



5<sup>th</sup> July 2017

## Introductory Statement for 8<sup>th</sup> Session of UN OEWG by AGE Platform Europe

Madame Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of AGE Platform Europe, which through its member organisations represents more than 40 million older persons across the European Union. AGE welcomes the thematic focus of this session, which illustrates a constructive political shift towards discussing elements of a new convention and moves away from a futile debate.

We appreciate the positive approach several major European countries as well as the EU are taking. We are also encouraged by the participation of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in this Open-Ended Working Group. We are however concerned that the panels do not include a single representative of an organisation of older persons. As we move towards a more substantive discussion, it is important that the voice of older persons remains at the centre of this Working Group.

Madame Chair, in June AGE Platform Europe has invited EU Member States, civil society, NHRIs and experts to participate in a conference on the normative aspects of equality and abuse in old age. These discussions exposed that discrimination and abuse against older persons are widespread across all EU countries, but also largely invisible and generally accepted as business as usual.

Several national examples illustrated that older people are treated in unequal and undignified ways, whereas such treatment is widely tolerated, even where legal and policy frameworks exist. These protections gaps cannot be tackled unless we change the way that institutions and individuals view the ageing population. The disenfranchisement of older people and the diminishment of their dignity is not only a problem for older persons but for every human being, to the extent that we continue to interpret universal human rights in diverging, fragmented and uneven ways across our lives.

Madame Chair, we hope that the discussions in this session will not shy away from thorny issues that impede everyone from enjoying equal rights in old age. We encourage Member States to be critical about the ageist assumptions that are integrated in their traditions, laws and policies and they should see what further action needs to be taken to ensure that older persons can equally enjoy their human rights. We invite everyone to reflect on the 'how' and 'why' the lived reality of old age falls short of the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all to contribute to the work to remedy this.

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