

Statement of Switzerland (21 April 2011)

I said yesterday that Switzerland favours the regional strategy on the implementation, follow-up and monitoring at the national level of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing since it enables to take into account the significant differences between developed and developing countries in terms of the kinds of household in which older persons live. At the same time we are ready to look at a more effective monitoring at the universal level of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing than the one exerted by the Commission for Social Development. And we are also ready to widen our today's discussion to consider other options under international human rights instruments protecting the rights of all human beings, including of older persons.

With the exception of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all international human rights instruments of the UN protect the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of older persons. On top of that, the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing incorporates and integrates the human rights of older persons in its numerous recommendations for action (see para. 13 of the Madrid Plan). We thus think that there are in principle no normative gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and that they don't need specific human rights compared to other layers of the population but we acknowledge that there may well be an implementation, monitoring and information gap in the respect and promotion of their rights.

A study by an independent expert, preferably of the Human Rights Council, could identify those gaps and propose recommendations to fill them. One of the recommendation by this expert could be to ask all treaty bodies - but the Committee on the Rights of the Child - to draw general comments addressed to States parties on how to better protect the human rights and specific needs of older persons on the basis of relevant international instruments and in light of this policy instrument on ageing called the 2002 Madrid Plan. Another recommendation of this expert could well be to appoint a Special Rapporteur, preferably of the Human Rights Council, who would report on the human rights situation of the older persons in the world and make recommendations to our States on how to improve the enjoyment of the rights of these persons. This would give a strong political signal, a strong message to the international community in favour of a better implementation of the human rights of older persons. A subsequent resolution of the Human Rights Council could then take on board the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur and ask States to implement them.

Let me state in conclusion that Switzerland is ready to look at ways and means on how to improve the implementation of the human rights of older persons along the suggestions I just made or any other options worth of consideration.