



AGE Platform Europe Statement at United Nations Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons

Session 1 – Limitations and gaps of selected human rights norms and obligations

29 August 2022

Thank you, Ms. Chair.

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, panelists, and colleagues,

I am speaking on behalf of AGE Platform Europe, the largest EU network of organisations of and for older persons.

In the European Union, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically shed light on the so-called '*vulnerabilities*' of older persons. It exposed ageism like never before: older persons suffered from isolation and loneliness, leading to mental health problems. Because of the reduction of staff in long-term care facilities, they experienced increased violence, abuse, and neglect. Online, older persons were the target of hate speech, even described as a burden to society.

Already depicted as a frail, vulnerable and homogeneous group – notably in the media – the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced stigmatisation of older persons and showed how our governments and institutions have failed in protecting and fulfilling their human rights. Yet this is nothing new. Older persons have faced age discrimination for years: inequality and discrimination in areas such as education, employment and living conditions; lack of full and effective participation in decision-making; inadequate income and pensions; lack of access to health and long-term care services; lack of support in emergency situations, including the current conflict in Ukraine, poverty; and social exclusion.

These challenges may be even worse for groups who face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination such as older women, older Roma people, older LGBTI people and older persons with disabilities.

In the current international human rights framework, ageism is not explicitly recognised as a form of discrimination but falls under '*other status*', limiting its enforcement in practice. States do not have explicit obligations to implement concrete measures to fight and eliminate ageism.

Let's not wait for another pandemic to highlight and heighten the gaps and challenges that older persons face in their daily lives. Let's work towards the drafting and adoption of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons now.

Apolline Parel (she/her)
Human Rights Officer
AGE Platform Europe
Apolline.parel@age-platform.eu





AGE work is co-funded by the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme** of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of AGE Platform Europe and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission. Transparency Register ID: 16549972091-86



AGE Platform Europe Statement at United Nations Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons

Session 2 – Adequacy of existing human rights mechanisms in responding to the challenges

29 August 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As mentioned in the report of the High Commissioner (A/HRC/49/70), the existing UN human rights mechanisms on the rights of older persons are not adequate. They fail to respond effectively to ageism and age discrimination. This contrasts with other forms of discrimination such as ableism, racism, and sexism, for which specific treaties exist.

The current human rights framework is severely lacking for older persons. For example, in case of risks and humanitarian emergencies, their rights are only covered under Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Yet, the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine shows that in practice the rights of older Ukrainians – whether they are staying or fleeing the country– are not provided for in the same way as the rights of persons with disabilities.

The lack of human rights mechanisms to address the challenges older persons face exposes them to further danger. For instance, older persons are ignored in the procedures that monitor human rights treaties. Constant monitoring of the human rights of older persons are important so that States can implement concrete actions, notably national action plans, to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of older persons.

The inclusion of civic society organisations in this monitoring process is crucial, in particular representative organisations who represent the voices of older persons. Membership organisations bring not only the experiences of older persons forward, but they also bring technical expertise: only older persons themselves know the structural barriers they face and what concrete solutions they would like to see put forward.

To tackle the discriminatory issues older persons face, we need to recognise them. To respect, protect and fulfil, once and for all, the human rights of older persons, we need to develop human rights mechanisms designed by and for older persons. It is high time that the international community starts drafting a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

My question is the following: how can we ensure that older persons are systematically consulted, notably when monitoring progress on the human rights situation of older persons?

Apolline Parel (she/her)
Human Rights Officer
AGE Platform Europe
apolline.parel@age-platform.eu



AGE Platform Europe | A society for ALL ages
Avenue de Tervueren/Tervurenlaan 168, box 2, 1150 Brussels, Belgium
www.age-platform.eu | info@age-platform.eu | +32 2 280 14 70



AGE work is co-funded by the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme** of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of AGE Platform Europe and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission. Transparency Register ID: 16549972091-86



AGE Platform Europe Statement at United Nations Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons

Session 3 – Strengthening coordinated actions for the protection of the human rights of older persons

30 August 2022

Thank you, Ms. Chair.

How do we strengthen coordinated actions to address violations of the human rights of older persons when there is no legally binding instrument that explicitly recognise ageism as a form of discrimination? How do we strengthen coordinated multilateral actions when there is no instrument on which to establish minimum standards?

The absence of a consistent international legally binding instrument prevents the establishment of a set of objectives and limits the implementation of a human rights-based approach by Member States at national level.

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would strengthen cooperation at international, regional, national, and local levels. It would allow States to adopt domestic legislation implementing the provisions of such an instrument and effectively tackling the violations of the human rights of older persons in many cross-sectional issues.

This convention would strengthen cooperation not only between States, but also with relevant stakeholders such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), notably membership organisations, representing the voices of older persons. Indeed, States must involve older persons in the conception of laws, policies, and strategies – including membership organisations – to truly develop inclusive societies in which decisions are grounded on the lived experiences of all citizens. Civil society actors should not be left behind but included in the discussions and consultations.

The European Union and EU Member States must play a leading role in advancing a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. This is our responsibility if we want to achieve a European Union of Equality, a society that works for ALL ages.

Such a legally binding international instrument would provide for a stronger coordinated cooperation based on enhanced dialogue and rights-based language. It would lead to concrete enforceable actions and in fine to the advancement of the human rights of older persons.

Apolline Parel (she/her)
Human Rights Officer
AGE Platform Europe
apolline.parel@age-platform.eu



AGE Platform Europe | A society for ALL ages
Avenue de Tervueren/Tervurenlaan 168, box 2, 1150 Brussels, Belgium
www.age-platform.eu | info@age-platform.eu | +32 2 280 14 70



AGE work is co-funded by the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme** of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of AGE Platform Europe and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission. Transparency Register ID: 16549972091-86



AGE Platform Europe Statement at United Nations Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on the Human Rights of Older Persons

Session 4 – Towards strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

30 August 2022

Thank you Ambassador,

The Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and older persons themselves have all recognised the inadequacy of the current human rights mechanisms on the rights of older persons. How much more evidence is needed for member States to finally adopt a coherent and comprehensive legally binding instrument?

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons will explicitly recognise ageism as a discrimination and make sure that member States take concrete actions to protect older persons' human rights. It would ensure that older persons' rights are effectively taken into account by the UN system, driving change at different levels: international, regional and national.

It would acknowledge the diversity of older persons, recognising the structural multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination they face.

It would guarantee the involvement of older persons in all processes that affect their human rights. It would allow them to claim their rights, notably through individual complaints to treaty bodies.

It would ensure adequate accountability mechanisms for civil society organisations to monitor progress made by governments.

The mandate of the Independent Expert for the full enjoyment of all human rights by older persons is crucial in ensuring that stakeholders share best practices at all levels.

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons using a human rights-based approach and language would encourage structural changes that will benefit everyone, no matter their age. Our societies are ageing, this is not a fatality but rather the chance to count on more people's experiences and expertise in tackling the challenges that lie ahead of us. Let not renounce that chance.

Thank you.



Apolline Parel (she/her)
Human Rights Officer
AGE Platform Europe
apolline.parel@age-platform.eu



AGE work is co-funded by the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme** of the European Union.
The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of AGE Platform Europe and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission. Transparency Register ID: 16549972091-86