



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

**United Nations virtual Expert Group Meeting
2-5, March 2021**

**Building Forward Better for Older
Persons post COVID-19**

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to an unprecedented halt and upended societies, and its ramifications are expected to be long lasting. The crisis has also intensified or brought to the forefront other trends, including rampant and growing inequalities, the vulnerability in economies around the world and in our social protection systems, including health care, and the impact human development has on the natural world.

Yet, such a volatile environment provides the opportunity to choose a different type of future. A deliberate concerted action could harness recovery efforts towards building more inclusive communities, and a more sustainable world. Older persons, who have faced specific and differentiated challenges during the pandemic, will continue to require an informed, inclusive and targeted response as countries engage in recovery efforts¹.

In the Policy Brief “The Impact of Covid-19 on Older Persons”, the UN Secretary General already identified some of the issues that policies will need to pay attention to in ensuring the full inclusion of older persons in recovery efforts. These include, but are not limited to, strengthening health care and social protection systems, improving access to care and support - including long term care, addressing ageism in all its forms, close the digital divide, strengthen services to prevent and protect older persons from violence and abuse and promote the disaggregation of relevant data so that policies are evidence-based. Some sub-groups of older persons, such as those in humanitarian crises or convicted older adults will require targeted action.² Further, policies must integrate the intersectional discrimination faced by many older persons.

Building forward better initiatives should also harness the opportunities provided by demographic ageing, by changing the prevailing narrative on old age whereby older persons are considered a burden to society, towards one that recognize their contributions, realize their right to participation, and identify areas where older persons could further support recovery efforts if given the appropriate conditions.³

¹ United Nations, DESA (April, 2020) “[Issue brief: older persons and covid-19](#)”

² United Nations (May 2020) “[Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons](#)”

³ See SG Report A/75/218

Purpose

With the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a background for discussions, this Expert Group meeting will bring together international experts, representatives of member states and relevant stakeholders to explore and propose some specific recommendations on how to ensure that ageing and older persons are adequately addressed, included, and actively engaged in post-COVID 19 recovery efforts.

The conclusions and recommendations of this expert group meeting will serve to position UNDESA to better support Member States in the context of two important policy processes: (a) the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and (b) the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

The legislative mandate for this meeting was established by the General Assembly through Resolution A/RES/74/125.

Methodology

The meeting will be conducted virtually. Speakers will be asked to pre-record their presentations and submit them to DESA in advance, for distribution to participants and posting on the meeting website. The meeting will focus on in-depth discussions among speakers and participants geared at proposing concrete policy recommendations based on the substantive presentations.

Speakers are asked to provide a paper; engage actively in group discussions and give their expert opinion and policy recommendations. Participants will be invited to contribute to the formulation of recommendations related to the issues identified in the meeting.

Outcome

A report summarizing the experts' deliberations and presenting the meeting's recommendations will be issued. The report will serve as input to discussions at the eleventh session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing as well as to future reports of the Secretary-General.

Organization of the meeting

Date and venue

Owing to the closure of UN Headquarters in New York, due to COVID19 pandemic, the expert group meeting will be convened online 2-5 March 2021, from 9 am to 11:00 am (NY time).

Participants

The meeting will bring together around 20 experts from national Governments, civil society, academia and the UN system.