

Eleventh Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Age International

Item 7: Discussion on the Way Forward

Thursday, 1 April 2021

I would like to begin by recalling that the full title of this Working Group is “for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons.” We are pleased by the commitment expressed by Member States for achieving this purpose. But we are disappointed that many Member States did not contribute to the substantive discussions in this Session dedicated to this end. We would like to acknowledge and thank those Member States that did.

The lived experience of human rights abuses against older persons over the past 12 months in response to COVID-19, and the multitude of abuses and ageism that older persons have experienced over the many years before the pandemic, requires a response.

One of the most powerful tools the UN has at its disposal for ensuring the rights of older persons are protected is a legally binding universal human rights convention.

It is right and appropriate for Governments to exercise due diligence before taking such a step. But after 10 years of discussions and deliberations, it is now time for Member States to act.

The evidence provided by the UN Global Report on Ageism and the OHCHR working paper that was submitted to the Eleventh Session, as well as a decade of evidence produced through the Working Group process and by the office of the Independent Expert, leave no doubt that a convention is necessary.

The Secretary-General called on this Working Group to accelerate efforts to develop proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons. And Assistant Secretary-General Ilze Brand Kehris reminded us at the beginning of this Session that “This requires full commitment by all Member States and all stakeholders to collectively move forward.”

The Way Forward is clear. It requires action.

We support calls to create a sub-group of the Working Group, whether a formal Advisory Committee or Informal Task Group, that would include experts from Member States, CSOs, NHRIs and the Independent Expert, to assist the Working Group during the intersessional period to achieve its mandate.

We urge you to act on this recommendation. Any further delay puts at risk the credibility of this Working Group’s commitment to protecting the rights of older persons.

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