Key Messages of the Regional Working Meeting on a new legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons: An Opportunity for Regional Leadership and Collaboration

In attendance of



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1 **Human rights don't fade with age.** Yet, older persons face unique human rights challenges, such as age-based discrimination; inadequate social protection or access to health care, right to work issues, lack of autonomy in decision-making, digital exclusion and vulnerability to violence, neglect, and abuse.

2 **Milestone move towards closing protection gaps.** Analysis by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights illustrates that the existing human rights framework is inadequate when it comes to older persons. Most international instruments, for example, lack an explicit prohibition of age-based discrimination, and older persons remain largely invisible in findings and recommendations by the international human rights mechanisms. The new legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons that States have decided to draft, will address these gaps, create standards to combat ageism and accountability mechanisms to make sure that older persons' human rights are upheld.

3 **Tool for empowerment and recognition of older persons.** The recognition of older persons as holders of rights shifts the narrative from vulnerability, burden and dependence to one of agency, autonomy and active inclusion. A dedicated human rights instrument catalyzes legal and policy reform and empowers older persons to claim their rights. It gives older persons across the world - in all their diversity - a common cause to rally around.

4 **Nothing About Us Without Us.** Inclusion and participation are central tenets of human rights that should guide the drafting process of the new legally binding instrument. Older persons' full and substantive participation from the outset is critical. Their lived experience provides a reality check for what the instrument should address. States should also consider including older persons in their delegations, building on good practice from drafting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

5 **Opportunity for EU leadership.** The new legally binding instrument is a significant opportunity for the EU and its Member States to reaffirm their commitment to multilateralism and to demonstrate collective leadership on ageing and human rights. Building on good practice from previous treaty-making processes, they should engage early and decisively in drafting a strong, globally relevant instrument on older persons' rights—one that aligns with EU values and realities and reinforces existing laws. The EU has a critical role to play in coordinating a common EU position, in ensuring legal clarity and coherence and in promoting meaningful participation of civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and older persons themselves in the drafting process

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Want to know more?
Intergovernmental Working Group on older persons