

Draft proposal to transform the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Group on Ageing into a standing intergovernmental body: Note by the Bureau

-Draft for Discussion 14 November 2018-

**Revised Terms of Reference
Working Group on Ageing (WGA)**

I. Rationale for revised Terms of Reference

1. Over the last 10 years, since its creation in 2008, the WGA has matured and achieved significant progress in mainstreaming ageing in the relevant policy areas at the local, national and regional levels. Its scope of work has also grown markedly, particularly in response to the calls of UNECE member States expressed in both the Vienna Ministerial Declaration (2012) and the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration (2017) as well as the outcome of the High-level Regional Conferences concluding the ICPD Beyond 2014 reviews. The national and regional commitments under the WHO Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health (2016) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development call for more work on population ageing and demographic change as well. Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/144 (2017) further recommends that member States “**consider expanding the role of the regional commissions on ageing issues and continue to provide resources for those efforts**”.

2. A strengthened status and continuous mandate of the WGA to guide and support this work in the UNECE region is therefore needed. To meet the challenges in advancing the work on ageing in a holistic manner and to strengthen the cross-sectoral and inter-agency cooperation, member States are invited to consider the following:

- **Continuous mandate**

3. Demographic change and population ageing are of long-term and growing concern in the UNECE region. Population ageing issues have been identified as a major policy concern by UNECE member States as illustrated in the UNDESA World Population Policies Database (2015). The global agendas that guide the work of the WGA such as MIPAA/RIS, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ICPD Beyond 2014 and the WHO Global Strategy on Ageing and Health have a long-term implementation time span. A continuous mandate for the Working Group on Ageing would allow for long-term planning of its work in line with the objectives of the global agendas.

4. A continuous mandate of the WGA would enhance its stability and institutional visibility/recognition. It would encourage more member States to designate long-term national focal points (NFPs) on ageing with the ability to engage cross-sectorally at the national and regional levels.

5. A continuous mandate will also facilitate long-term collaboration with international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and academia as well as key partners within the United Nations systems, including the ILO, UNDESA, UNFPA, WHO, and the World Bank Group.

- **Scope of activities**

6. The current TORs of the WGA (enclosed in the Annex) focus narrowly on the implementation and periodic reviews of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy. The 2030 Agenda and other global initiatives related to ageing have growing impact on the scope of the WGA activities in order to better respond to the demographic challenges and ageing in the UNECE region. Therefore revised Terms of Reference are needed to reflect the changed scope of activities.

- **Change of name**

7. Renaming the WGA to a “Standing Working Group on Ageing” will better reflect the continuous mandate and longer-term stability of the group.

- **Resource-neutral**

8. The proposed changes to the Terms of Reference are resource-neutral. The secretariat’s work will be carried out within existing regular budget resources currently devoted to servicing the WGA. The United Nations Conference and Document translation/distribution services will be at the same level as currently provided to the WGA. No additional regular budget funds or personnel will be required. The voluntary contributions to the UNECE Ageing fund established at the initiative of the WGA will support additional activities as appropriate.

9. In view of the rationale described in section I the following revised TORs are proposed.

II. Terms of reference

Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA)

A. Mandate

1. The Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) is an intergovernmental body which is subsidiary to the UNECE Executive Committee and reports regularly to the EXCOM on its work programme and achievements.

2. The mandate of the UNECE SWGA emanates from the following recent resolutions and global agendas: the United Nations General Assembly (GA) resolution 72/144 (2017) on Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1, 2015), the World Health Organization’s Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (2016) and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014.

B. Objectives

3. The SWGA aims to help all countries in the ECE region to mainstream population ageing in their policy and regulatory framework in order to adjust to demographic changes and create an environment conducive to the full realization of the individual and societal potential of living longer. The Working Group supports the realization of the policy principles set out in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) and the subsequent Ministerial Declarations on Ageing among the ECE member States. It strives for synergies in the activities related to the implementation and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS and those related to the regional/national follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other population-related international frameworks such as the ICPD Beyond 2014 and the WHO Global Strategy on Ageing and Health.

C. Membership

4. The membership of the SWGA consists of national focal points on ageing representing the member States of the ECE region. In addition, representatives of relevant international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and academia can also be invited as observers, in compliance with the UN rules and practices in this respect.

D. Activities

5. The SWGA, acting within the framework of the policies of the United Nations, is entrusted with the implementation of the Population component of the Housing, land management and population subprogramme of the ECE. The work of the SWGA is demand-driven, focuses on issues of population ageing and intergenerational relations and aims to contribute to the effective implementation of commitments taken by member States at international summits on population issues, in particular the commitments of MIPAA/RIS by:

- (a) promoting international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing and intergenerational relations taking into account the situation and different needs of individual countries;
- (b) developing guidelines and policy recommendations for governments on population ageing issues
- (c) supporting MIPAA/RIS monitoring activities and coordinating the five-year review and appraisal exercises of MIPAA/RIS implementation
- (d) providing demand-driven policy advisory services and other capacity building activities
- (e) raising awareness of population ageing and its implications throughout the ECE region;
- (f) creating synergies with related policy agendas and collaboration within and outside the ECE.

6. The SWGA operates in accordance with a multi-year Programme of Work anchored in the periodic reviews and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation as well as the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable.

7. The SWGA cooperates and determines its activities in close contact with other United Nations agencies, international governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field of ageing, to avoid duplication, and to focus on challenges of specific interest to ECE member States. It promotes cooperation with international organizations and encourages partnership among the public and private sectors in addressing the implications of population ageing.

E. Officers

8. The SWGA elects a Bureau and a Chair according to the section V of the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37 E/ECE/1464).

F. Meetings

9. The SWGA meets annually. In between the sessions its work is guided by the Bureau as provided by section VI of the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies (E/2013/37 E/ECE/1464). The Standing Working Group on Ageing and its Bureau are serviced by the ECE secretariat.

Annex

Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Ageing (as approved by EXCOM in January 2018)

1. The Working Group on Ageing is an intergovernmental body, which is subsidiary to the UNECE Executive Committee.
 2. The mandate of the Working Group extends throughout the five-year cycle of the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, i.e. 2018–2022. It will submit a full report on its accomplishments over the five years with interim annual reports to the Executive Committee. After receiving these reports, the Executive Committee will review the activities of the Working Group and decide whether to renew its mandate for the next cycle.
 3. The Working Group meets annually. In between the sessions its work is guided by the Bureau as provided by section VI of the Guidelines on procedures and practices for ECE bodies. The Working Group on Ageing and its Bureau are serviced by the UNECE secretariat.
 4. Members of the Working Group are the representatives of national authorities dealing with ageing in the UNECE member States.
 5. The aims of the Working Group are:
 - (a) to contribute to the effective implementation of commitments taken by member States at international meetings on ageing, particularly the commitments of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), the León Ministerial Declaration (2007), the Vienna Ministerial Declaration (2012) and the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration (2017);
 - (b) to provide direction and guidance to the UNECE work in the field of ageing;
 - (c) to promote international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing taking into account the situation and different needs of individual countries;
 - (d) to promote awareness of ageing and its implications throughout the UNECE region;
 - (e) to create synergies within and outside UNECE.
 6. The Working Group builds, among others, on the experience and work of the national focal points on ageing.
 7. The Working Group cooperates and determines its activities in close contact with other international governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the field of ageing, to avoid duplication, and to focus on challenges of specific interest to UNECE member States. It promotes cooperation with international organizations and encourages partnership among the public and private sectors in addressing the implications of population ageing.
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