



Open-ended working group on Ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

General Assembly

Item 4: General Discussion

New York, 12 August 2013

Statement of Switzerland

Mr. Chairman

Switzerland attaches great importance to the situation and the well-being of older persons. Discussions and studies in recent years have shown that there may be a gap in awareness, information, implementation and monitoring of respect for and promotion of the rights of older persons.

Switzerland has, on several occasions, emphasized that in our view further work is needed in order to clarify how the implementation of the rights of older persons can be advanced in cooperation with civil society and the private sector. We would also like to identify strategies to strengthen solidarity between the generations.

This is why Switzerland has read with interest the compilation, setting out the existing instruments, documents and programs in this area. The compilation confirms our position. Human rights of older persons are protected by all international human rights instruments of the UN with the exception of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Even though there is no specific instrument dealing with the rights of older persons, there is an impressive array of legally binding instruments that constitute a source of the rights of older persons. This applies primarily to the two Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which deals with the specific situations of older people who have to cope with physical restrictions. The practice of the Treaty Bodies has already made a substantial contribution to the specific implementation of these rights.

The compilation also points out that there is a wide range of non-binding instruments. The Madrid Plan of Action has a particularly important role to play here. There is also a diverse range of measures that have been taken at the regional level. The African Union, the Arab States, Latin America and Europe all possess various non-binding instruments that deal with the situation of older people.

Mr. Chairman,

Switzerland remains convinced that there are no normative gaps in the protection of human rights for older persons. However, we acknowledge that there may be an implementation, a monitoring and an information gap in respect to and for the promotion of their human rights. We believe that it is an important task for the international community to focus on the specific needs of older persons in order to better protect their civil, economic, political and social rights, the most glaring violation of their rights being discrimination based on age.

For this reason, Switzerland has already put forward various proposals, for example that an independent expert from the Human Rights Council in Geneva could be mandated to analyse the state of implementation of the recommendations of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, then, based on the studies already made by other mechanisms, draw up a report on how the exercise of human rights by older persons could be improved. We have also proposed that the Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies pay greater attention to the rights of older persons and could be invited to appoint focal points on those rights. Particular attention should be paid to the establishment of realistic, sustainable and verifiable priorities and to the definition of appropriate indicators.

Another measure worth considering, is to review and update the UN Principles for Older Persons on the occasion of the 20th anniversary. An instrument of this kind could help States to implement the rights of older persons more effectively.

Finally, Switzerland would like to reiterate that it is not appropriate, at this point, to compile elements for a legally binding instrument, rather, that what we need is a stronger focus on in-depth analysis and on how the rights of older persons can effectively be improved on the ground. The introduction of an additional legally binding instrument could be a lengthy and costly exercise without any guarantee that it would have a positive impact on the situation of older people.

We are looking forward to hearing other States' and experts' views on these options during this session of the inter-governmental working group.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.