



PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by Ms. Zhang Dan, Counsellor of the Chinese Delegation at the First
Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**

New York, 18 April 2011

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to congratulate you on your election as chairman of the Working Group. I am confident that under your able leadership, the current session of the Working Group will produce positive results.

Ageing is a daunting challenge in today's world. With the aged population growing at a faster rate, the number of people aged 60 and over has reached 760 million, accounting for 11% of the world's total population. It is projected that the number of the aged will exceed one billion by 2020. Developing countries will enter the first stage of rapid ageing. According to forecast, the world's older persons will increase by 29 million per annum on average between 2010 and 2025, twice as fast as the growth rate between 2000 and 2009. Moreover, 80% of such growth will occur in developing countries.

Population ageing is a natural pattern of the development of a society. In a society for all ages, older persons not only contribute to and participate in social development, but are also entitled to share the fruits of such development. Addressing population ageing is a gigantic multisectoral program that entails efforts in such areas as economy development, housing, education, sports, health and social welfare. Governments therefore should adopt a comprehensive approach and ensure policy coordination. In particular, Governments must properly address poverty, illness and other difficulties confronting the elderly, eliminate discrimination against and abuse of the aged, promote their social integration, and ensure that they are well provided for and live with dignity and security, so as to improve the welfare of the older population and promote sustainable social development.

The Chinese Government supports the establishment of the Open-ended Working

Group on Ageing by the General Assembly to facilitate discussion on promoting and protecting the rights of older persons. The Chinese delegation would like to express the following views in this regard:

First, the principle of differentiation should be stressed. Countries are diverse in terms of economic and social conditions as well as historical and cultural traditions. Member States should address the ageing issue on the basis of their national conditions and different development levels, make full use of existing mechanisms and resources, and take practical measures to improve the wellbeing of older persons.

Second, we should view the ageing issue from a development perspective. Ageing is first and foremost a development problem. Economic and social development has always been, and will remain the prerequisite for the wellbeing of older persons as well as the protection of rights for older persons. Member states should view the older person's rights in a comprehensive and balanced way. Attention to the rights of older persons as individuals should not be at the expense of their collective rights. Likewise, the protection of civil and political rights of older persons must go hand in hand with the protection of their economic, social and cultural rights.

Third, international cooperation on ageing should fully accommodate the concerns of developing countries. Against the backdrop of accelerated ageing around the globe, developing countries will face even greater challenges in coping with their ageing issues. The international community should strengthen cooperation, pay attention to the unique circumstances and difficulties of developing countries, and address their legitimate concerns. Developed countries should provide necessary financial and technical support to help developing countries tackle ageing issues.

Fourth, the Working Group should carry out its work step by step within the scope of the mandate of the GA resolution. At present, major differences still exist regarding whether to draft a convention on the rights of the older persons. The Working Group should adhere to the fundamental principles reflected in UN development goals, policy documents and legal instruments concerning ageing. The Working Group can discuss such basic topics as the ageing trends of countries, the current situation of older persons' rights and the existing protection mechanisms, in order to summarize experiences, identify gaps and gradually garner consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

As of 2009, China's older population reached 167 million, or 12.5% of the country's total population. In the coming years, China will enter a period of rapid ageing, characterized by faster rise of median age and accelerated growth of population over 80 and "empty nest" families.

The Chinese Government pays great attention to the country's ageing process. Its proactive measures to tackle the ageing issue and protect the legitimate rights of older persons have yielded positive results. In 1996, China's first law on the older persons, the *Law on Protection of Rights and Interests of Seniors*, was enacted. In 1999, China's National Commission on Ageing was established with the mandate to coordinate and promote ageing-related work across the country. Since 2000, China has promulgated and implemented such documents as *Decision on Strengthening Work on Ageing* and *Opinion on Accelerating the Development of Elderly Care Industry*, which have provided strong policy underinnings for the development of programmes for the elderly. The Chinese Government has incorporated ageing issues into the overall planning for economic and social development and invested heavily in building social security systems with the view to seeking systematic solutions to the issues of pension and health care for the elderly. To date, China has already established various social security systems, such as basic pension, basic health care, minimum life guarantee and medical aid. Pilot projects of the new type of rural pension insurance have been implemented and expanded. In summary, a social security framework for older persons has basically taken shape in China.

Despite its enormous progress in ageing related endeavors, as the most populous developing country, China is still facing daunting challenges in the field of ageing. The Chinese Government will continue to adopt effective measures, strengthen cooperation with the international community, and work tirelessly for the advancement of older persons' welfare commensurate with socio-economic development and for the realization of active and healthy ageing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.