

Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Panel Discussion on “Human rights dimensions concerning older persons in recent policy developments and initiatives in multilateral processes”

“2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Indicators, Follow-up and Review”

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Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global ageing, without parallel in human history, is pervasive and enduring. The United Nations recent projections show that by between 2015 and 2030 - the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals, the number of older persons in the world is expected to grow by 56 per cent from 901 million to 1.4 BILLION.

Last year, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by world leaders with the historic promise of leaving no-one behind and transforming our world by eliminating extreme poverty, sustaining peace, and combating climate change. Fulfilling the promise of Agenda 2030 and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represents an ambitious challenge.

Although we have recently witnessed increased attention to ageing issues, which is partially reflected in the SDGs (but significantly less in terms of targets and indicators), we need to harness this momentum to ensure that the visibility of older persons in the implementation of the SDGs at the national level does not fade.

How do older persons and ageing issues fit into the Development Agenda? In a recent report to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General addressed this very question.

Clearly, Goal 1, End poverty in all its forms everywhere is relevant to people of all ages. I don't need to repeat statistics on the low numbers of older persons who receive any kind of pension or those that receive inadequate pensions and live close to or under the poverty line. The findings of the World Social Protection Report 2014/15 suggest that without significant expansion of old-age income security and related social and health services for older persons, eliminating extreme poverty for all people everywhere will remain elusive - and that there could actually be a rise in poverty rates as the numbers of older persons continues to rise worldwide.

However, measuring poverty among older persons through the indicators for Goal 1 (as proposed to be disaggregated by age and sex), household survey data currently uses aggregate household

based information to calculate per capital income. This clearly assumes much about living arrangements and the allocation of resources among household members that may well not capture the individual economic situation of older persons.

Goal 3, Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages promisingly embraces a life course approach to health from birth to old age. It also promises equality in health at all ages. Again there are challenges measuring targets under this goal for older persons in a globally comparable manner. Hence, the indicator "By 2030 reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs" - that is before age 70 - not only excludes those above age 70, but tells us little about the current health status and well-being of older persons.

Goal 5, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, again includes women of ALL ages - a much welcome development to widen the lens to include the cumulative effects of gender discrimination that older women face as a results of gender discrimination throughout their lives. However again, age disaggregated data for women above the age of 49 for many key issues is lacking - for instance, on gender based violence. Much work is needed to ensure that the particular issues concerning older women are taken into account in the implementation of the SDGs.

Goal 8 that covers full and productive employment and decent work for all must include the large number of older persons who chose to continue working at older ages, or indeed have no choice but to continue working in the absence of a decent pension. Centre stage is the right of older persons to work on an equal basis as others. As the number of older persons continues to grow, combating age discrimination in the work place, which is already a key focus of developed countries, will soon become more important in many developing countries. While data is more available at the global level on these issues, there is still a need for greater age disaggregation into older ages.

Goal 10, reduce inequality within and among countries, contains a crucial emphasis on empowering and promoting the social and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, among other things, as well as ensuring equal opportunity, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices. The latter is to be measured by reporting of population having felt discriminated against, and the limits on self reporting by older persons are well known.

Goal 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable applies to people of all ages, but resonates particularly for older persons - to enhance, economic, social and political participation and social inclusion. While indicators measure the proportion of the population that benefits from the achievement of individual targets, indicators are not able to assess whether specific groups of people benefit from the achievement of targets

Finally, goal 13, to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts applies to all people, although older persons are not specifically mentioned. The specific vulnerabilities of older persons in situations of natural disasters and the effects of climate change such as heat waves was however, recognized in the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015-2030.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see from the issues I have just raised, while the 2030 Agenda represents an historic landmark, with its strong emphasis on inclusion of all social groups, we are all confronted with unique challenges on the way to its full implementation and monitoring.

We should not, however, lose track of the following points, emphasized by David Nabarro - the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda:

No community should be considered to be outside the totality of this agenda, whether you are old or young, male or female, disabled or well-bodied, all of us are inside this new plan of action.

And in order to achieve inclusion on that scale, no part of the United Nations should seek to 'own' any one of the goals. Instead we see ourselves as working across all the goals.

A "Business as usual" approach, where UN agencies work within their own mandate as they had done in the past, is no longer an option.

In that vein, my Division is currently reaching out to UN agencies to explore how we can work better together on issues of ageing in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. For the first time, discussions are now taking place on how to promote the collection and analysis of more age disaggregated data.

I am fully convinced that if Member States, the UN system and all stakeholders are able to work in a cross cutting manner to ensure that "no one is left behind", we are presented with a unique opportunity for the mainstreaming of ageing and older persons into the development agenda, as originally called for in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, in 2002.

Thank you.