Joint statement to the 41st Session of the Human Rights Council

Annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights
Technical cooperation and capacity building in the field of human rights
10th July 2019

We welcome the focus of this agenda item on the rights of older persons and thank the panelists for their contributions.

The report by the Office of the High Commissioner and the discussions today reflect the unfortunate reality that technical cooperation and capacity building in this area is extremely limited and that most activities undertaken fail to address the human rights of older persons.

As the report highlights, ageing continues to be understood as a vulnerability and challenge to be overcome. Older persons are objectified as contributors whose capacities must be ‘tapped’. Activities focus primarily on active or healthy ageing, wellbeing, older people’s needs and basic services.

Core human rights issues such as eliminating age discrimination, preventing violence, abuse and neglect, ensuring dignity, autonomy and independence, and addressing the deprivation of liberty, denial of legal capacity and access to justice in older age are not addressed.

A notable exception in the report is that of technical cooperation and capacity building in the Americas Region based on the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons.

A comprehensive international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons would provide the framework essential to ensure future technical cooperation and capacity building truly contributes to better protection and promotion of the rights of older persons.

Human rights education programmes need to include older persons to combat the prevalent ageism in society. The side event today at 13:00 in room XXV will continue this debate and propose a way forward.