

Statement to the Eleventh Session of the UN OEWGA

Thursday, 1 April 2021

Under Item 7 - Other matters

Written statement on the way forward

**The Office of the Public Defender of Georgia
On behalf of the Working Group on Ageing
Of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)**

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

I thank you for the opportunity to present a statement on behalf of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia, National Human Rights Commission of Korea and the members of the GANHRI Working Group on Ageing, which includes National Human Rights Institutions of the Republic of Korea, Poland, the Philippines, Georgia, Peru, El Salvador, Nigeria, Kenya, Ecuador, and Germany.

During these past few days, we have heard evidence-based information about the biggest challenges faced by older persons all around the world. In addition to that, this Session demonstrated how the global pandemic worsened the human rights situation of older people.

Let me underline that the UN Secretary-General António Guterres mentioned in his policy brief published in May 2020 that the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the existing challenges of older persons in terms of healthcare, medical services, social exclusion, economic poverty, inequality and ageism. Given the extensive support shown for this policy brief from 146 Member States, we are of the opinion that the Working Group needs to take more decisive steps as soon as possible. Therefore, we insist on establishing a sub-group of the Open-Ended Working Group, be it a formal Advisory Committee or Informal Task Group that would include experts from the Member States, CSOs and NHRIs, along with the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. This sub-group should provide substantive input during the intersessional period that could be considered by OEWGA during the next session.

In this context, NHRI colleagues welcome and support the recently released 'Update to the 2012 Outcome Study on the normative standards in international human rights laws in relation to older persons' which was prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report highlights the following and I quote: *'the existing human rights framework continues to provide fragmented and inconsistent coverage of the human rights of older persons in law and practice'*. Accordingly, the adoption of a dedicated international normative instrument would be an effective way to bring about major changes in how the human rights of older persons are understood and protected, and thus contribute to changes in law and practice at the national level required to ensure full enjoyment of human rights by older persons. At the same time, we insist on including the OHCHR report in the official works of OEWGA.

If we are to build a better future for older persons after this pandemic, States must create an enabling environment by forging international and intergenerational solidarity for older persons. A binding

international instrument shall help ensure that the dignity of older persons is upheld at all times and in all places.

Lastly, Madam Chair, I would like to thank the Bureau and the UN Secretariat for all the efforts they put in organizing this meeting. However, NHRI colleagues from around the world had difficulties in participating in this session due to the lack of precise information and adequate procedure to register, as well as the limitation and challenges in accessing and using the Interprefy platform. Although we understand that this is the Session postponed from last year, the official registration for this year should have been opened as many NHRIs were keen to participate and contribute to the meeting, especially following the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on older persons. As the Working Group formalized the participation of NHRIs in 2016, I ask the organizers to allow NHRIs to participate independently in the Working Group Sessions in an open and transparent manner in the future. In addition to transparent NHRI participation - GANHRI / NHRIs support and encourage the OEWG to ensure the most effective and active participation of NGOs in its work, too.

We, NHRIs, look forward to seeing the major changes happening in the nearest future.

I thank you.