



AGE Platform Europe a.i.s.b.l. ■ 111 rue Froissart ■ B - 1040 Brussels
Tel.: +32.2.280.14.70 ■ Fax: +32.2.280.15.22
www.age-platform.eu

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Opening statement by AGE Platform Europe

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I am speaking on behalf of AGE Platform Europe, the EU-wide network representing directly over 30 million older people in the continent. Our members wish to reiterate their great interest in the on-going discussions.

As a self-advocacy organisation we firmly believe that older persons should have a strong voice in all processes that affect them. We therefore regret the lack of representation of older persons in the panels of the fourth session and the fact that so far the EU's position in this debate has not been adequately informed by the views of EU senior citizens. We hope that in the future the UN, national delegations and the EU will make efforts to strengthen the direct involvement of older persons in the OEWG, in particular by, firstly, organising at the national and regional level large consultations inviting older persons' representatives and other civil society actors; secondly, ensuring that the position presented at the OEWG and other UN bodies is genuinely informed by the views of older persons in their respective countries/regions and thirdly, including older persons in national delegations to the OEWG.

The Madrid International Plan of Action (MIPAA) and other existing soft law instruments impose on Member States (MS) policy imperatives based on identified needs, rather than a categorical imperative based on rights. As needs are unconstrained by law and can be set-off against other countervailing needs, MS today remain free to decide how rights apply to older persons, or more worryingly, whether these apply at all. This is the reality in the EU, where the prevailing ageism and the persisting austerity overrule fundamental rights. It is our conclusion that human rights violations cannot be adequately addressed as long as the rights of older persons remain optional.

This is why AGE would like to see MS take advantage of the part of the programme, which focuses on the MIPAA and the existing regional protection, as a basis for concrete forward-looking proposals, which would respond to the General Assembly resolution of February 2013 asking the OEWG to discuss the main elements that should be included in an international instrument creating legal obligations to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons.

We look forward to fruitful discussions on the way forward to ensuring equal and full enjoyment of the rights of older persons.

Thank you