

***Statement of Mr. Alfredo Ferrante,  
Chair of the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing, at the  
UN CSocD61 - High-level Panel discussion on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of  
the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing on 8 February 2023***

*Check against Delivery*

Thank you, Chair.

Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to take part in this High-level Panel session representing the UNECE region. The Commission this year takes place in a particularly complex framework for all our countries, in a moment that has been significantly shaped by the events that occurred in the last 5 years.

2022 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, an important milestone for the protection and advancement of older persons' rights. Indeed, over the last 5 years, significant progress has been made by the majority of UNECE Member States in recognizing the potential of older persons, encouraging longer working lives and the ability to work, and ensuring ageing with dignity.

The MIPAA+20 report for the ECE region revealed that ECE countries are increasingly recognizing the importance of mainstreaming ageing in public policies, especially in key long-term national development strategies, including by strengthening the coordination among all relevant stakeholders and the involvement of older persons and their representatives in the decision-making processes affecting them.

Over the last 5 years, many are the ECE States that focused on extending the working life of older persons in their countries by identifying older jobseekers as a key target group for employment policies and offering them tailored support, including rehabilitation initiatives and labour force reintegration programmes, as well as by investing in developing their skills, especially digital skills.

Poverty in older age, especially among women, is a persisting issue in the majority of ECE countries and received significant attention as well. Efforts were made by countries to compensate for and, importantly, also to prevent the emergence of a gender pension gap, through measures that compensate for pension contributions during periods of care work and through an enhanced drive to reduce the gender pay gap.

Over the last 5 years, countries have also taken concrete actions to promote the human rights, autonomy and self-determination of older persons and to fight their isolation, in line with the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, by progressing de-institutionalization in long-term care, developing support infrastructures, encouraging research in the sector of assisted-living technologies, and promoting alternative living arrangements in various forms, such as intergenerational and supported housing.

Awareness-raising and training initiatives have been implemented by a number of countries with the view to better responding to cases of violence and abuse against older persons, including through improved legislation and measures to protect victims.

Dear Colleagues,

The efforts that I just mentioned, which represent only a small share of the incredible work done by the ECE Member States covered by the 4<sup>th</sup> review and appraisal of the MIPAA, should be not taken for granted as they were made in the context of several crises, changes, and unprecedented challenges: the increased pressure on private and public finances, as well as on health and social services, the growing awareness of the effects of climate change, the digital transformation and emergency crises, including the Covid-19 pandemics and the armed conflict in Ukraine, all had a disproportionate impact on older persons.

The 4<sup>th</sup> review and appraisal of MIPAA was concluded in the UNECE region with the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing held in Rome, Italy, in June 2022, which also marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of MIPAA. As a testimony of the importance of building synergies and cooperation between Governments and the third sector to promote older people's rights, the Conference was preceded by a Joint Forum of Civil Society and Scientific Research. The events resulted in the adoption of two Declarations, respectively the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration and the Declaration of the Joint Forum.

In particular, the Rome Ministerial Declaration commits all UNECE Member States to the implementation of a set of priority actions on MIPAA to be carried out over the next 5 years, grouped under 3 main comprehensive policy goals, namely:

1. Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life;
2. Ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families;
3. Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages.

Among the priorities identified under the first policy goal, Member States committed – inter alia – to a deep cultural change towards a healthy lifestyle to be promoted over the entire life course, by investing in strategies aimed at facilitating and encouraging physical activity, healthy nutrition, preventive health interventions, and strengthening mental health and well-being, especially among older persons.

Commitments have also been taken on recognizing and supporting the continued role of informal and family care, by taking measures to help carers balance paid work, care, and private life, and

strengthening intergenerational solidarity as well as a more equal distribution of care work between women and men.

Last but not least, for the first time in a UNECE Ministerial Declaration on ageing, mainstreaming ageing was introduced as a key priority. In this respect, States committed to developing or strengthening a strategic framework for mainstreaming ageing across all policies, a participatory stakeholder engagement approach to ensure that older persons are listened to and actively involved in meaningful cross-sectoral dialogue, and collaboration on ageing between all relevant actors in the public and private sector, academia, social partners, and civil society, as recommended by the UNECE Guidelines on Mainstreaming Ageing that the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing issued in 2021.

To advance the implementation of MIPAA, strengthened institutional mechanisms, that enhance coordination and collaboration on ageing are needed, at national but also international level. In the UNECE region, I am happy to share that we were able to strengthen the inter-government mechanism for regional cooperation on ageing by upgrading the Working Group on Ageing to a Standing Working Group in 2020 with a longer-term mandate for regional cooperation on the implementation of MIPAA.

Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ageing is the challenge we all share for the future. Addressing it through a holistic approach will lead to better policies that will ultimately allow us to not only protect older people's rights, but also value their enormous experience and potential contribution to our societies' wellbeing. This is what we – all the stakeholders together – need to do to ensure that no one is left behind.

Thank you.