking and monitoring progress towards the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals.

IV. Cooperation with other organizations

20. The Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat maintain very good cooperation with the international organizations active in the area of population ageing in the ECE region: joint projects are ongoing with the European Commission (i.e. the AAI project), and some joint events were co-organized with the WHO.

21. At the global level, close relationships have been maintained with UNFPA, both the headquarters in New York and the Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECARO) in Istanbul. Cooperation takes place with regard to supporting the implementation process of the ICPD Programme of Action and other population-related matters. On an annual basis, the UNECE Population Unit and the EECARO exchange information on their work programmes and discuss possible joint activities.

22. The UNECE Population Unit coordinates an informal Geneva-based inter-agency group on ageing, with representatives from ILO, the International Social Security Association (ISSA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UNFPA Geneva office, the WHO, and the NGO Committee on Ageing. The meetings of the inter-agency group take place once or twice a year to mutually update on planned ageing-related activities and discuss how the group members could be involved in/benefit from each other activities. The inter-agency group's work has already contributed to enriching the work of the WGA by providing substantive contributions to several annual meetings and organizing various events and expert exchanges.

V. Exploring the possibility to transform WGA into a standing intergovernmental body – responding to the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration

23. In Paragraph 38 of the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration, UNECE member States acknowledged “the need to explore the possibility of a resource-neutral transformation of the Working Group on Ageing to a standing sectoral committee” in order to further support the intergovernmental collaboration in the field of population ageing. The WGA at its tenth meeting in November 2017 established a Consultation Group to follow up on Paragraph 38. The Consultation Group was composed of Austria, Germany, Portugal, the Russian Federation, and Slovenia.

24. On 22 June 2018, members of the Consultation Group met with members of the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) to discuss the proposal to transform the WGA to a sectoral committee. While there was general support for the strengthening of the WGA status, not all member States would agree with the creation of an additional sectoral committee within the organizational structure of the UNECE. The secretariat was therefore requested to explore alternative institutional frameworks that would strengthen the status of the WGA and enable it to better fulfil its mandate.

25. The second informal consultation with the EXCOM members took place on 5 November 2018 and as a result a draft proposal for revised (new) Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Ageing was prepared by the secretariat. Key elements of the proposal are a change of the name to Standing Working Group on Ageing and continuous and stronger mandate in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant recent global agendas. The Working Group endorsed the proposal. It is submitted to the EXCOM for its review and decision.
