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AFFAIRS

Opening Remarks
Thirteenth Session of the General Assembly Open-ended Working Group on
Ageing

Monday 3 April, 10:00 AM
Conference Room 2

Distinguished President of the General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to represent the Secretary-General at the opening of the thirtieth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

I congratulate the Chair, Ambassador María del Carmen Squeff, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. And I commend all of you for your tireless commitment to this process.

We meet as the compounding crises, have further undermined progress towards delivering on the vision and promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The disproportional impact on older persons of the COVID-19 pandemic is well known. Likewise, are the hard-hitting effects of war, cost-of-living hikes and the raging climate emergency.

Faced with these challenges, older persons are demanding action.

Older persons play crucial roles in their families, communities, economies, environments and political systems. However, they continue to be left behind in development processes and in policy decisions affecting their lives. It is important not only to ensure that development gains reach older persons, but also that their knowledge, experience and expertise are harnessed to support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We need to better understand the barriers that prevent the full participation of older persons in the benefits of development. Giving every person an equal chance to grow old in good health and with economic security starts by promoting equal opportunities from birth. For

addressing the non-fulfilment of rights as well as patterns of inequality and discrimination throughout the life course, gender-sensitive and intersectional perspectives are crucial.

Dear colleagues,

As Member States gear up for negotiations over the coming months in the run-up to the SDG Summit in September, and for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us recall that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is rooted in long-standing commitments of Member States to human rights and to principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Development and human rights are twin pillars of the United Nations. They are interlinked and must be upheld together.

Dear colleagues,

Earlier this year, Member States concluded the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. I am pleased to report that both governments and civil society organizations participated in this bottom-up and participatory process. In total, the review involved participants from 109 countries, which are home to 84 per cent of older persons worldwide.

For the first time in the review of the Madrid Plan of Action, there were Member States and civil society organizations from all five regions who acknowledged that an international legal instrument to protect the rights of older persons would complement and reinforce the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Building stronger legal frameworks at the national and international levels to protect the human rights of older persons is key. I take this opportunity to reiterate the Secretary-General's call to the membership of this Group to accelerate efforts to (quote) "develop proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons" .

I urge Member States and other stakeholders to support this vital work. I assure you that it will have the full support of my department every step of the way.

Thank you.
