

**Written Statement Submitted by the International Federation on Ageing (IFA): Accessibility,  
infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access)**

**14<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**

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The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is an international non-governmental organization whose membership base comprises government, civil society, industry, academia, and individuals who are committed to driving the agenda on the world's ageing populations globally. The IFA appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement at the 14th Session of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing towards the focus area of accessibility, infrastructure and habitat (transport, housing and access).

Having access to one's community is what enables older persons to do what they have reason to value. The right to accessibility, infrastructure use and habitat is difficult to realize if older persons do not have the ability to interact with their environments. Environments need to be physically, socially, and economically accessible for older persons. This means that older persons inform the creation and maintenance of their environments, which need to be pedestrian friendly and accessible by both private and public transportation. Without the ability to exercise the right to accessibility, infrastructure use and habitat, older persons' other rights — including the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to take part in cultural life — are difficult to exercise. (1)

As with other rights that have been discussed over the lifetime of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, ageism is a continuous barrier faced by older people to realize their right to accessibility, infrastructure use and habitat. Sustainable Development Goal 11 — Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable — outlines some key targets and indicators that can guide practice to improve older persons' ability to exercise the right to accessibility, infrastructure and habitat. These indicators include 'Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities', and 'Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities'. (2)

The Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC), which the IFA is an Affiliate Member of, is one global initiative that is supporting cities and communities in becoming more age-friendly by being informed by the needs and voices of older people. (3) This contributes to the elimination of ageism as older people are required to be included within GNAFCC members' age-friendly plans, thus informing the design of infrastructure within their communities. We see that through older persons' contributions to GNAFCC members' activities that environments are improved and facilitate accessibility for all infrastructure users and the habitats in which they exist. A convention that confirms older persons' human rights would encourage this type of mutually beneficial engagement between local governments and older people; older people ought to be central to the decision-making processes related to the realization of their human rights.

We all hope to grow old one day. When that day comes we want to be in an environment where we can engage with our community, access the services we need to stay well, and have a safe place to call home. It is critical that older persons' are recognized as vulnerable to exclusion from community life due to inaccessible infrastructure and habitats and that there are legally binding mechanisms for them to object to exclusion. The International Federation on Ageing urges UN Member States to support the creation of a convention on the human rights of older persons so that older people around the world can exist in accessible environments that facilitate their ability to exercise their other human rights.

## References

1. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | OHCHR [Internet]. [cited 2024 Apr 3]. Available from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>
2. United Nations. Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs [Internet]. [cited 2024 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>
3. World Health Organization. About the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities - Age-Friendly World [Internet]. [cited 2024 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>