

Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages

Thursday, 17 June, 15:00 – 16:30 Second Ministerial Roundtable

Dear Vice-Chair,

Dear Minister **Kisic Tepavcevic** (of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs of Serbia),

Minister **Opperman** (for Pensions and Financial Inclusion of the UK),

Deputy Minister **Aliyev** (of Labour and Social Protection of Population of Azerbaijan),

Ms. **Diavolova** (Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Office),

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure and a great honour to be here today to discuss this important topic – a topic that impacts all of our countries, that is developing and mainstreaming policies and government services that are sensitive to the needs of older people.

Moldova is in the group of countries with a relatively low life expectancy. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the life expectancy for **men** was **67** years and for **women** – **75** years. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the life expectancy decreased by **almost 1 year** for both women and men. That is **66** years for **men** and **74** years for **women**.

Even though our population has a lower life expectancy, in Moldova like in other countries, the share of older population is continuing to grow. Currently, older population, **aged 60 and over** constitutes **nearly a quarter** of our country's population. In **20 years – by 2040**, population projections show that older population, aged 60 and over will represent a **third** of our country's population.

Over the last few years the Government of Moldova took steps on incorporating ageing lens to our intersectoral policies and government services, as it's becoming **more and more** important that our national policies on health, employment, education, infrastructure, etc. reflect the needs of older people and provide a better quality of life and greater security to our senior citizens.

Our commitment to healthy and active ageing have been included in a number of policy documents, such as:

- **The Program for Mainstreaming Ageing and its Action Plan on Implementation of the Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing in Policies for 2014 – 2016**, that was adopted by the Government of Moldova in June 2014;
- This was followed by the adoption of the **Road Map on Ageing and an Action Plan on Mainstreaming Ageing into Sectorial Policies for 2018–2021**.
- The National Development Strategy “Moldova-2030” that will be adopted soon this year;

- The National Employment Strategy for 2017-2021 and 2022-2026;
- The Government Action Plan for 2021-2022;
- The National Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of Moldova for 2022-2028;
- The Action Plan on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Youth for 2020, and other documents.

As a result, we've accomplished a number of objectives that decreased the economic insecurity of our senior citizens and increased their well-being that I would like to name a few:

Within the last year, in order to reduce poverty among our senior citizens, we've increased twice the retirement pensions and changed the indexation mechanism. Through this mechanism, we focused on increasing the pensions for those who have low pensions. This allowed us to reduce the gap between the highest and lowest pensions in the Moldovan pension system.

- Because of high energy prices in Moldova, we've increased the **financial assistance for the cold period of the year** to more families. In 2022, nearly **172,000** families with pensioners, age 62 and over benefited from the financial assistance for the cold period of the year. That's 26% more families benefited from this financial support than in 2019, when nearly **137,000** families with pensioners benefited from financial assistance.
- Another tool that supports lower-income families and lift them from poverty is the **Social Aid program**. This program provides a guaranteed minimum monthly income to lower-income families. In 2021, **18,000** families with pensioners, age 62 and over received social aid.
- We've made important regulatory changes to **home care services**. We've improved the case management mechanism that takes into account the age of the beneficiaries. We've improved the rules and made it easier for older persons to access at no cost home services. The changes we've made allowed also for **more** older persons to benefit from home care services free of charge.
- We are on a good track on the creation of **community integrated care for medical and social services**. Now we have **14 community integrated care centers** that provide medical and social care for older people.

All this was possible through a close collaboration with the civil society, non-profit organizations, international organizations and our senior citizens. I would like to mention

in particular **Active Aging Platform**, which is an independent, informal, and apolitical entity that includes 16 member entities. We coordinate the policy-making process and the implementation of actions in the field of ageing through this platform. I also would like to mention **HelpAge International Moldova, the Center for Partnership for Development** and others that are playing an important role in improving our policies, programs, and services for our senior citizens.

Another focus that our ministry has had over the years is protecting the social security rights, especially the pension rights of our citizens who work or have worked abroad. In this respect, we've signed social security agreements with **16 states**, including with Italy in 2021.

Besides Italy, I would like to mention that we've signed social security agreements with **Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Turkey**. We are currently negotiating social security agreements with **France, Latvia, and Spain**.

We know there is more that needs to be done. That's why we started the development of a **Program on Active and Healthy Ageing for 2023 – 2027** that will be released later this year. The program will contain specific actions on further developing our social security, health, and education systems, promoting age-friendly workplaces so that our labour market becomes more inclusive to all ages, and not to mention the least, combating stereotypes and discrimination based on age in all areas of social life.

Priorities

After the evaluation of the results of the **Action Plan on the Implementation of the Principle of Active Ageing for 2018-2021** and the **Madrid International Action Plan for Aging and the Regional Strategy for its Implementation**, we had an assessment that stressed the need to intensify the joint efforts of all actors – here I mean central and local authorities, civil society, senior citizens and so on in order to fulfil Moldova's commitments to MIPAA.

In May of this year, Moldova benefited from a visit from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, that assessed the progress and challenges in implementing the **Road Map on Ageing**. The conclusions and recommendations of the assessment will help us to develop a new **Programme in the field of active and healthy aging for 2023 – 2027** that I mentioned earlier.

I would like to take this opportunity and thank UNECE for all the support provided to the Republic of Moldova on mainstreaming aging over the years.

The elaboration of the **The Program on Active and Healthy Ageing for 2023 – 2027** is determined by the need to ensure the implementation of the commitments assumed by Moldova by adhering to the MIPAA, in particular to ensure an inclusive society for all ages by promoting quality of life and active ageing and presenting at the forefront the contributions of older persons to social and economic development of Moldova.

Through this program, we aim to strengthen the institutional capacity by establishing a mechanism for cross-sectoral coordination at the central and local level, including having additional budget support on enabling implementation of actions aimed at active ageing.

Through this program, we aim to further develop the social security and the health and education systems to enable older persons to fulfill their potential.

We need to ensure an inclusive labour market for all ages by developing skills through formal and non-formal educational programs that contribute to strengthening a person's autonomy independent of age and gender.

The program will contain specific actions on:

- how we can continue to integrate the approach to active and healthy aging in all policy areas;
- how we can create a social, physical, and digitally-friendly and more accessible environment for older persons;
- how we can combat stereotypes and discrimination based on age in all areas of social life;
- how we can encourage social participation of older persons;
- how we can reduce loneliness and social isolation;
- how we can implement innovative solutions in the field of infrastructure.

The Program on Active and Healthy Ageing for 2023 – 2027 will be in alignment with the Demographic Resilience Programme launched in December last year at the Ministerial Conference in Sofia, which I also attended. Our priority is to implement policies that build demographic resilience and which contribute to active and healthy ageing and empower older women and men to fulfill their rights and wishes.

Thank you for your attention!