

OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGEING, 11<sup>TH</sup> SESSION

Focus area – Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market

Bette Levy, Soroptimist International - 31 March, 2021

Soroptimist International, recognizes that the working document (A/AC.278/2020/CRP.3) provides guidance for the realization of the human right of older persons to work, and there is legislation in many countries to protect discrimination on the grounds of age.

However, for older persons, age-based discrimination in the formal & informal labour market is rampant, such as age bias in job announcements, unequal employment terms and conditions, lack of opportunities for promotion and professional development, access to further training and education, and pressure to retire. The right to work and access to the labour market cannot be discussed without consideration of social protection measures.

World-wide, women have suffered a life-time of discrimination, remain illiterate with no opportunity to attend school, which limits employment opportunities. Without a job, they cannot accumulate savings, receive a pension or afford healthcare. A life-time with no access to economic resources, including credit, work opportunities, land ownership and inheritance.

Many spend most of their lives taking care of others, work that goes unrecognized, they end up leaving the labour market or stuck in precarious, low wage work because of unpaid care responsibilities.

What social protection is available to them?

ILO estimates that world-wide, 57 million older workers are part of the informal economy, primarily because of lack of opportunities in the formal economy or other means of livelihood. When there is an absence of sufficient opportunities, inadequate social protection and social dialogue are most pronounced. ILO has identified deficits of rights, of social protection and of representation.

With the changing demographics, participation of older workers will significantly increase. We must protect the rights of older workers, we must combat ageism.

A convention to protect the rights of older persons will facilitate international recognition and codification of the rights of older persons. It will act as an anti-discriminatory tool to challenge prevailing negative stereotypes about old age. If we are serious about leaving no one behind, and about ensuring a life of dignity for everyone, agreement **must be reached** to move forward with a convention to protect the rights of older persons.

My question is for Ms Ayalon and Ms Mahler, I appreciate Ms Mahler's comments about specific issues related to gender, can you address why even when women work there's a gender pay gap, a 'pension gap', lower statutory retirement ages, making it harder for older women to retire at a time of their choosing ... how do we overcome these challenges?

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today