

Statement by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People

Fifth Session of the open-ended Working Group on Ageing, 31st July – 1st August 2014

The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) is a coalition of over 100 civil society organisations from across the world that have come together to strengthen and promote the rights of older persons. The Global Alliance's mission is to support and enhance civil society's engagement at national, regional and international levels on the need for a new international instrument on the rights of older persons. The Global Alliance welcomes the appointment of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights of older persons and looks forward to contributing to the achievement of its mandate which complements that of the Open-ended Working Group.

The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People notes with concern the slow progress made by the Open-ended Working Group in fulfilling the mandate formally stated in the 2012 resolution 67/139. This resolution, adopted in full accordance with General Assembly procedures, mandated the Working Group to "consider proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons" (paragraph 1) and to "present to the General Assembly, at the earliest possible date, a proposal containing, inter alia, the main elements that should be included in an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons" (paragraph 2).

The Global Alliance is especially concerned with the lack of discussion on the main elements of a new legal instrument amongst Member States at the fourth session in 2013.

Over the course of its four sessions to date, the Working Group has identified a number of key blockages and barriers to the enjoyment of human rights in older age. The first session identified gaps in the international and regional human rights frameworks, while sessions two, three and four explored in detail the barriers impeding millions of older people from the enjoyment of their rights to non-discrimination, to health, to freedom from violence and abuse, to social security and access to resources, to social protection, to autonomy and independent living, to work and employment, to social inclusion and to access to justice.

Moreover, submissions from Member States, civil society, and other stakeholders in response to the 2013 note verbale proposed the following rights as main elements of a new legal instrument: the right to life, to an adequate standard of living, to social protection, financial security and social assistance, to access to work, to care and long term care, to health care and mental health including vital drugs and treatment, to legal services and judicial protection, to education and training, to information, to accessibility, to equal recognition before the law, to freedom of association, to participation in public and political life, to participation in a social and cultural life, to a private life, to freedom from abuse and violence, to physical security, to social services, to care and long term care, to dignity, including a dignified death, and to access to credit, establishment of business, income generation activities and ownership of property. The importance of addressing the intersection of discrimination based on different identities was also formally acknowledged.

The Global Alliance welcomes the fact that this fifth session of the Working Group will address three under-explored areas of human rights in relation to care, planning for end of life care and financial abuse. We encourage the moderators of each panel to guide the discussions to consider these various human rights dimensions, the barriers which impede enjoyment of these rights in older age, and in particular, the implications of these challenges in the context of outlining the main elements of a new legal instrument

By the close of this fifth session, the Working Group will, therefore, have explored and discussed in some detail a wide range of barriers faced by older people which prevent their enjoyment of their rights.

The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People suggests that the substantive body of work across the five sessions of the OEWG now provides the basis for a Chair's summary on the main elements of a new legal instrument. Such a summary by the Chair would be an important and essential next step towards fulfilling Resolution 67/139.

To conclude, the Global Alliance looks forward to a full and substantive discussion in this, the 5th Session of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, specific to the main elements of a new instrument to appropriately address and protect the human rights of older people.