

Joint NGO Concluding Statement

Human Rights Council Social Forum 2014

3rd April 2014

This joint NGO statement is presented on behalf of:

AARP
Age International
Age Platform Europe
Aide-Federation, Morocco
Care Rights, Republic of Korea
HelpAge International
International Longevity Centre Global Alliance
International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)
Network Humanas, Serbia
Older Women's Network Europe
Organisation des Femmes Instigation, Morocco
Red Cross Serbia
Resource Centre for the Elderly, Kyrgyzstan
Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA)

We thank the Chair and the Secretariat for their organisation of this Social Forum and all the participants for their valuable contributions.

We welcome the fact that this Social Forum has recognized both the common and distinct experience of discrimination that women and men face in old age and we call upon Member States to take action to increase the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on different grounds to expose complex multiple and intersectional discrimination in old age.

We also welcome the fact that this Social Forum has dispelled any myths there may have been about the validity of the arguments put forward against a new convention that have hitherto polarised the current debate around older people's rights.

This Social Forum has confirmed that existing guidance, principles, general comments and recommendations across the international human rights system have not and can not result in adequate protection and promotion of older people's rights by States' parties and other stakeholders.

The Social Forum has also firmly established that existing international human rights standards themselves are incomplete in that they fail to prohibit

discrimination in old age and do not cover the range of human rights violations that older people experience.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights herself emphasized in her opening Statement that “the rights of individuals do not rest on a calculation of their net input to society”. Economic arguments as a reason not to extend protection of older people’s rights have been resoundingly refuted at this Social Forum.

Evidence presented at this Social Forum has clearly shown that these arguments against a new convention as a tool to further the rights of older people are invalid.

Wetherefore call on Member States to ensure that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing fulfill its mandate by discussing what protections, standards and guarantees are necessary to adequately respond to the human rights challenges that older people face.

We also call upon members of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure the work of the new Independent Expert helps foster a more substantive and in depth exploration of these issues, both here in Geneva and in the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing.

It is absolutely critical that older women and men are afforded every opportunity to directly input their lived experience into these critical discussions at the UN level. Special measures need to be taken by members of the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and the new Independent Expert to ensure older women and men are able to contribute fully to the proceedings.

For example, Member States should consult with older women and men at the national level before the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing sessions. Agenda items should be made available well in advance of the sessions so such consultations can be meaningful. Member States should also include older people in their Government delegations. Older people should be invited onto every panel and greater use of web-based technology, and video links and social media should be made to allow more older women and men to make presentations and input into the discussions remotely.

The current failure to consistently include older women and men from debates about their rights is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue.

We therefore call on Member States, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and the new Independent Expert to more proactively facilitate the direct participation of older people in discussions about their rights at both the national and UN levels.