

Summary

The United Nations Commission for Social Development, in its resolution 42/1 of 13 February 2004, decided to undertake the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) every five years. In Resolution E/2011/26 the Commission agreed on the modalities for the second review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action. The Resolution encourages regional commissions to facilitate the review and appraisal exercise at the regional level. The Commission further decided to conduct the global segment of the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action in 2013 at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development.

The second review and appraisal in the UNECE region culminated in the 2012 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing which took place from 19 to 20 September 2012 in Vienna, Austria. Delegations from 50 UNECE Member States, including 27 Ministers and Deputy Ministers/State Secretaries and a number of high-level officials, the European Union Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, as well as other participants from the European Commission and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, scientists and other stakeholders discussed progress made in accomplishing the Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPAA during its second cycle of implementation (2007-2012). The 2012 Ministerial Conference in Vienna adopted the Ministerial Declaration "Ensuring a Society for All Ages: Promoting quality of life and active ageing" (ECE/AC.30/2012/3).

INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Commission for Social Development, in its resolution 42/1 of 13 February 2004, decided to undertake the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) every five years. In Resolution E/2011/26 the Commission agreed on the modalities for the second review and appraisal of Madrid Plan of Action. The Resolution encourages the regional commissions to continue to facilitate the review and appraisal exercise at the regional level, including by providing an analysis of the main findings, identifying key priority action areas and good practices and suggesting policy responses. The Commission further decided to conduct the global segment of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action in 2013 at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development.

2. The second review and appraisal in the UNECE region culminated in the 2012 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing which took place at the Aula der Wissenschaften (Hall of Sciences) in Vienna Austria from 19 to 20 September 2012, with the Ministerial Segment being held on 20 September.

3. Overall, delegations from 50 UNECE Member States participated in the Conference. The following Member States were represented: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and Uzbekistan. Ministers and Deputy Ministers/State Secretaries from 27 UNECE Member States attended the Conference. The majority of other delegations was led by high-level officials from specialized government departments and agencies.

4. Representatives from the European Commission, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Council of Europe, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), the European Parliament, and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research participated. In total, 11 intergovernmental organizations participated in the conference. In addition, thanks to the NGO Forum and the Research Forum that took place on the day preceding

the Ministerial Conference, numerous representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as scientists participated in the Conference.

A. Opening of the Conference and adoption of the Agenda

5. Mr. Rudolf Hundstorfer, Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Republic of Austria and Mr. Sven Alkalaj, Executive Secretary of UNECE, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The Conference elected the Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection as the Chairperson and Ms. Kathy Greenlee, Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging, Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, United States of America, as Vice-Chairperson for both Conference days. Conference participants adopted the Agenda.

B. Overview of the ageing situation in the UNECE Region

6. In the framework of preparations for the Conference, 38 Member States submitted their country reports for the second review and appraisal of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), based on the guidelines provided by the UNECE secretariat. The secretariat presented a summary of findings from these country reports (ECE/AC.30/2012/4).

C. Brief on global progress of MIPAA implementation, 2007-2012

7. The representative of UN DESA provided an update on the global progress of MIPAA implementation in 2007-2012.

D. Expert panels

8. Three expert panels were held on the following topics:

(a) Promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability;

(b) Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons;

(c) Creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity.

9. During the first expert panel on “Promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability”, discussants highlighted that unemployment levels in UNECE countries had increased significantly during the last five years and that employment activity rates for older people were still below the international targets. The panel stressed the need for a more holistic approach to ageing and labour markets. It was acknowledged that promotion of longer

working lives was important to sustain both labour markets and social welfare systems. In fact, working after statutory retirement age is increasingly common, because people choose to be in employment or because they depend on the income from employment – ever more so in the current economic crisis. The contribution of workers over 65 years old is not recognized in the traditional statistics of the dependency ratio, indicating that the statistics are often misleading.

10. The first expert panel also highlighted the importance of combatting prejudice and age discrimination and the need to create more positive attitudes towards work of older persons. Panellists noted that individual differences in cognitive and physical abilities had to be taken into account, especially since they increase with age. Therefore, more flexible solutions to organizing the working life were called for. Strategies towards enhancing employment of older persons as well as youth have to be pursued simultaneously. Employability of older workers should be improved, for example through lifelong learning and training. At the same time, working conditions and environments should allow for more flexibility. More flexible retirement models have to be a part of pension reforms. Challenges remain in addressing the rise of the informal sector which poses a particular challenge for older persons who have not had the opportunity to contribute to the social security system. Gender aspects were also raised, stressing the need to reconcile the burden of largely female unpaid care work with regular employment in order to enable longer working lives.

11. The second expert panel on “Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons” emphasized the diversity of older people and ageing processes that should be adequately reflected in policy actions and measures. Emphasizing the life-course approach, the keynote speaker noted that early interventions, especially through education, were most effective in enhancing the social participation of older people. At the same time, interventions were still effective and meaningful later in life. Lifelong learning and knowledge transfers between generations were considered crucial to enhancing the social inclusion of older people and to mutual understanding. Panellists stressed the importance of volunteering for the health and well-being of older people and for society at large. Normative frameworks should be established that support volunteering. Increased opportunities for volunteering also contribute to more active participation in social life.

12. During the second panel discussion it was noted that prejudice against older people can be minimized by fostering positive images of older people. The importance of collaborative work between government institutions and non-governmental organizations on raising public awareness about age discrimination was emphasized.

Participants called for more vigorous initiatives to stop the abuse of and discrimination against older people. The protection and promotion of human rights of older people was considered important. Interventions also highlighted the importance of making cities more age-friendly, considering houses, public transport and the cultural sphere.

13. The third expert panel on “Creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity” highlighted the importance of material and physical independence as crucial in terms of ensuring ageing in dignity. Ensuring access to health promotion and disease prevention programmes, and to health and care services of high standard were considered key. Investments should be made into training health and care workers and into ensuring high standards of care services. The importance of building long-term care systems was underlined. To ensure independence in old age, home-based care systems were considered crucial. For people with disabilities it was important to make assistive devices and personalized support services available. The environment where people live and age should be constructed in a way that is well adjusted to a person’s need, benefiting from the potentials of new technologies. Some interventions provided good examples of adapted housing models, equipped for example with panic buttons. Several speakers underlined their commitment to improve barrier-free access to buildings and to improve infrastructure.

14. The panellists stressed that to uphold independence in older age, social protection systems should ensure basic subsistence levels. At the same time, provisions should be made to cater for older people’s non-material needs, such as the need for social contacts and respect. Challenges remain in changing attitudes towards older people and generating a common understanding that ageing-related policies are to the benefit of all generations. The discussion concluded that political will was most important to carry through policies that support healthy lifestyles, social security and participation in society, thus ultimately improving quality of life and active ageing.

E. Opening of the Ministerial Segment

15. Mr. Rudolf Hundstorfer, Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Republic of Austria, opened the Ministerial Segment on 20 September 2012. Introductory speeches were given by Mr. Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Executive Secretary, and Mr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria.

16. The speakers expressed their appreciation for the work done by the secretariat and the members of the UNECE Working Group on Ageing in facilitating the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and in preparing the Ministerial Conference.

F. Presentation of the draft Ministerial Declaration

17. The Chair of the Working Group on Ageing, Ms. Erika Winkler (Austria), informed the Conference about the drafting and intergovernmental consultation process of the declaration and presented its main points. Member States were invited to consider adopting the declaration at the last plenary session of the Conference. The delegations were requested to present in writing any last minute comments or changes for consideration.

G. Panel discussion between Ministers and Civil Society Representatives

18. The panel discussion focused on the theme “Stimulating Intergenerational Dialogue and Solidarity between the Generations: A Shared Responsibility”. The panellists discussed ways to ensure intergenerational reciprocity and measures to promote solidarity between generations as one of the pillars of social cohesion. The panellists reviewed issues of social rights and obligations of younger and older people and how existing and potential conflicts can be resolved. The risk of pension system needs crowding out investments in youth or questions regarding the right to education, the social rights of different generations, and the solidarity behind social institutions were considered, among other aspects.

H. Presentation of the NGO Declaration and the Research Community Declaration

19. The NGO declaration was presented by Mr. Dirk Jarré (European Federation of Older People, Germany) and the declaration of the Research Forum was presented by Mr. Asghar Zaidi (European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Austria).

I. Ministerial panels

20. The Ministerial Panels were held under the overall theme “Ensuring a Society for All Ages: Promoting quality of life and active ageing”. The first Ministerial Panel focused on two issues, namely “Promoting longer working life and maintaining work ability” and “Promoting participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons”. The second Ministerial Panel discussed various aspects around the topic “Promoting quality of life in older age and creating an enabling environment for health, independence and ageing in dignity”.

21. In the keynote address to the Ministerial panels, Mr. László Andor, the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, presented EU activities in the framework of the *2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations* with the aim of changing attitudes towards ageing and to highlight older people’s untapped potential. It was stressed that the *Europe 2020 Strategy* goal is to harness innovation, improve education and consolidate Member State finances. The Strategy sets various targets, including a

75 per cent employment rate for people aged 15 to 64 and lifting people out of poverty by 2020. Linking with the theme of the conference, the Commissioner referred to the work done to develop guiding principles for active ageing and an Active Ageing Index to identify unused potential in countries for older persons to remain active and independent.

22. To enhance participation of older persons, activities at the European level are also directed towards developing a *European Accessibility Act* as a European framework that aims to remove barriers to people with disabilities, thus improving access to goods and services. Other activities referred to promoting volunteering and intergenerational solidarity.

23. During the first Ministerial panel discussion, ministers and the heads of delegations of a number of Member States informed about their integrated strategies devised to tackle ageing in a holistic manner, and in some cases about the strategies specifically targeted to active ageing. Among the declared priorities in a majority of the countries were measures to prolong active working lives. Many countries have implemented pension reforms in support of that goal, reducing incentives for early retirement while trying to ensure sufficient pension incomes. Such measures are supported by labour market measures, including vocational training and lifelong learning, subsidized employment, assistance to job seekers or promotion of entrepreneurship. Activities were presented to encourage social entrepreneurship and to promote sectors in the economy with the potential to create employment for older workers. Job creation for young and older generations was an issue of common concern.

24. The second Ministerial panel called for recognition of the fact that older men and women continue to make important contributions to their communities in various ways, including performing non-paid care of younger and older family members, participating in volunteering, as well as cash and in-kind transfers to benefit younger members of their families and communities. Speakers supported the idea of a dialogue between generations, for example through intergenerational learning. Solidarity between generations also means adequate and sustainable social protection of older persons, as well as combating discrimination, prejudice, neglect, abuse and discrimination. Delegates focussed on the new trend in social policy aimed at enabling older persons to continue

living for as long as possible in their own environment and community. Speakers referred to different health promotion and disease prevention measures, as well as the continuum of care and support services and self-support arrangements to ensure independent living. The need to support family carers was recognized, making it easier to reconcile care with work responsibilities. The panel also addressed the implications of out- and in-migration for older people and their care in different parts of the region.

J. Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration

25. The Chairperson informed the delegates that no requests for changes in the draft text of the declaration had been received since its presentation at the plenary session in the morning and asked the Member States to adopt the declaration. The Conference by acclamation adopted the Ministerial Declaration “Ensuring a Society for All Ages: Promoting quality of life and active ageing” (ECE/AC.30/2012/3).

K. Closing of the Conference

26. Mr. Rudolf Hundstorfer, Austria’s Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, and Mr. Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Executive Secretary, highlighted in their closing remarks priorities for furthering the implementation of the UNECE RIS/MIPAA. The Federal Minister pointed out that these priorities and ways to implement them are clearly outlined in the Vienna Ministerial Declaration.

27. Mr. Sven Alkalaj welcomed the engagement of Member States in the UNECE Working Group on Ageing as expressed in the Declaration. He thanked them for the appreciation of the work of the secretariat and reassured participants that the UNECE secretariat remains committed to assisting Member States in the follow-up process to the Conference.

28. The Executive Secretary of the UNECE thanked the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection for hosting and organizing the Conference together with UNECE.

29. Turkey declared its willingness to host the next UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Istanbul. Serbia invited the Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing to hold its next meeting in Belgrade. After this, the Chairperson thanked the participants and closed the Conference.