



## 2022 ROME MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

“A Sustainable World for All Ages:

Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities Throughout Life”

1. We, the representatives of the member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), gathered at the fifth Ministerial Conference on Ageing from 16 to 17 June 2022 in Rome, Italy, reaffirm our commitment made in the Berlin Ministerial Declaration (2002), and subsequently confirmed by the León (2007), Vienna (2012), and Lisbon (2017) Ministerial Declarations to fulfil the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (MIPAA), and to ensure older persons' full enjoyment of all human rights, indivisible and inherent to all human beings, regardless of age.
2. We celebrate significant longevity gains in the UNECE region over the last decades thanks to medical progress, better living and working conditions, increased welfare, and advances in public health. This enables older persons to stay healthy and active longer and to be more involved in their communities, giving our societies increased opportunities to benefit from their manifold contributions to the economy, society and families as active citizens and volunteers, consumers, caregivers, and as sources of experience and knowledge.
3. We recognise that older persons are becoming the fastest-growing segment of the population in the UNECE region, and we need to be more aware of and respond to the heterogeneity of their capacities and the inequalities accumulated over the life course, while respecting that older persons are not a homogeneous group, but diverse in their situations, identities, needs, preferences, and opportunities.
4. We acknowledge the significant progress made in implementing RIS/MIPAA over the past five years in particular towards recognizing the potential of older persons, encouraging longer working lives and the ability to work, and ensuring ageing with

dignity. The frameworks on active and healthy ageing, age-friendly environments, and mainstreaming ageing are gaining recognition. We also welcome the growing engagement in ageing policy matters from civil society and public and private stakeholders.

5. We are aware that the implementation of RIS/MIPAA has occurred during times of major demographic, political, social, and economic changes. The last years have been marked by increased pressure on private and public finances as well as on health and social services, together with a growing awareness of the impact of climate change, digital transformation and emergency crises, including pandemics, armed conflicts and disasters. There are still challenges to be addressed and necessary policy improvements to be made to better leverage the potential of older persons, including:
  - a. further developing sustainable, accessible, and adequate social protection systems covering social security, universal health care and inclusive, quality social services, in particular long-term care services, that help to mitigate cumulative inequalities and prevent old-age poverty and exclusion;
  - b. focusing on health promotion, including raising awareness of and access to sports, physical activity, healthy nutrition, and other preventive health measures over the life course;
  - c. enhancing the involvement of older persons and their representatives in law- and policymaking at all levels to better reflect their rights and diverse needs and interests;
  - d. making all environments, including physical, social, technological, and digital environments, more age-friendly and accessible for all, and increasing the availability of adapted housing and assistive devices;
  - e. recognizing the intersectionality between disability and ageing across different areas of everyday life, and addressing obstacles older persons with disabilities face, including by promoting universal design and adaptations as a prerequisite for age-friendly environments;
  - f. creating flexible conditions for longer and healthy working lives, ensuring inclusive labour markets and decent work for all ages, preventing and responding to gender inequalities, old-age poverty, and social exclusion;
  - g. eliminating persistent gender inequalities by addressing the different impacts of demographic change on women and men through dedicated measures, including by mainstreaming gender in all policies and by collecting, using, and analysing sex- and age-disaggregated data;
  - h. combating ageism and the perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination based on age in all spheres of society;
  - i. adopting policies that strengthen inter- and intragenerational cooperation and solidarity, considering the needs of both current and future generations;
  - j. better recognising and supporting the important role of both formal and informal carers, particularly older women, and promoting a distribution of care work that is not gender-based;

- k. fully recognising the active participation of older persons and the contributions they make to the functioning of our societies including in emergency and conflict situations.
6. We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures taken to fight it, have underscored a range of societal challenges and opportunities. The pandemic has:
  - a. disproportionately affected persons in vulnerable situations, including those belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic groups and those living in institutions, and showed the importance of intra- and intergenerational justice, inclusion, and gender equality;
  - b. highlighted the vulnerability of many older persons who have been at higher risk of severe illness and mortality, and in some cases have faced difficulties accessing essential services, including testing, vaccination and treatment, and have been exposed to ageism and discriminatory care rationing. Public health measures such as physical distancing, restrictions in nursing homes, and temporary closures of day-care centres for older adults have caused and deepened social isolation of many older persons with serious consequences for their mental and physical health;
  - c. demonstrated the need to strengthen the capacity, emergency preparedness, and coordination of the health and long-term care sectors, in particular the protection of persons in vulnerable situations, and to develop flexible and innovative models of care across different settings to prevent vulnerability;
  - d. made clear that difficult public health decisions affecting older persons need to be guided by a commitment to dignity and the right to quality health and social services;
  - e. highlighted the need to better guarantee the full enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, including being able to speak for themselves and to exercise their right to individual autonomy, participation in decision-making, freedom of movement, and social participation;
  - f. underscored the importance of solid and inclusive welfare systems and solidarity in mitigating the economic and social consequences of crises;
  - g. demonstrated the strong engagement by civil society, volunteers of all ages, local communities, and families to improve the situation for older persons and others in need;
  - h. demonstrated older persons' contribution to our societies, exemplified by retired health and care personnel who returned to duty on a voluntary basis and supported the functioning of health and social care systems;
  - i. emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation, including through sharing of good practices, experiences, knowledge, and data.
7. The near future will be characterised by the reshaping of our societies based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we recommit ourselves to RIS/MIPAA, which has for the last 20 years provided a framework for addressing the cross-sectoral and multidimensional issues of ageing, we stress the need to ensure the full enjoyment