

**AFRICAN REGIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF OLDER PERSONS IN AFRICA.
November 25-26, 2019
ECOWAS PARLIAMENT, ABUJA**

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations data on World Populations Prospects 2017, Africa is the World “youngest” continent of which about 5.5% of its population is made up of Older Persons over 60 years, and is expected to have a sharp increase in the next thirty years. The situation of Older Persons in Africa is characterized by poverty, weakening of family and community structures due to migration, conflict, natural disasters, and the impact of disease, lack of attention to Older Persons and worsening economic situations, no access to social security, healthcare, education and legal protection, denial of the rights to participate in development activities, discrimination on inheritance and unfavourable property laws. Older women especially face greater discrimination in access to services and are often tagged witches. Family, friends and relatives, either due to lack of knowledge or negligence, fail to detect abuse of older persons, often assuming that their problems are caused by old age.

The African Charter on the Rights of Older Persons, which is focused on promoting and strengthening the basic rights of Older Persons, was adopted by the AU Commission at its 26th Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia January 30-31 2016 and have been signed by only 14 countries and ratified by 2 countries, Lesotho and Benin. In view of the aforementioned factors above, the Stakeholder Group on Ageing Africa (SGA) and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in collaboration with United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), and Office the of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) convened this important high-level regional conference which drew participants from ECOWAS Member States and ECOWAS Parliament, UN Agencies, Human Rights Institutions, Stakeholder Groups on Ageing, Older Activists, the Academia and NGOs. The conference is considered timely and apt as it was held in the hallowed chambers of the ECOWAS Parliament in order to seek collaborations with the ECOWAS parliamentarians and in extension, the Member States on the need to provide the legal frameworks and political will for signing the African Charter and having a common front towards the Open Ended Working Group Convention to be held in New York, April 2020.

OPENING CEREMONY

The conference, which was aligned with the ECOWAS Parliament Plenary Session, started at 10:14 am with ECOWAS First Deputy Speaker, Hon Ahmed Wase presiding at the plenary. The conference session was moderated by Mrs. Rabi Abdallah, who took time to introduce the conference on Ageing and harped on the importance of ageing and care for Older Persons in the society.

The Conference had in attendance, the following dignitaries:

- **President Muhammadu Buhari**, President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, represented by **Senator George Akume**, Minister for Special Duties,
- **Prof. Tijjani Mohammad Bande**, President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
- **Hon. Moustapha Cisse Lo**, Speaker ECOWAS Parliament, represented by the 1st Deputy Speaker ECOWAS Parliament, **Hon. Ahmed Wase**,
- **Prince Yomi Johnson**, 3rd Deputy Speaker, ECOWAS Parliament,
- **Mr. John Azuma**, Secretary General, ECOWAS Parliament,

- **Dr. Osagie Ehanire**, Hon Minister of Health,
- **Mr. Godfrey Onyeama**, Hon Minister of Foreign Affairs, represented by **Mr. Oluremi Olajide**,
- **Mr. Tony Ojukwu, Esq.**, Executive Secretary, National Human Rights Commission, and
- **Dr. Emem Omokaro**, Executive Director, Dave Omokaro Foundation and Co-Chair, Stakeholders Group on Ageing Africa (SGA)

WELCOME ADDRESS

The welcome address was delivered by Mr. Tony Ojukwu, who commended the organizers of the conference and welcomed all the participants. He highlighted the challenges on the rights of Older Persons and hoped for fruitful deliberations and exchange of ideas to chart new ways towards the promotion of Human Rights of Older Persons. He expressed hope that the conference will work on the leads by Countries in promoting the civil, economic, social and political rights of Older Persons while calling on the Governments to take up and include all citizens especially Older Persons in the scheme of things while correcting social flaws against older persons in achieving aspirations of SDGs. He asked for collaborations from President of Nigeria, President of United Nations General Assembly and other relevant stakeholders in promoting the Rights of Older Persons.

TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

The technical overview of African High-level Conference Agenda was presented by Dr Emem Omokaro, the Convener SGA Africa and Executive Director, Dave Omokaro Foundation. She acknowledged the members of the high table and gave an insight on Ageing and Older Persons as the harbinger of economic development and reservoir of knowledge, wisdom and experience as advocated for promotion of human rights of Older Persons in Africa. She called on Countries to sign and ratify the 2016 Protocol on Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons of African Union as only 14 countries have signed and 2 countries has ratified the protocol. She also hinged her hope on gaining strong support from the ECOWAS Parliament and seeks their cooperation on signing the protocol by ECOWAS Member Countries.

PRESENTATIONS

Dr Osagie Ehanire, Honourable Minister of Health, thanked the Organisers and acknowledged the dignitaries present. He highlighted the need for a collective effort in promoting the formulation of rights and privileges in healthcare and social welfare for the increasing population of Older Persons. He noted the efforts of African Governments on universal health coverage which covers all citizens including vulnerable and Older Persons and assured the participants of the commitment of the Nigerian Government towards ensuring the well-being and social rights of the aged and healthy ageing. He hinted the approval of 1% of Federal Consolidated Revenue Fund to offer free basic health care package to poor and vulnerable including Older Persons.

The representative of the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Oluremi Olajide, took the floor and decried the deprivation, abuse, discrimination and neglects being faced by Older Persons as a result of economic, social and cultural challenges. He proposed the need to mitigate deprivation and abuse by African Countries through support of International Partners and Member states of UN. He also enumerated the efforts of the government in alleviating the plights of Older Persons.

The representative of the Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament, Hon Ahmed Wase, 1st Deputy Speaker, ECOWAS Parliament, welcomed the dignitaries, Organizers and Participants and expressed hope that the conference will proffer the required solutions on the need to cater for the aged in the society. Speaking on the signing and domestication of the protocol, he assured the Participants of the

cooperation and support of the ECOWAS Parliament as well as all relevant stakeholders in their Member States.

Prof Tijjani Muhammed Bande, President 74th Session of United Nations General Assembly expressed satisfaction in taking part in the conference and reiterated cooperation of the United Nations General Assembly and lauded the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHRCR) in partnering with NHRC and SGA Africa on promoting human rights of Older Persons. He also pointed out the importance the UNGA attaches to inclusion of Older Persons in their agenda and harped on the need to include the needs and rights of Older Persons in accomplishing the SDGs Agenda 2030 and AU Agenda2063.

OPENING REMARKS

Senator George Akume, Hon Minister of Special Duties representing His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari, President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, acknowledged the members of the high table, thanked the organizers and expressed his gratitude and honour at declaring the conference open. He cited the importance of ageing and the role of the aged in African society and reminded Africans on the need to collaborate with other nations of the world in promoting the rights of older Persons. He pointed out the policies and programmes for the Older Persons by the Nigerian Government which include National Senior Citizens Acts of 2018, Pension Transitional Arrangement Directorate (PTAD), Preretirement and vocational training, subsidized medical expenses in public hospitals and social welfare services, Conditional Cash Transfer etc. He highlighted the collaboration of Nigeria with other African Countries and Organizations on the policies and programmes at the regional level towards the promotion of rights of Older Persons in the region while further emphasizing the aligning and mainstreaming of the Economic Growth and Recovery Plan (EGRP) programme of the Federal government in line with the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action on ageing. He expressed hope that the conference will come up with recommendations to develop policies towards improving the human rights situation of Older Persons. He then declared the conference open.

The meeting also witnessed a Working Session which featured a keynote address by Mr. Anthony Ojukwu, Esq., Executive Secretary, National Human Rights Commission, Nigeria and Vice Chair, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutes (GANHRI). In his keynote address, he forecast an increase in the population of Older Persons which is brought about by decrease in fertility rates, increase in life expectancy and improved public healthcare, nutrition, and health services. Speaking on the protection of Older Person's rights, he enumerated their rights to health, education, and employment as stipulated in the AU Charter and AHPCR. He spoke on the role of the African Court in protecting and promoting rights of Older Persons. He recalled that a focal point was established in 2007 to create the infrastructure for the protocols on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and in May 2009, during its 45th Ordinary Session, the AU Commission turned the focal point to the Commission's Working Group for the rights of Older Persons. He further stated that at its 26th Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia January 30-31 2016, the AU Commission also adopted the "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons". According to him, this protocol, which was adopted by the AU Commission, included references to rights of Older Persons and also provided a legal framework. He Called on African Countries to make use of their policies as well as the legal and administrative frameworks to sign and ratify the protocol while berating the leaders as only 14 countries have signed and 2 countries ratified the AU protocol.

He concluded by highlighting the importance of sustained and collaborative efforts after the 10th Open Ended Working Group by stakeholders in Africa to discuss and have a common front towards the upcoming 11th Open Ended Working Group on Ageing, New York, in April 2020. He thanked the

President and Government of Nigeria, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECOWAS Parliament, Stakeholders Group on Ageing Africa, the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Development and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for collaborating with the National Human Rights Commission to support the Regional Conference.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

PLENARY 1

The discussions were on **“Contextualizing the Reality of Older Persons in Africa: Equality and Non-Discrimination, Neglect and Violence, Abuse and Stigmatization.**

The discussants were:

- **Mr. Elijah Mwega, (KARIKA Ageing, Kenya)**
- **Mrs. Margaret Kabango, (Uganda Reach the Aged Association)**
- **Paulette Metang, Association Camerounaise Pour la Prise en Charges Personnes Agées (ACAMAGE Cameroun)**
- **Dr. Andrew Mbewe, The Rabe Institute, Zambia.**

Mr. Elijah Mwega presented his paper on “The Context of Older Persons in Kenya on Social Security and Social protection/ Right to Work and Access to Labour market. He narrated his experiences and knowledge gathered as the Founder/ Chairman of Kenyan Aged People Require Information, Knowledge And Advancement (KARIKA Kenya) for 18 years amongst which are engaging with the Central Governments through inter-ministerial forums, promoting and championing the rights of older persons in influencing relevant policies, campaigning for the UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons at the UN Social Forum on Human Rights of Older Persons and working in the national technical working group on social protection and human rights of older persons, etc.

He enumerated some factors such as the economic situations and social rights of a person and explained affordability, special measures and specific considerations, best practices and challenges. He also mentioned labour market and its challenges, remedies and redress; lifelong learning and capacity building, state obligations and challenges; and access to justice by older persons, its challenges and concluded with its remedies.

Mrs. Margaret Kabango delivered a paper on “National Health Services Delivery as a Human Right in Uganda”. She introduced her paper by tracing the origin of Human Rights from the United Nations Human Rights Declaration of 1948 and the adoption of such laws in different nations as can be seen in Chapter 4 of Uganda’s constitution titled “Protection and promotion of fundamental and other Human Rights and Freedoms”. She pointed that Uganda has a population of just over 40 million people, of which 53% are female and 43% are male and that about 4% of the population is made up of older persons of which 80% of the population lives in the rural areas. On the health infrastructure, she noted that it consists of referral/teaching hospital in the capital city of Kampala and regional centres, district hospitals in district headquarters and Health Centres II, III and IV in the rural areas which are relatively well staffed with qualified medical officers. She pointed out that lower health centres which serve the majority populations including older persons in rural areas are staffed with junior health workers and are not so well supplied with medicines and other requirements. She decried the treatment of Non-Communicable Diseases confined only to referral, regional and district hospitals, which is not close to majority of the older persons as they resort to local medicinal herbs and the non-inclusion of older people’s medical needs in the medical policies and programmes of the Ministry of Health. She

cited examples of such medical needs for older women experience who suffer psychological, physical and social challenges after menopause and are liable to get diseases like cancer of the uterus, cervix, fistula, etc. and older men who are liable to conditions like prostate cancer, incontinence of urine, etc.

The next paper was delivered by Paulette Metang and was titled “Older Women in Cameroon”. She gave an insight on the gender distribution of female and males aged over 60 years and pointed out that, the older women who are mostly widows, who live mostly in rural areas are slightly higher in population and more vulnerable due to gender, old age and poverty. She pointed out the contributions of the older women to development despite the vulnerability they suffer as they take care of orphans, grandchildren family etc. but are abused, neglected, violated and are not captured in women empowerment.

Dr. Andrew Mbewe presented a paper on The Human Rights Situations of Older Persons in Zambia. He began by making a brief description of Zambia, the 2019 population pyramid of Zambia and comparing it with that of USA and the distribution of Zambia population. He gave explanations on how Human Rights came into existence, the basic characteristics of human rights which he listed as: inherent, indivisible, fundamental, universal, inalienable, amongst others. He went on to enumerate the various challenges on human rights of Older Persons in Zambia, the barriers to the comfortable living condition which calls for urgent government’s attention, challenges which hinders governments from integration of Older Persons issues and platforms available for Older Persons to make their voices heard.

PLENARY 2

The session was on **“Focus on Health, Ageing, and Human Rights - A Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030) Challenges, Good Practices and Lessons Learned”**. The panel discussants were

- **Ms. Shatho Nfila, Programme on Ageing, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**
- **Dr. Peter Clement Lasuba, Officer-in-Charge, World Health Organization, Nigeria**
- **Ms. Roseline Kihumba, Co-Chair SGA Africa, International and Regional Policies Coordinator, Help Age International.**

Dr. Saidu Ahmed Dumbuluwa, National Coordinator, Healthcare Package for Improving Quality Care for Older Persons in Nigeria (HEPIQ-C) Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria was the moderator.

The first presentation was made by Ms. Shatho Nfila was titled “Advancing Health and Well-being into Old Age in Africa. She gave a synopsis of ageing in Africa and the projected growth of African population. She further highlighted the situation of Older Persons in Africa and harped on the need to seize the opportunities presented by ageing societies. She proposed a framework of action to foster healthy ageing through data collection, analysis and uses and proffered adherence to regional frameworks like the 7 Aspirations of Africa in Vision 2063, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Dr. Peter Clement Lasuba made his presentation on “Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030. He quoted the findings of UN DESA in 2019 on increase in ageing population. He enumerated the synergies and connections to accelerate progress like Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, (MIPAA), Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health, GSAP, Agenda 2030 and the SDGs; and WHO’s General Programme of Work 13. He also listed the local actions needed to be done in achieving the decade of healthy ageing 2020-2030, the lessons learned for the decade and the collaborations between

relevant stakeholders to achieve the aim. Dr. Peter Lasumba further highlighted the current steps to develop a proposal document for the decade and rounded off with the milestones to the formal launch of the decade in 2020.

Ms. Roseline Kihumba gave a presentation on “The implementation of the AU Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its impact on Older Persons in Africa. She gave a description of age distribution of older persons (60 years and above) in the various continents of the world. She indicated the sharp increase of Older Persons in Africa as compared to other parts of the world. She went further to indicate the increased numbers of Older Persons living in poverty and sickness which are greater than other age groups. She concluded by enumerating the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its impact on older persons in Africa.

PLENARY 3

The third session on “The Human Rights Framework on Older Persons and its Application in African Region was moderated by Mr. Ken Bluestone, Co-Chair Global Alliance for Rights of Older Persons” (GAROP). The panellists were:

- **Hon. Chernor Maju Bah, Chairman, Committee on Human Rights, Child Protection and other Vulnerable Groups, ECOWAS Parliament who is the Keynote Speaker represented by Hon. Fatoumata Niambali, Parliamentarian, ECOWAS Parliament,**
- **Ms. Denise Hauser, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) New York,**
- **Dr. Tunji Asaolu, Chairperson Social Affairs and Health Cluster Committee, Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), African Union, and**
- **Dr. Martin Ejidike, International Human Rights Advisor, Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and Country Team Nigeria.**

The keynote address was presented by Hon Fatoumata Niambali who represented Hon Chernor Maju Bah. She cited the committee instrument and protocol on Democracy and Good Governance signed in Dakar Senegal in 2018 on recognition and protection of basic rights and its provisions on women and children’s rights but berated the lack of protocols for rights of older persons. She pointed that ECOWAS Parliament have no special reference for Older Persons in its protocols and assured that this conference will afford the Parliament an opportunity to include the rights of Older People. She mentioned that plans are underway to revamp the protocol on Democracy and Good Governance for inclusion of the Older Persons and convention of a joint workshop of ECOWAS Parliament, NHRC and ECOWAS Commission to look at national laws on protection of Older Persons, harmonize and suggest a uniform law for ECOWAS Member States in conjunction with Representatives of National Assemblies of member States to be organized by National Human Rights Commission.

Ms. Denise Hauser made a presentation on “The International Human Rights Framework to Protect the Rights of Older Persons”. She gave a general overview on international human rights treaties, international human rights mechanisms and how to access them for the protection of Older Persons. She also highlighted the limitations of existing UN human rights mechanisms to protect Older Persons, Normative progress in strengthening the human rights of Older Persons and the need for international treaty on Older Persons. She enquired on the normative changes that would provide clearer and more effective protection and enjoyment of the Rights of Older Persons and listed yardsticks like

discrimination, autonomy and independence, neglect, abuse and violence, social protection and health and social care. She concluded the presentation by suggesting the way forward and the steps that needs to be taken.

Dr Martin Ejidike made his presentation on “The Application of Regional and International Instruments on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa”. He gave an insight on the percentage of Older Persons’ population in the world which stands at 10% and is expected to rise to 20% in 2050 as he compares the population of Older Persons in Africa with the rest of the world. He enumerated the various international and regional instruments for protection of Rights of Older Persons and decried the approach by African countries to the AU Charter. He also pointed out that only 9 countries in Africa has age specific related legislations. He listed the countries as South Africa, Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi and Zimbabwe. He also gave an insight into the situation of Older Persons in Africa ranging from ageing, abuse and neglect, discrimination and lack of basic amenities such as healthcare and social security. He commended the roles of some Africa countries in enacting policies and programmes that cater for the rights and welfare of Older Persons.

PLENARY 4The topic was on “Advancing towards an International Human Rights Instruments to Protect the Human Rights of Older Persons: The Work of the Open-Ended Working Group.

The discussants for the session were:

- **Ambassador Martin Garcia Moritan, Chair of OEWG and Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations.**
- **Mr. Alexander Temitope Ajayi, Senior Adviser to the President of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly.**
- **Mr. Ken Bluestone, Co-Chair Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons (GAROP)**
- **Mr. Tony Ojukwu, the Executive Secretary, National Human Rights Commission.**
- **Dr. Emem Omokaro, Co-Chair, SGA Africa and Executive Director, Dave Omokaro Foundation.**
- **Mr. Wilfred Johnson, Commissioner, Human Right Commission, Liberia**

The session was moderated by Ms. Roseline Kihumba, Co-Chair SGA Africa.

Amb. Garcia Moritan delivered the keynote address on “The Current Status of Discussions in the OEWG towards Implementing its General Assembly Mandate: Challenges and opportunities” via video message. He commended the organizers and hoped for increased support from African continent as he looks forward to future collaborations at the OEWG 2020. He highlighted the efforts of the OEWG and decried the lack of internationally legally binding working instrument and the practical implications inherent and urged the conference to act as a platform for further deliberations and garner support for Africans on protection of Rights of Older Persons. He pointed out the challenges OEWG faces and hopes for further visibility on human rights of Older Persons. He hoped that the conference will lead to increased further support and active engagements from Africa continent.

The next presentation on “The Role of Member States to support the OEWG implementing its mandate on considering an international instrument on the human rights of Older Persons” was presented by Mr. Alexander Temitope Ajayi. He gave a general overview and the efforts of Nigeria in adoption and approval of normative frameworks on the protection of Rights of Older Persons and its support to OEWG, regional and international collaborations on Rights of Older Persons. He assured the

conference and OEWG of Nigeria's commitment and support on the Rights of Older Persons and calls for support and understanding as Nigeria that will enable them put literary ideas into concrete actions to prove its commitment to promoting the rights for Older Persons. He assured of the commitment of the President UNGA to the promotion of Rights of Older Persons as he advocates for more regional and international collaborations and charged all participants on concrete commitments.

Mr. Ken Bluestone while making his speech on "Fostering a meaningful discussion within the OEWG" gave an overview on GAROP and its mission while highlighting what is needed to protect the rights of people. He went further to list the stakeholders that will take part in the discussions and the organizations involved. He concluded by proffering suggestions for deepening engagements.

Mr. Tony Ojukwu spoke on the opportunities on supporting the work of the OEWG both at the regional and national levels. He advocated for more collaborations amongst the stakeholders and charged African countries to sign and ratify the AU Charter. He mentioned the role and efforts of NHRC towards working with the OEWG in promoting rights of Older Persons. He expressed hope that, with the adoption of protocols and awareness created by the conference and at OEWG, mechanisms for generating the momentum and jurisprudence required for the promotion of Rights of Older Persons in Nigeria will be developed. He urged countries to create specific national institutions and ensure that internal mechanisms are put in place to deepen the discourse and realize the protection of Rights of Older Persons and works of OEWG.

Dr Emem Omokaro spoke on politics of the OEWG and the need for lobbying, partnerships and collaborations on mobilizing support towards the UN Convention. She cited examples of Rights and Acts created at UN Conventions and called for concerted efforts for Rights of Older Persons. She extolled the power of UN Convention and urged all to make good use of the convention. She admonished African countries to come as a common front and make a case for strong support at the UN convention. She asked for the support of ECOWAS Parliament to garner support of member countries towards the convention and called for more synergy between Permanent Missions and administrative capitals of countries. She advocated for mobilization of the CSOs and capacity building as facilitators and for more understanding on thematic and normative issues. She charged the Member Countries to sign and ratify the African Charter.

Mr. Wilfred Johnson made his contributions and shared Liberia experiences and efforts in the protection of Rights of Older Persons. He made mention of the presence of Refuge Homes/Old Folks Home which was in existence but was closed during the civil war, health care services and conditional cash transfer to the old and poorest. He recalled that in 2013, the Liberian government developed National Human Rights Action Plan and proposed to train social welfare workers to provide help to the older persons and access to healthcare and pay attention to older women. He listed various government agenda for Older Persons which still remains elusive. He admitted to the non-signing and ratification of Rights and Older Persons by Liberian Government. He decried the surge of older persons as beggars on the streets and berated the lack of political will, neglect and entrenched corruption in Liberia. He concluded by advocating for legislation on Rights of Older People.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made after the day's panel sessions.

- **A new legislation to be harmonized by ECOWAS and National Assemblies of ECOWAS Member States on legislation for protection of rights of Older Persons.**

- **Urgent need for the implementation of African Charter and legal frameworks to protect Rights of Older Persons.**
- **Allocation of requisite resources to the cause.**
- **Discuss on the contents of rights of older person and to give visibility and initiate the areas in dire need of urgent attention by nation policies and legal frameworks legislation.**
- **Government to create commissions to cater and address issue of Older Persons.**
- **Parliament to provide a legal framework.**
- **Advocacy by stakeholders.**

The MC thanked the dignitaries and participants and declared the day session closed.

DAY TWO: PRESENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONFERENCE DECLARATION

A recap of the previous day's activities was relayed by the MC, Mrs. Rabi Abdallah. The day's conference session started with the MC calling the panellists for the day's discussions. The topic for discussions was on **"Overcoming Challenges and Identifying Opportunities to Strengthen the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the Support to the Open-Ended Working Group"**. The session was moderated by Mr. Tony Ojukwu, Executive Secretary National Human Rights Commission and Vice Chair, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutes (GANHRI).

The speakers were

- **Mr. Alexander Temitope Ajayi, Special Adviser to the President of the UN General Assembly,**
- **Ms. Denise Hauser, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) New York,**
- **Mr. Shem Ochola, Head of Network Coordination and Development, HelpAge International, Kenya**
- **Ms. Patience Mungwari, Programme Manager, Women's Rights Unit, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, and**
- **Paulette Metang, Association Camerounaise Pour la Prise en Charge des Personnes Agées (ACAMAGE Cameroun).**

Mr. Alexander Ajayi was represented by Dr Emem Omokaro who lauded the ECOWAS Parliament for its advisory role and powers as she seeks for their comprehensive support across Africa. She decried the lack of working document on ageing and pointed out that Madrid International Plan of Action is a soft law as she seeks for collaborations on the signing and ratification of AU Charter on rights of Older Persons. She cited that SGA and NHRC at the 10th OEWG session, approved support for Nigeria position and made commitment to start creating awareness in Africa to carry out sensitization on the Human Rights of Older Persons and seek the intervention of ECOWAS Parliament.

Ms. Denise Hauser cited the effort of the Office of the Human Rights Commission on human rights of Older Persons and seeks for dialogue and contribution of the ECOWAS Parliament on working together to promote and strengthen the human rights of Older Persons. She pointed out the shift in

demographics and harped on the need for proper legislation as it will still benefit the advocates in the future and who will still face the challenges such as chronic poverty, lack of access to healthcare and social security, discrimination, etc. She pointed out the need to invest in this as it will reduce poverty in few years' time and save economic cost for governments.

Mr. Shem Oshola recounted his personal experiences and stories on the tenets of healthy ageing. He advocated for physical exercises and healthy living and urged Ecowas Parliamentarians on the Rights of Older Persons towards creating a better future for them. He advocated taking cognizance of the poor and having a common front as a means of securing their future. He called on ECOWAS to motivate SADC and EAC to push the agenda for promotion of Rights of Older Persons in their various regions and appealed for legal instruments, policies and programmes for the Rights of Older Persons. He also sought for visibility and profiling of Older Persons while calling on SGA and its partners to create awareness and offer technical assistance where needed. He charged ECOWAS Parliament on a binding protocol, championing the cause for Rights of Older People, political will and sensitization of countries and also requested the parliamentarians to enact laws on the Rights of older persons, to help galvanize support and make it a key agenda.

Ms. Patience Mungwari shared experiences from academic view and interaction with Older Persons especially women. She gave an insight into her research in 2008, on the relationship between violence and abuse of women and alcohol use by their assailants who were mostly their partners and spouses. She seeks for ratification of the AU protocols and more robust continental dialogues. She decried lack of political will in signing and ratification of the protocol, non-prioritization of the Rights of Older Persons, lack of sufficient knowledge on the CSOs. She mentioned the efforts of the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) in promoting Rights of Elder Persons like the meetings they had with state parties in Tanzania, South Africa and Mauritius in which older persons living in those countries who were invited for interactive sessions shared their challenges and needs. She listed some challenges that made the protocols not to be ratified since it was signed at the AU meeting and informed the ECOWAS Parliamentarians on the need to champion the signing and ratifications in their various countries.

Paulette Metang advocated for development of Action Plan and ratification of AU protocol on Rights of Older Persons as she made a clarion call to the ECOWAS Parliament on the need to pressure their various national governments for the signing and domestication. She assured all participants that Africa is leading the campaign on the Rights of Older Persons towards improving their living conditions

The following recommendations were made:

- **Advocacy for the standardization and uniformity of privileges accorded to Older Persons across the ECOWAS Member States.**
- **Timely education and sensitization of Older Persons**
- **Programme of action to be included in respective country's charter**
- **Sensitization on implementation of laws on Rights of Older Persons**
- **Identification of particular challenges each country faces, conflict of generation and discrimination being faced by Older Persons which needs to be addressed**
- **Public sensitization on merits and demerits of laws before being passed by individual country's parliament.**
- **Review of the system and emoluments for health workers and caregivers**
- **Sensitization and enlightenment of parliamentarians and policy makers on the plights of Older Persons**

- **Parliamentarians and Member States called upon to exercise the political will to sign and ratify the laws on Rights of Older Persons**
- **Drafting of legal framework to define and lend support for basic rights and privileges of Older Persons**
- **Member States and parliamentarians are urged to adopt a bill for advocacy and rights and support of Older Persons**
- **Parliamentarians charged on the need for national legislation in individual countries to cater for Older Persons and signing of the AU Charter**
- **Individuals, Civil Society Organizations, government and Members of Parliament are to carry out their different roles on signing and ratification of rights of Older Persons**
- **Putting into force the resolutions from workshop to be organized for organizations and networks on protection of human rights in individual countries by the ECOWAS Parliament.**

Sequel to the deliberations, the Conference Declaration was duly adopted.

CONCLUSION/CLOSING CEREMONY

The Conference on Human Rights Situations of Older Persons in Africa, organized by the Stakeholders Group on Ageing is of the knowledge that the recommendations reached at the conference when put into force, will go a long way in ameliorating the plights of Older Persons as well as strengthening the protection of Human Rights of Older Persons. The conference seeks the cooperation of the ECOWAS Parliament and in extension, the political leaders of its Member States, on the signing and ratification of the Protocol on Rights of Older Persons in Africa. The Conference is optimistic that the recommendations reached will provide a clear roadmap towards fostering an inclusive development.

At the end of the Session, the Executive Secretary, National Human Right Commission, commended the Organizers, thanked the ECOWAS Parliament for their support and thanked the participants for their active participation throughout the conference. He noted that the recommendations reached will form the basis for the discussions at the 11th Open Ended Working Group Meeting, New York, April 2020.

Stakeholder Group on Ageing