***Protecting the Rights of Older Persons:***

***Accessibility and non-discrimination: ‘Leaving no one behind’***

UNDESA Forum on Disability Inclusion and

Accessible Urban Development

16 October 2016, Quito

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While not all older persons are persons with disabilities, the likelihood of acquiring a disability increases with age.

Older persons worldwide experience discrimination and the violation of their human rights at family, community, institutional and societal levels.

Unprecedented global population ageing means that discrimination is likely to increase.

There are today around 900 million persons over the age of 60 in the world. 57% of them live in urban areas. It is expected that the number of older persons will rise to 2 billion by 2050. Despite the fact that most international human rights treaties apply in principle to people of all ages, specific reference to older persons is rare.

During technical briefings on the rights of older persons at the Committee on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (CRPD), members of the Committee agreed on the need to discuss and study in depth the intersections between ageing and disability. At the same time, concerns were expressed about possible conflicting messages and a perception of lack of cooperation between the movement for the rights of older persons and the disability movement, namely on issues of accessibility or legal capacity. A call was made to ensure that a focus on the rights of older persons does not undermine the rights of persons with disabilities.

The disability movement has been a source of inspiration for the movement for the rights of older persons. While the CRPD can do a lot to improve the lives of older persons with disabilities, not all older persons have a disability and therefore the CRPD cannot respond to all instances of age-based discrimination. The cooperation between he movements can only be strengthened with a convention on the human rights of older persons. We commit to work together to make sure that this is the case..

Older persons are not a homogenous, separate group. Age alone does not define them. In fact, ageing applies to the whole population regardless of group or identity. The same human rights should apply to everyone everywhere throughout the life course. By protecting the rights of older persons we are protecting the rights of all in society. But in reality, upper-age limits in all fields of life prevent older persons from exercising their rights, whether it is employment, access to health and care services, access to training, housing, adequate transport or participation in decision-making. Age becomes the only basis for discrimination that is still accepted and enshrined in legislation and policies.

Ageism and structural abuse are the root causes of the specific challenges and barriers that older persons face. Laws and policies for older persons are different than those for younger persons with disabilities. Older persons often belong to a different administration, with different budgets and different eligibility criteria for benefits, without proper coordination or no coordination at all between administrations. Therefore older persons often lose some state disability benefits when they reach the age threshold of the country. These age limits may prevent older persons from identifying themselves as persons with disabilities and seeking protection under the CRPD.

Those who acquire impairments and/or functional limitations for the first time in old age and those who grow old with a disability, all may face significant and similar challenges when they attain this age threshold. Sadly, older persons are seen as less deserving of support to maintain their autonomy and live independently in the community.

Ageist attitudes are behind inadequate pension schemes, the lack of access to preventive health care or rehabilitation services, lack of access to appropriate housing, to credits for economical development or delayed, inadequate or undignified treatment. Abuse, including social isolation, disrespect for individual choices, being deprived of day-to-day decisions, of liberty, of privacy and neglect can be a reality for older persons both at home or in an institution. The abuse is tolerated as evidenced by lack of legislation, of regular monitoring, of adequate quality standards, unqualified/untrained caregivers, and profit-making or austerity measures.

The NGO Committee on Ageing at the UN in Geneva advocates for the rights older persons and to combat ageism. It works to raise awareness of ageing issues and to ensure that the UN System adequately addresses them*.*

We interact with the sister Committees in New York and Vienna and as members of the stakeholder group on ageing we advocate and monitor the inclusion of older persons in the 2030 agenda to make sure that *Leaving no one behind* is more than a slogan. We are here to make sure that urbanization takes into account the unprecedented number of older persons living in cities.

We organize events at the UN and the Human Rights Council and we contribute to negotiations of resolutions, the WHO Action Plans on Ageing and Health, on dementia and on violence. We shall discuss the intersection of ageing and disability at the UNECE Working Group on Ageing and the ministerial conference in Lisbon in September 2017.

Member States should collect data without age limit with age bands reflecting the challenges faced as people age and engage in a constructive discussion around a Convention on the rights of older persons to tackle the social injustice that older persons suffer.