

OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON AGING

U.S. Statement, delivered by Laurie Phipps

Monday, August 12, 2013

Thank you to Mr. Chair. I am pleased to address this session of the Open-Ended Working Group on behalf of the U.S. delegation.

Over the past three Open-Ended Working Group sessions, participants have shared best practices and discussed possible actions that the UN, member states, and non-governmental organizations can take to protect the rights of older persons. Yet more needs to be done. We would like to propose some concrete action for the future work of the Working Group, consistent with its role in mainstreaming ageing issues throughout the UN's policies and programs.

At the spring 2013 Commission on Social Development session, the ten-year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was completed and a report was presented to the Commission. The Madrid Plan encapsulates a balanced and pragmatic approach to the various difficulties facing older persons, and provides a comprehensive agenda for dealing with ageing issues. It addresses how to include older persons in the benefits of development; advance health and well being throughout the life cycle; and build enabling and supportive environments for older persons. And it suggests how governments, NGOs, and other actors can reorient how their societies perceive, interact with, and care for their older citizens. For these reasons, we urge the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing to continue facilitating implementation of the Madrid Plan. The U.S. delegation looks forward to hearing this afternoon's interactive panel discussion on the Madrid Plan.

Older persons often face concerns that need to be addressed immediately, including food, health care, economic security, protection from violence and

neglect, and services to allow for independent living. Because of the time-sensitive nature of these needs, the UN system should direct its efforts to suggesting practical measures, consistent with the Madrid Plan of Action, which member states, the UN, and civil society can take to improve the situation of older persons. Reference to these actions should be included in relevant resolutions, including General Assembly and Second and Third Committee resolutions. Next, reports and side events can focus on topics of particular importance, with a view to raising awareness and arriving at courses of actions. Lastly, language on older persons can be included in the Strategic Plans of the UN Funds and Programmes and other relevant UN organizations, including ILO and UN Women. Doing so would inform the Funds and Programmes in their efforts to develop policies and programs and allow for monitoring and evaluation of progress made. The Open-Ended Working Group should encourage and facilitate these efforts of the UN system, which a range of actors would undertake.

Mr. Chair, elder abuse is a topic of particular importance to the United States. At this year's World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, we and our UN partners, the Canadian government, and non-governmental organizations hosted panel discussions on concrete measures to combat elder abuse. At the 2012 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the White House brought national attention to the issue by holding an event that brought together a broad range of actors within the U.S. government. Last April the National Academy of Sciences Institute on Medicine held a two-day public workshop on global elder abuse and its prevention. The workshop explored the negative impacts of elder abuse on individuals, families, communities, and societies.

In the United States, the Elder Justice Act of 2009, as part of the Affordable Care Act, established the Elder Justice Coordinating Council to coordinate across the U.S. government activities related to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The Council is a permanent body, with the goal of better coordinating the Federal response to elder abuse. And the United States has long been engaged in efforts to protect older individuals from elder abuse, such as financial exploitation; physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; and neglect. Through the Older Americans Act, the United States aims to provide services to older persons and protect those who may not be able to protect themselves.

In closing, let me note that Elizabeth Grossman from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's New York District Office will participate in the Wednesday morning panel discussion on "Discrimination and access to work." We look forward to a useful Open-Ended Working Group session and continued cooperation with member states to improve the situation of older persons globally.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.