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## **IV Non-Governmental Organizations' and Research Forum Declarations**

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### **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS' POLITICAL DECLARATION**

1. We, the NGOs contributing to the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Vienna, 19-20 September 2012;

2. Recognizing that much has to be done to achieve the aims and objectives of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and insisting that fiscal uncertainty is not an excuse for inaction;

3. Recalling the León Ministerial Declaration in which NGOs were recognized as playing "a significant role in representing people and their needs in society and thus can contribute to policymaking";

4. Reaffirming that MIPAA and its political declaration constitute a forward-looking response on the part of governments to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing in the twenty-first century and that if MIPAA is to succeed, Member States need to implement the three priority actions of MIPAA that they themselves have agreed: older persons in development; advancing health and well-being into old age; ensuring enabling and supportive environments;

5. Noting with concern problems with the effectiveness of MIPAA as a political tool given the non-binding nature of the agreement, its lack of concrete time-bound targets and comprehensive accountability;

6. Further noting with disappointment: i) the lack of awareness of MIPAA; ii) the failure of over one third of UNECE Member States to complete reviews of MIPAA in the current cycle; and iii) the lack of implementation of the "bottom-up" review process across UNECE Member States resulting in the almost total absence of civil society involvement in the review at the national level, where such discussions would have had greatest impact;

7. Reaffirming the rights of older persons and the obligations of Member States to protect those rights;

8. Recognizing that efforts to address the needs and aspirations of older people require ongoing intergenerational dialogue, cooperation, communication and the full participation of all age groups;

9. Further recognizing the need to value older persons and their multiple contributions to society, and rejecting any notion of discrimination based on age;

10. Insisting that assured social, physical, material and financial security is a fundamental prerequisite for ageing in dignity in all societies and at all times;

11. In the interests of achieving the aims and objectives of MIPAA, urge UNECE Member States to:

a. Protect the rights of older persons by: i) enforcing legislation that already exists; ii) promoting good practice that enables older persons to understand and claim their rights; iii) strengthening national, regional and international human rights legislation including the continuation of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing; and iv) appointing ombudspersons in every UNECE Member State in order to offer older persons greater legal recourse;

b. Strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and review of MIPAA by: i) setting time-bound targets and commitments; ii) developing specific indicators with the involvement of older persons and NGOs for monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of MIPAA; iii) supporting the submission of NGO shadow reports at MIPAA reviews; and iv) establishing a schedule of interim meetings between NGOs and relevant national ministers in the years between the mandatory five-year reviews of MIPAA;

c. Eliminate poverty and inequality among older persons by: ensuring adequate incomes, including universal access to non-contributory pensions and equal access to essential goods and services;

d. Facilitate access to decent work and adequate pay for persons of all ages by: i) abolishing mandatory retirement ages; ii) eliminating discrimination on the basis of age for access to work and pay across the life course; iii) implementing flexible working practices that meet the needs of older persons; iv) supporting retraining programmes for older workers; and v) supporting older workers in the informal sector;

e. Recognize, make visible and support the multiple contributions of older people to society and to the benefit of people of all ages, including knowledge and life experience, caring, educating, homemaking, working and volunteering;

f. Guarantee access to lifelong learning across the life course, recognizing that access to affordable high-quality education, informal and non-formal learning for people of all ages is necessary to strengthen older persons' participation in society, increasing social inclusion and reducing discrimination;

g. Strengthen the autonomy of older persons and their inclusion in the community by investing in age-friendly environments, including: local infrastructure, transport, adaptable housing and products, social and personal support services, and local facilities;

h. Provide free access to: i) high-quality and gender-specific health and social care services, including investment in gerontological training of care personnel and their adequate remuneration; ii) mental health and dementia services, including preventative and rehabilitation services; and iii) adequate pain management and palliative care;

i. Put in place national quality standards to regulate health and social care services in both community and institutional settings involving older persons in the monitoring, evaluation and review of those standards;

j. Take action to prohibit, prevent and redress acts of abuse, neglect and violence by: i) reviewing laws and policies and implementing existing legislation; ii) raising awareness and providing appropriate social support systems; and iii) implementing transparent complaint mechanisms;

k. Take action on the gender-specific rights and needs of women and men, including: addressing the vulnerability of older women who often live in greater poverty; and meeting the specific needs of older vulnerable men living in isolation;

l. Recognize the vulnerability of older migrants and other marginalized groups and put in place measures to assure them adequate social protection and equal access to services;

m. Take forward the commitments and values of MIPAA in eliminating poverty and meeting the needs of older persons internationally by: i) mainstreaming ageing in development cooperation; ii) strengthening age and sex-disaggregated data collection globally; and iii) ensuring that issues relating to ageing and older persons are fully integrated into the post-2015 Development Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals;

n. Ensure that the commitments and values of MIPAA are carried forward in other international agreements, including, but not limited to: the UN Principles for Older Persons of 1991; the Declaration on the Right to Development; the Millennium Declaration; and all relevant human rights instruments;

o. Engage and collaborate actively with civil society and older persons to ensure that the commitments made at the present Ministerial Conference are fully realized.

12. In conclusion, we the NGOs expect the UNECE Member States to: i) recognize fully the role of NGOs in achieving the commitments entered into both at the present Ministerial Conference and in the original MIPAA agreement; ii) convene planning meetings with organized civil society at the national level in each Member State by March 2013 to take forward those commitments; and iii) report publicly, both nationally and regionally, on the results of those meetings by the end of June 2013.

## VIENNA RESEARCH FORUM STATEMENT

1. We have come together at the Research Forum in Vienna, Austria, to contribute to the Ministerial Conference on Ageing with its theme “Ensuring a Society for All Ages: Promoting quality of life and active ageing”. We unequivocally support the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). We are convinced that the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for MIPAA (UNECE RIS/MIPAA)<sup>39</sup> is a sound framework for policy actions on ageing in our countries. We are also convinced that such actions will have to be informed by and founded on valid, reliable, representative and timely evidence drawn from high-quality multidisciplinary research on ageing, incorporating life course perspective and placing an essential focus on gender.

2. We realize that our region and the entire world have been undergoing important demographic change with social, familial, economic, political and technological implications, and population ageing will be one of the most powerful forces driving these global transformations. Through research and knowledge dissemination, we want to understand the full extent and significance of these transformations and contribute to capacity development in designing appropriate policy responses. Emphasis needs to be placed towards capacity-building in gerontological expertise, so as to assist shaping the society for all ages consistent with the goals of MIPAA/RIS, as well as in securing and enhancing the dividends of longevity gains. This requires a significant investment in the development of academic centres in the field of research on ageing, as well as rolling out training programmes in the field of gerontology to ensure an effective provision of all essential social and health services.

3. We recognize that researchers and research institutions of the UNECE region are among those leading the global efforts in identifying the mechanisms of individual and population ageing and therefore we have a special responsibility to share the scientific analysis of ageing and its implications with the rest of the world. To realize this endeavour, adequate and timely funding is required from both public and private sources and also obligations to make all necessary data accessible to researchers, policymakers and practitioners. We must do more and better research to counter the growing concerns often raised in policy debates in which population ageing is seen as a burden to the society, in particular during times of

economic crisis, and elaborate approaches for removing the institutional and social barriers in mobilizing the potential of older people.

4. We acknowledge in particular that Eastern Europe countries, as well as countries of the former Soviet Union, in recent decades have undergone multifaceted transitions and gathered invaluable experiences in addressing numerous challenges of building cohesive and prosperous societies. Many of these countries have also been adjusting to their demographic transition by developing policies for active and healthy ageing, by reforming their pension systems, by reorganizing labour markets and by modernizing their health and social care systems. These countries need to be supported further in building research capacity and in formulating evidence-informed policymaking, especially in view of the fact that efforts to deal with the crisis may undermine attempts to improve the programmes that exist in these countries to enhance well-being and social integration of older people. Reciprocity is required in drawing lessons across the countries of the UNECE region.

5. We note the progress achieved within the priority areas for policy-related research on ageing outlined in the Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century.<sup>40</sup> We are eager to see that the results of this research are translated into good practices, evaluated and applied in more effective and efficient policy responses to the challenges and opportunities of ageing. To achieve this, the policy formulation and its evaluation must be performed through a concerted and well-coordinated engagement of experts from public authorities, research institutions, academia, civil society, including employers and advocacy groups, trade unions, the business sector, older people themselves and representatives from younger generations, not just at the national level but also at the regional and local levels. Policies should clearly seek to respond to the needs and preferences of older persons by giving them the opportunity to make their voices and opinions heard as experts in their own right, and all new initiatives or policy developments should aim to promote active and healthy ageing and the quality of life among the current and future generations of older people.

6. We regard the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework on Knowledge translation<sup>41</sup> as a useful tool for promoting evidence informed policy in various areas

<sup>39</sup> [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/\\_docs/ece/2002/ECE\\_AC23\\_2002\\_2\\_Rev6\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/_docs/ece/2002/ECE_AC23_2002_2_Rev6_e.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> [www.imsersomayores.csic.es/documentos/documentos/desa-agenda-01.pdf](http://www.imsersomayores.csic.es/documentos/documentos/desa-agenda-01.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> [www.who.int/ageing/projects/knowledge\\_translation/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/knowledge_translation/en/index.html)

of individual and population ageing. “Strengthening the evidence base and research” has been singled out as one of the four strategic priority areas for the WHO strategy and action plan for healthy ageing in Europe, 2012–2020.<sup>42</sup> We welcome the initiatives of the *Road Map for European Ageing Research*, resulting from the FUTURAGE project funded by the European Commission<sup>43</sup> and the European Research Area in Ageing (ERA-AGE) resulting in Europe’s first post-doctoral programme in the ageing field (FLARE) and the first European ageing research funded jointly by several European countries – Active and Healthy Ageing Across the Life Course. We also acknowledge the significance of the *European Social Charter* and the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights* that help strengthen human rights of older people, as well as the EU Directives against age discrimination and the recent *European Charter on the rights and responsibilities of older persons in need of assistance*.

7. The 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the pilot *European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing* (EIPAH)<sup>44</sup> and the Joint Programming Initiative “More Years, Better Lives – The Potential and Challenges of Demographic Change”<sup>45</sup>, as well as the EU programme “Ambient Assisted Living”<sup>46</sup> have initiated a more systematic process, identifying how research and innovation can best enhance and highlight the contribution that older people make to society. These initiatives, as well as the *Active Ageing Index* (AAI) developed at the European Centre Vienna for the European Commission, have the explicit purpose to encourage policymakers and relevant stakeholders at all levels to take the most appropriate policy actions, with the goal of ensuring that longevity gains are not just additional years of life but an asset for social and economic development.

8. Exchange of knowledge, practice and policy experiences on ageing can make indispensable contribution at national, cross-national, and cross-cultural levels. To

ensure such exchanges, both a sustainable structure and an ongoing process are needed and it must involve all key stakeholders from various parts of our region, most importantly older people as well as younger generations, to empower their interests further. We believe that such requirements in the UNECE region can be met by forming the online *Research Application and Dissemination Platform on Ageing* (REAP-AGE). The formation of an initiating multidisciplinary group for exploring the feasibility of this proposal would be required at the first stage of such an endeavour.

9. The proposed platform would involve international experts from public and private sectors, academia, civil society, the business sector, and labour and trade unions as well as older people to help translate research findings into policy options and specific recommendations for policy actions. It would serve as a forum for exchanging innovative scientific ideas, help in designing rigorous studies, analysing research findings and monitoring current research and policy advancements, in order to identify the most promising replicable models (best practices) to inform evidence-based policy action on ageing. It would also provide opportunities for international experts to train each other in the development, analysis and dissemination of data on ageing. It can become a bridge between Western, Central and Eastern European countries and the countries of the former Soviet Union to share experiences in evidence-based policy action on ageing and to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experts between various countries in developing national capacity in the area of ageing.

10. European countries are entering the third cycle (2013–2017) in implementing the UNECE RIS/MIPAA, and we (the participants of the Vienna Research Forum) commit ourselves to producing and disseminating the essential evidence to inform policy efforts aimed at reaching the goal of the MIPAA: A Society for all Ages.

<sup>42</sup> [www.euro.who.int/en/who-we-are/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/sixty-second-session](http://www.euro.who.int/en/who-we-are/governance/regional-committee-for-europe/sixty-second-session)

<sup>43</sup> [futurage.group.shef.ac.uk](http://futurage.group.shef.ac.uk)

<sup>44</sup> [ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index\\_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing](http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing)

<sup>45</sup> [www.jp-demographic.eu](http://www.jp-demographic.eu)

<sup>46</sup> [www.aal-europe.eu](http://www.aal-europe.eu)