

**HelpAge International statement to the 11<sup>th</sup> Open-ended Working Group on Ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons, 29th March – 1st April 2021**

**Item 7. Other Matters: Discussion on the way forward, Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> April**

HelpAge International would like to thank you, the Bureau and the Secretariat for your efforts in convening this session despite the technical challenges. We very much hope we will be able to meet in person at the 12<sup>th</sup> session.

Just under a year ago, when calls to ‘cull’ older persons were in the media and egregious violations of rights in care homes and discriminatory age-based restrictions of rights were fresh in our minds, 146 of you, Member States, committed to promoting and respecting the rights of older persons.

This week only eight Member States took part in the interactive discussion on COVID-19.

Despite the UN Secretary General’s call to action to accelerate progress towards an international legal instrument, despite the priority given to a new convention by the public in the UN75 consultation, only two Member States took part in the interactive discussion on normative elements.

This lack of engagement fails older persons everywhere today and in future generations.

As the 394 civil society organisations of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People said in our opening statement, to fail to act now is inexcusable.

But we have heard that there are Member States who are ready to act.

The working paper by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>1</sup> provides you with unequivocal evidence of the gaps in the existing system. Ten years’ of this Working Group provides you with the substance and normative content to start drafting the main elements of an international legal instrument as your mandate requires you to do.

The time has come to fulfill that mandate and set up a multi-stakeholder group of human rights experts from Member States, civil society and national human rights institutions, as well as the Independent Expert on the rights of older persons and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Wherever this multi-stakeholder group sits, in New York or Geneva, it should focus on drafting the main elements of a proposed international legal instrument and report to the 12<sup>th</sup> session of this Working Group.

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<sup>1</sup> Working paper prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – “Update to the 2012 Analytical Outcome Study on the normative standards in international human rights law in relation to older persons”

As an older man from Jordan said, “It’s as if we were dead. We have no rights, we’re not recognised, our opinions are not respected, and we’re not being heard.”<sup>2</sup>

It’s time for that to change.

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<sup>2</sup> HelpAge International, *Unequal treatment: What older people say about their rights during the COVID-19 pandemic*, 2021