



Welcome Session

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A warm welcome to all of you, Excellencies, Government Representatives, and interested parties from UN organizations, welcome to friends and colleagues from civil society and scientific research, to the many representatives of older persons from almost all countries of the UNECE region, and to the many other interested parties in a policy that should improve the living conditions of older persons in this region and ensure their full enjoyment of all human rights, regardless of age.

I particularly welcome the participants from the member States that are currently suffering from a cruel war. Our thoughts have accompanied you in the last weeks and will also be with you when these days in Rome come to an end.

As the representative of non-governmental organisations in the Bureau of the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing, I express this welcome to all of you on behalf of the Organising Committee for this Joint Forum of Civil Society and Science.

We are extremely grateful to the Italian Government for making this Forum possible as well as the participation of so many people from all over the UNECE region who otherwise would not have been able to come to Rome.

The Joint Forum is themed:

“A fulfilling life throughout the life-course - A joint effort of civil society and research in policy making”.

This means that, for the first time for many years, civil society and scientific researchers are coming together to break down thinking and acting in separate silos. Based on the **specific experiences from civil society** and **evidence from research**, we will discuss issues that have become increasingly important in recent years and that will also continue to be the focus of the Ministerial Conference during the next two days.

A special concern for us was also to find out which topics are gaining particularly in importance regarding **future challenges from the point of view of our respective communities**. We asked this question in the run-up to the Forum and received a whole range of significant proposals. We have pooled the guidance we received and will present it at the last session this afternoon.

The challenges raised have also been incorporated into the **Joint Declaration of civil society and scientific research**, which we will equally present and discuss this afternoon.

The **aim** of this joint endeavour is to create a broader, more meaningful basis for productive cooperation between civil society, science and politics in order to jointly master the opportunities and challenges of ageing societies **in the interests of people of all ages**.

Whether and how this can succeed, we want to test in the following sessions.

For each topic, we have invited a representative of civil society and a scientist, and we asked a politician who is confronted with respective ageing related issues in daily practice to comment on his or her experience.

And of course, you are all cordially invited to contribute your experiences and discuss them with us.

Linguistic communication plays an important role in a participatory approach. We would therefore also like to thank the Italian government for making translation into different languages possible so that as many people as possible can participate in the discussions with their questions, experiences, and suggestions.

And now I wish you – no, all of us – new insights and fruitful discussions and perhaps a greater mutual understanding.

I hope – and with this I conclude – that this Joint Forum will take us a step forward on the path to partnership-based policymaking – a policymaking towards a fulfilling life for all people, a life, based on the universal and indivisible human rights that apply without age limits.

Thank you.