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**Meeting with the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing  
Report by the Chair**

## Report by the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing

1. The Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, Mr. Edmundo Martinho, is pleased to submit his report to the 121st meeting of Executive Committee (EXCOM) on 3 March 2022.

2. The report presents highlights of the work undertaken in support of mainstreaming population ageing in the national policy and regulatory frameworks and creating an environment that is conducive to the realization of the individual and societal potential of living longer. It covers achievements since the previous report presented in March 2021, and the major activities planned for 2022 and beyond. Further details can be found in the report of the fourteenth meeting of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, ECE/WG.1/2021/2, and the document ECE/WG.1/2021/4 on Implementation of the work programme of the Standing Working Group on Ageing in 2021.

### Introduction

3. In the ECE region today one in six persons is aged 65 years and older, in 2050 the proportion will be one in four with every eleventh person being of the age of 80 and above. The ECE region is clearly at the forefront of the global population ageing megatrend. Guiding and strengthening policymaking by member States to adapt to population ageing and other demographic changes are among the core activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

4. The work is governed by the Standing Working Group on Ageing (SWGA) – its current status and revised Terms of Reference were approved by ECOSOC in July 2020 (E/RES/2020/19). SWGA is composed of National Focal Points on Ageing nominated by the respective governments of ECE member States. The ECE Population Unit acts as the secretariat to SWGA and contributes to the preparation and implementation of the SWGA Programme of Work. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing older persons and/or working in ageing-related areas and the scientific community participate as observers to the Standing Working Group and are represented on the SWGA Bureau. The international organizations with programmes related to population ageing also take part in the Standing Working Group as observers.

5. SWGA supports the realization of the policy principles set out in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS), and the subsequent ECE Ministerial Declarations on Ageing. The SWGA Programme of Work for 2018-2022 responds to the goals of the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration “A Sustainable Society for All Ages: Realizing the potential of living longer”. The programme of work links the implementation and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS with activities addressing the regional / national follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other population-related international frameworks. It also contributes to the programme of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021-2030.

6. The vulnerability of older persons in emergency situations and the malfunctioning of the long-term care systems in the region were brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, in many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted business and social innovation to warrant continuity of long-term care and social services for older people and avert social isolation. Through its policy dialogue and experience exchange, SWGA highlighted the need for investing in strengthening / reforming long-term care systems to ensure ageing with dignity and decent work for those providing care as an essential part of adapting to population ageing.

7. The SWGA work is based on international cooperation, exchange of experience and policy discussion on ageing and intergenerational relations, taking into account ongoing and emerging challenges in an increasingly interconnected, dynamic and digitalized environment as well as in the face of climate change.

## **I. Achievements over the past twelve months**

### **A. Conducting the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation (2017-2021) and preparing the 2022 Ministerial Conference on Ageing**

#### **1. Support to national review processes**

8. In 2021-2022, SWGA is focused on the fourth five-year review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS implementation. Over the past twelve months, the majority of ECE member States carried out national reviews and appraised the progress made towards the goals of the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration that concluded the previous regional review. By early February 2022, 31 ECE member States had submitted their reports to the secretariat while ten others informed about forthcoming submission. Ongoing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted some planned national consultation events on ageing and, in some cases, affected the timeliness of report submission.

9. To support the preparation of the national review reports, the SWGA secretariat held three online workshops in April-June 2021 covering various aspects of the fourth review and appraisal cycle of MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region. A Guidance note on “Meaningful participation of older persons and civil society in policymaking” was issued, advising policymakers and civil society actors on inclusive stakeholder engagement and participation processes. In addition, an informal subregional consultation with North and Central Asian countries on the fourth MIPAA review was organised jointly with ESCAP in October 2021. All the supporting material for national reviews as well as the Guidelines for national reports and the submitted reports received are publicly available on a dedicated webpage ‘MIPAA+20’.

#### **2. Preparation for the 2022 Ministerial Conference on Ageing**

10. The ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing hosted by Italy will take place in Rome on 16-17 June 2022 and will be preceded by a joint Civil Society and Scientific Research Forum on 15 June 2022. SWGA acts as a Preparatory Committee for the Conference with the Bureau members forming two groups to lead (1) the work on Conference content and (2) the drafting of the Ministerial Declaration. In the course of 2021, the SWGA Bureau held three quarterly meetings to advance the preparation for the Conference and co-organized a briefing to member States on the regional review and Conference preparations.

11. The group of the Bureau working on the Conference content in collaboration with the Italian team elaborated the conceptual content of the Conference, its provisional schedule, agenda and possible composition of panellists which was discussed and approved at the SWGA meeting in November 2021. The following themes will be addressed by the Conference: (1) Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life, (2) Ensuring access to long-term care, and support to families and caregivers, (3) Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages.

12. An initial draft of the declaration for the Ministerial Conference was prepared by the Bureau together with the Italian team and discussed in detail at the Bureau meeting in June 2021. Subsequently, a reviewed version of the zero draft was sent to the SWGA members at the end of July 2021 for comments and suggestions. The Declaration drafting group reviewed the comments received and presented an updated draft for the debate at the fourteenth SWGA meeting. Following an extensive discussion, SWGA agreed on the acceptable amendments and proposed to submit the draft for formal consultations with ECE member States. The ECE secretariat launched the consultation on 14 December 2021 with a deadline of 15 February 2022 for member States’ comments and proposals. The draft declaration makes reference to the impact of COVID-19, and links MIPAA/RIS to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing.

### **B. Advancing international cooperation, exchange of experience and evidence-based policy discussion**

13. Along with the activities related to the MIPAA/RIS review process over the last year,

SWGA and its secretariat also actively used the opportunities for sharing insights and promising practices between governments, research, and civil society networks to leverage the potential of digitalisation for ageing populations, mitigate associated risks and foster the digital inclusion of older persons. The Standing Working Group pursued its commitment to mainstreaming ageing in policy and regulatory frameworks and supported the development of a toolkit and capacity building activities to operationalize the Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing, launched in March 2021.

**1. Policy seminar “Ageing in the digital era”**

14. The fourth Policy Seminar on Ageing took place on 24 November 2021 in a hybrid format and was dedicated to the topic “Ageing in the digital era”. 76 participants attended the event, including delegates from 24 ECE member States. The seminar focused on three policy challenges: the need to enhance digital skills and literacy, the need to ensure access to services that increasingly move online, and the protection of human rights. Speakers from Austria, Canada, Germany, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America shared innovative solutions and practices that have been championed by communities, businesses, civil society organizations and older persons themselves. Further details can be found in the report of the policy seminar.

**2. Policy briefs on ageing**

15. In 2021, one new policy brief on ageing was published: “Ageing in the digital era” (No. 26, July 2021). This latest brief - examining the ‘digital divide’ between generations and highlighting policy priorities for digital inclusion of older persons - served also as a background paper for the Policy Seminar.

16. Policy briefs on ageing are prepared on topics selected by the members of the SWGA. 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, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian and Spanish) by the member States.

**3. Guidelines and a toolkit for mainstreaming ageing**

17. SWGA included the development of guidelines for mainstreaming ageing in its programme of work in response to the MIPAA/RIS commitment to “mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages”. The ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing were issued in March 2021 and were presented by Portugal on behalf of SWGA at the eleventh session of the GA Open-ended Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of older people's human rights in New York. To facilitate the operationalization of the guidelines and promote their use at all governance levels, Germany and the Republic of Moldova translated the guidelines into their national languages.

18. The purpose of the Guidelines is to support governments in building a strategic framework for mainstreaming ageing to facilitate the systematic consideration and integration of both individual and population ageing aspects into broader national policies. They encourage countries to align their policies with relevant international frameworks and initiatives such as MIPAA/RIS, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), while taking into account and building on existing structures, processes and measures that work well and can support the mainstreaming process.

19. A toolkit complementing the Guidelines is under preparation. A first set of tools for Stage 1 of the Guidelines has been completed. The toolkit is designed to be short and visual, providing step-by-step suggestions and templates. In November 2021, the SWGA secretariat held an introductory workshop on getting started with mainstreaming ageing. Development of additional tools to help operationalize stages 2–5 of the Guidelines will follow with a support of volunteer experts among SWGA members.

#### 4. **Monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking**

20. The latest biennial update of the Active Ageing Index (AAI) for European Union (EU) countries was issued in early 2021 providing index values disaggregated by gender for six points in time: 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018 (issued as 2010 AAI – 2020 AAI). Most of 2020 AAI indicators were also computed for several other ECE member States that participate in the pan-European surveys. Several non-EU countries – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova - also took necessary steps to compute the national AAI, including conducting special surveys or adding the dedicated modules to the ongoing ones. The AAI indicators are also included into the core monitoring framework of their national action plans on ageing. The guidelines on application of AAI in non-EU countries and at subnational level support these new initiatives. The number of ECE countries taking part in the Generations and Gender Programme is also growing. In 2021, the Republic of Moldova launched its analytical report on evidence collected through the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS-II) conducted in 2020, while six ECE countries conducted GGS-II in 2021 and another five country teams plan to conduct the survey in 2022.

## II. **Major planned activities for 2022 and beyond**

21. SWGA and the secretariat will continue working towards their main objective to enhance the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in ECE member States, focusing on mainstreaming population ageing in national policy and regulatory frameworks. The SWGA activities and outputs for 2022 will centre around the fourth regional review of MIPAA/RIS implementation as well as the launch of a new work programme for 2023-2027 based on the goals to be agreed at the forthcoming ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in June 2022.

### A. **Completion of the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in the ECE region**

22. The fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation in the region will span throughout 2022. The regional review will culminate with the ECE Ministerial Conference under the title “A sustainable world for all ages: Joining forces for solidarity and equal opportunities throughout life”. The Conference will be held in Rome, Italy, on 16-17 June 2022 and preceded by the joint Civil Society and Scientific Research Forum on 15 June 2022.

23. The Ministerial Conference will host about 400 participants from governments, international organizations, academia and civil society. It is planned to be held in person, but organizers are ready to accommodate a hybrid mode if needed. The suggested format of national delegations is a minister/head of delegation and three delegates. The host country will support participation of around 150 civil society representatives and researchers who will attend the Ministerial Conference and the joint Forum of Civil Society and Scientific Research.

24. It is expected that ministers attending the Conference will adopt a Ministerial Declaration outlining the goals and necessary actions for the next five-year period of MIPAA/RIS implementation. The draft text of the Ministerial Declaration was submitted for the formal consultations with ECE member States on 14 December 2021. The deadline for comments and proposals was set for 15 February 2022. The SWGA Bureau will work on finalizing the draft declaration and lead the second round of formal consultation on the text if necessary. The final draft of the Ministerial Declaration has to be ready by mid-May 2022.

25. For the regional review of MIPAA implementation, the ECE secretariat will prepare the Synthesis Report of the main achievements over the last five years as well as remaining/emerging challenges presented in the national review reports. The Synthesis Report will be structured along the 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration goals but also include a section on the impact of COVID-19 and highlight the synergies between MIPAA/RIS and other global frameworks including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing. An extensive statistical annex containing major

demographic and Active Ageing Index indicators across ECE countries will complement the report. The Synthesis Report will be launched at the Ministerial Conference in June 2022.

26. To mark the 20th anniversary of MIPAA, SWGA has decided also to prepare a MIPAA/RIS+20 report as a background document for the 2022 Ministerial Conference. The report will provide a brief overview of key developments over the last 20 years, including an analysis of the most important trends affecting population ageing in the region, an overview of progress in implementing MIPAA/RIS since 2002 and an outlook for the way forward.

27. The summary of deliberations of the Ministerial Conference and its Ministerial Declaration as well as the findings of the two regional reports shall feed into the final global review event in 2023 during the 61st session of the Commission for Social Development.

## **B. Supporting international cooperation, exchange of experience and fostering evidence-based policymaking**

### **1. Policy seminars on ageing**

28. The policy seminars that focus on specific policy challenges and responses developed by member States are being organized back-to-back with annual meetings of the Standing Working Group since 2018. The topic for a policy seminar in November 2022 will be decided after the Ministerial Conference in June 2022. The Standing Working Group, at its fourteenth meeting in November 2021, decided to explore the possibility of extending its formal annual session from two to three days starting in 2023 to accommodate an interactive in-depth policy discussion on a chosen topic.

### **2. Policy briefs on ageing**

29. Policy briefs remain an important element of the SWGA Programme of Work as they provide evidence-based policy advice on specific aspects of MIPAA/RIS and showcase good practices from across the region. Two new policy briefs are planned for 2022. Policy brief No. 27 “Mainstreaming Ageing - Revisited” - will be issued in spring 2022 and will inform the Expert panel discussion on mainstreaming ageing at the Ministerial Conference. The brief No. 28 shall be issued in the fall of 2022 and will be on the topic “Joining forces for solidarity and equal opportunities throughout life”.

## **C. Capacity building - operationalizing the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing**

30. In 2022, SWGA aims to further promote the development of national strategic frameworks for mainstreaming ageing as outlined in the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing. The development of additional tools to help operationalize stages 2–5 of the Guidelines and the development of a training course on mainstreaming ageing for policymakers, technical experts and other stakeholders are planned. The SWGA is also ready to support online workshops on various aspects of mainstreaming ageing at the regional, national and local levels.

31. In response to the recent request from the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the ECE secretariat, with the support of SWGA, will carry out an evaluation of the 10-year implementation of the Roadmap on Mainstreaming Ageing to help inform a new programme in the field of healthy and active ageing that the Government plans to adopt in 2022.

## **III. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the SWGA**

32. There are no proposed changes to the subsidiary structure of the Standing Working Group to report.

33. During its fourteenth meeting on (22–23 November 2021, Geneva), SWGA adopted the draft Programme of work of the Population component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2022, as contained in document ECE/WG.1/2021/5. The Standing Working Group also reviewed the key components of the programme of work for

2023 (ECE/WG.1/2021/INF) and suggested to extend its annual session from two to three days as of 2023 to accommodate an interactive in-depth policy discussion on a chosen topic.

34. EXCOM is invited to approve the above programme of work for 2022.

#### **IV. Follow-up to the 2019 session of the Economic Commission for Europe**

34. The 2019 session of the Economic Commission for Europe, under the item F (68) Revised terms of reference and change of name of the Working Group on Ageing, took a decision to change the name of the Working Group on Ageing to “Standing Working Group on Ageing” and adopted the revised terms of reference of the Group. Subsequently, in July 2020, ECOSOC issued a resolution 2020/19 approving this decision with immediate effect.

#### **V. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities**

35. The work of SWGA on population ageing contributes to numerous intersectoral activities of ECE and beyond. The SWGA provided direct inputs to the ECE Nexus on Sustainable and Smart Cities for All Ages. The Population Unit being a part of Statistical Division was also contributing to the Nexus on Measuring and Monitoring Progress Towards SDGs. The Population Unit also collaborates with the ECE focal point on disaster risk reduction in the work related to vulnerable population groups.

36. The Population Unit acts as the ECE focal point for matters related to the United Nations Commission for Population and Development and the Commission for Social Development and liaises respectively with the DESA Population Division and the Division for Inclusive Social Development. The Unit also actively contributes to the activities of the global Inter-Agency Group on Ageing.

#### **VI. Technical cooperation activities**

37. Enhancing the capacity of all member States, and particularly those in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in mainstreaming ageing and aligning their policies with relevant international frameworks and initiatives such as MIPAA/RIS and the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is at the core of the capacity-building activities coordinated by the Population Unit. They include:

- Tailored road maps for mainstreaming ageing at the request of member States
- Capacity development workshops
- Advisory services to address country-specific needs
- Development of methodological guidance, tools and training materials

38. The member State contributions to the ECE “Ageing – phase 3” project fund provide the main source of financing capacity-building activities under the SWGA work programme in 2020–2022. By the end-January 2021, contributions received to the fund from Austria, Estonia, Germany, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland amounted to USD 435,000; in the course of 2021 and January 2022, additional contributions to the fund were received from Estonia (USD 3,380), Germany (USD 112,600) and Switzerland (USD 21,780). In 2021, the fund provided financing for a temporary full-time P3 staff to support the implementation of the SWGA work programme, including finalizing the publication of the Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing in March 2021 and developing a pilot toolkit for the stage 1 of the Guidelines, conducting a related capacity development workshop as well as designing a series of webinars in support of preparation of national reports on MIPAA/RIS implementation.

39. In 2021, the Population Unit completed a pilot rapid country assessment of COVID-19 impact on older persons to identify long-term care systems challenges in two major cities of Kazakhstan: Almaty and Nur-Sultan. The report on the findings shall inform the Road Map on Mainstreaming Ageing in Kazakhstan when the work on it resumes (currently on hold).

40. In 2022, the ECE secretariat with a support of SWGA will carry out an evaluation of the 10-year implementation of the Roadmap on Mainstreaming Ageing in the Republic of Moldova to help inform a new programme in the field of healthy and active ageing that the Government plans to adopt in 2022.

## **VII. Cooperation with other organizations**

41. The Standing Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat maintain good cooperation with the international organizations active in the area of population ageing in the ECE region. Close relationships have been maintained with the European Commission, the World Health Organization (WHO) (HQ and the regional office for Europe), and the Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECARO) of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Istanbul. The ECE Population Unit and the EECARO exchange information on their work programmes and discuss possible joint activities.

42. The Population Unit is an active partner in the “Joint programme on Ageing: Building forward better in light of COVID-19” launched in July 2020 by UNFPA, WHO, ECE, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and HelpAge International. This regional initiative aims to strengthen coordinated support for and actions in member States through the United Nations country teams. Collaborative actions focus on: (1) enhancing preparedness and emergency response during the pandemic and beyond to mitigate the impact; (2) person-centred integrated social care during and beyond the pandemic to ensure ageing in dignity; and (3) contributing to changing the narrative about older people to promote their human rights and to enable participatory, conducive environments.

43. At the global level, the Population Unit is a member of the United Nations wide inter-agency group on ageing and actively participates in and co-chairs the regular (online) meetings with its counterparts in other regional commissions.

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