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**Meeting with the Chairperson of the Working Group on Ageing
Report from the Chair**

Report from the Chairperson of the Working Group on Ageing

I. Improving policymaking in compliance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Population ageing represents a major demographic trend in the world and in the UNECE region in particular: by 2030 the share of region's population aged 65 and above will reach over 20 per cent. It impacts economic and societal development. Guiding and strengthening policymaking by member States to adapt to population ageing and other demographic changes are among the core activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

2. The work is governed by the Working Group on Ageing (WGA),¹ composed of National Focal Points on Ageing nominated by the respective governments of UNECE member States. The UNECE Population Unit acts as the secretariat to the WGA and enables the preparation and implementation of the WGA Programme of Work. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing older persons and/or working in ageing-related areas and the scientific community participate as observers to the Working Group and are represented in the WGA Bureau. The international organizations with programmes related to population ageing also take part in the Working Group as observers.

3. The Working Group supports the fulfilment of the policy principles set out in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and its Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) among the UNECE member States and conducts review and appraisal of MIPAA/RIS implementation every five years. In 2017, the third review and appraisal exercise was completed and the MIPAA/RIS framework was reaffirmed by the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration "A Sustainable Society for All Ages: Realizing the potential of living longer".

4. The Lisbon Ministerial Declaration and the WGA work programme provide a modality for the inclusion of older persons in the implementation and attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, including ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG1), ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG3), achieving gender equality (SDG5), promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8) as well as access to lifelong learning opportunities (SDG4), reducing inequalities (SDG10) and making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG11) as well as fostering inclusive societies (SDG16).

5. This report highlights the work undertaken by the WGA over the last 12 months and major activities planned for 2020 and beyond. Further details can be found in the report of the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Ageing, ECE/WG.1/2019/2.

II. Achievements over the past twelve months

6. The Working group on Ageing over the past year actively used the opportunities to assert that population ageing and MIPAA are/need to be an integral part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other global programmes and platforms of action. In March 2019, the WGA members from Austria, France and Germany presented their case studies on lifelong learning at the roundtable "Learning without Limits" at the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development; in April, WGA secretariat together with UNFPA and representatives of

¹ Following the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) endorsement at its 103rd meeting on 1 February 2019 of the revised terms of reference (TOR) of the Working Group on Ageing including the change of its name to "Standing Working Group on Ageing", the Commission at its sixty-eighth session in April 2019 decided to approve these changes. In July 2019, the Economic and Social Council deferred consideration of this matter to its 2020 session.

Belarus, Bulgaria, Japan and Tunisia organized and moderated a side event "Policy options for low fertility and ageing" during the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development, New York; and in October, during the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting, France, Germany, Italy, WGA secretariat and European Commission held a side event on Ageing and its implications on gender equality.

7. The active involvement and initiatives of the WGA members ensured successful implementation of the 2019 work programme as briefly presented below.

A. Policy seminar “Informal care for persons with dementia”

8. The 2019 UNECE Policy Seminar on Ageing focused on support for informal carers of people with dementia and was held back-to-back with the annual meeting of the Working Group on Ageing. Against the backdrop of changing family structures, enhanced mobility and longer working lives, the societal capacity to provide informal care comes under increased pressure. The growing prevalence of dementia represents a particularly challenging situation for affected families. A number of countries in the region have recognized and addressed this policy challenge by developing national dementia strategies and support measures for affected families. The policy seminar provided a dedicated space for in-depth discussion, experience exchange and peer learning in this important policy area. A unique opportunity for participants in 2019 was to learn about informal care policy in Switzerland, the Geneva action plan for dementia and support measures by the canton and city of Geneva, through two site visits in the afternoon organized at the initiative of Switzerland.

B. Policy Briefs on Ageing with good practice examples

9. In 2019, two issues of Policy Briefs on Ageing were published: “Combating Ageing in the World of Work” (No. 21, February 2019) and “The challenging roles of informal carers” (No. 22, September 2019). Two further policy briefs were under preparation: No. 23 “Gender Equality in Ageing Societies” – at the initiative of and with the substantive contribution of France - to mark the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality and No. 24 “Ageing in Sustainable and Smart Cities”. The latter is a WGA contribution to the UNECE Nexus on Sustainable and Smart Cities for all ages and financially supported by Germany.

10. Policy Briefs on Ageing are prepared on the topics selected by the members of the WGA. They suggest policy measures and promote the exchange of good practice examples among member States. Many of the briefs are translated into several languages (French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian and Spanish) by the member States.

C. Capacity-building:

Road Map projects and Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing

11. At its eleventh meeting the WGA agreed to commence a new Road Map project in support of the development of a national strategy on ageing in Belarus. Two field missions were conducted by the secretariat in December 2018 and April 2019, supported by the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Road Map put forward 65 recommendations in the areas of MIPAA/RIS commitments. In April 2019, the roadmap’s method and draft recommendations were discussed with authorities in Belarus. Majority of them were taken into account in devising a national strategy “Dignified longevity 2030”. The **Road Map on mainstreaming ageing in Belarus** was presented to the Belarus stakeholders at the Forum “Dignified Longevity: equal opportunities for all generations” on 1 October 2019 in Minsk and published in December 2019.

12. Another request to develop a Road Map for mainstreaming ageing was received in 2019 from the Government of Kazakhstan and accepted by the UNECE Executive Secretary. The work on a desk study commenced in late fall of 2019. The first field mission is taking place in January 2020.

13. The decision to develop **guidelines for mainstreaming ageing** and to establish a Task Force to lead this work were taken at the eleventh meeting of the WGA in November 2018. The Task Force on Mainstreaming Ageing started its work in June 2019. It developed and piloted a stocktaking questionnaire for the preparation of country notes and invited all members of the Working Group on

Ageing to take part in the stocktaking on mainstreaming ageing across the UNECE region. By the end of 2019, 15 member States had prepared country notes on mainstreaming ageing and shared the experience in preparing them during the annual WGA meeting.

D. Monitoring implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking

14. An important area under the WGA Programme of Work is monitoring the implementation of MIPAA/RIS and strengthening the evidence base for policymaking. In this regard, the Working Group supports the wider use of the **Active Ageing Index (AAI)**.² The index provides a composite measure for active ageing outcomes and the capacity/enabling environment for it and is used as a tool to monitor the outcome of active ageing policies. In June 2019, the “2018 Active Ageing Index: Analytical Report” was launched at the AAI Stakeholder meeting in Brussels. Thanks to the growing interest among countries new pilot studies at subnational level were conducted in Romania and Spain in 2019 and their results were presented at the respective national seminars on the AAI. The 2018 AAI was also calculated for a number of non-European Union (EU) countries: Norway, Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia; while revisions were ongoing for the Republic of Moldova. Most of these activities were implemented under the umbrella of UNECE/European Commission jointly managed AAI-phase III project that ended on 31 August 2019.³

15. The evidence on intergenerational and gender relationships within the family and society that **Generations and Gender Programme (GGP)** builds with its cross-nationally comparable surveys supports population-related policymaking. The latest survey was completed in Kazakhstan in June 2019 with a sample of 15,000 respondents. An agreement to run the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) was signed by the Republic of Moldova in January 2019; the fielding is set to start in early 2020. The Programme is governed by the Consortium Board, of which the UNECE is a member. The Population Unit coordinates the GGP network of national teams (Council of Partners) and has a role in bridging the Programme governance with national teams responsible for GGP implementation.

III. Major planned activities for 2020 and beyond

16. The Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat will continue working towards its main objective to enhance the implementation of MIPAA/RIS in UNECE member States and meet the goals of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration. The WGA activities and outputs for 2020 and beyond will fall under the main elements of the Programme of Work for the fourth cycle of MIPAA/RIS (2018–2022). Among them:

A. Policy seminars on ageing

17. The policy seminars or “master-classes” that focus on specific policy challenges and responses developed by member States will be organized back-to-back with annual Working Group meetings to facilitate participation. The topic for the policy seminar in November 2020 will be decided at the WGA Bureau meeting in April 2020 based on the outcomes of consultation with all the member States via an online questionnaire. Germany is providing the necessary funding to ensure interpretation (English–Russian) and expert support.

B. Policy Briefs on Ageing

18. Policy Briefs remain an important element of the Programme of Work for 2018–2022 as they provide evidence-based policy advice on specific aspects of MIPAA/RIS and showcase good practices from across the region. The briefs No. 23 “Gender Equality in Ageing Societies” and No. 24 “Ageing in Sustainable and Smart Cities” will be finalized and launched respectively ahead

² <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/AAI/Active+Ageing+Index+Home>

³ Evaluation of the third phase of the AAI was conducted by an independent consultant (July–September 2019). Report is available on <http://www.unece.org/info/open-unece/evaluation-and-audit.html>

of International Women's Day and for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. One new Policy Brief on older persons in emergency situations will be developed in 2020. Its focus and content were discussed by the WGA at its twelfth meeting in November 2019.

19. The UNECE member States are invited to translate Policy Briefs into national languages to make them accessible to a wider circle of professionals, policymakers and NGOs/volunteers.

C. Capacity-building on ageing-related issues

20. The WGA Task Force on Mainstreaming Ageing and a consultant will work on preparing **Guidelines for mainstreaming ageing** based on the information collected using the stocktaking questionnaire. The draft Guidelines will be tabled for discussion at the thirteenth WGA meeting in 2020. The launch and promotion activities are planned for 2021 including a conference during Portugal's presidency of the Council of the EU (January–June 2021).

21. At the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Ageing in November 2019, member States agreed to prepare and publish a repository of country notes on mainstreaming ageing in preparation of the upcoming fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy.

22. In 2020, the Working Group on Ageing will be also supporting the development of the Road Map on mainstreaming ageing in Kazakhstan. Its finalisation is tentatively planned for October 2020.

D. Preparations for the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

23. Preparations for the fourth cycle of MIPAA/RIS review and appraisal (2018–2022) have started with discussions on the timeline and modalities during the 12th meeting of the WGA in November 2019 at which an informal working group composed of members of the Bureau was established to develop guiding instructions for national focal points and stakeholders for the preparation of country reports. The instructions are planned to be issued by the Bureau in September 2020, so that countries have 12 months to prepare their reports before the submission deadline of September 2021. The Working Group will start acting as a preparatory committee for the fifth UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, and the Bureau will divide tasks between a declaration drafting group and a conference preparation group at the thirteenth WGA meeting in November 2020.

24. Two decades after MIPAA adoption at the Second World Summit on Ageing, a 20-year review of its implementation may be considered and the decision in this regard will be taken by the WGA once the modalities for a global MIPAA review are agreed upon.

IV. Cooperation with other organizations

25. The Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat maintain good cooperation with the international organizations active in the area of population ageing in the UNECE region. Close relationships have been maintained with the European Commission, World Health Organization (WHO) Europe and the UNFPA Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECARO) in Istanbul. On an annual basis, the UNECE Population Unit and the EECARO exchange information on their work programmes and discuss possible joint activities.

26. The UNECE Population Unit coordinates an informal Geneva-based inter-agency group on ageing, with representatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Social Security Association (ISSA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UNFPA Geneva office, the WHO, and the NGO Committee on Ageing. The meetings of the inter-agency group take place once or twice a year to mutually update on planned ageing-related activities and discuss how the group members could be involved in/benefit from each other's activities. The inter-agency group's work has already enriched the work of the WGA by

providing substantive contributions to several annual meetings and organizing various events and expert exchanges.

27. At the global level, the UNECE Population Unit is a member of the United Nations-wide inter-agency group on ageing and actively participates in the regular (virtual) meetings with its counterparts in other regional commissions, in particular with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP).

V. Mobilizing financial support for the WGA work programme in 2020–2022

28. The ambitious WGA Programme of Work for 2018–2022 is entering into its second half and the member States decided to mobilize financial support for activities directed to improve capacities of UNECE countries in developing evidence-based policy measures to meet their commitments under MIPAA/RIS and 2017 Lisbon Ministerial Declaration. The proposal outlining a number of programme activities that would need extrabudgetary support was discussed at the WGA meeting in November and by the end of 2019 contributions received from Austria, Estonia, Germany, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland amounted to approximately USD 350,000 in total.
