



## Expert Group Meeting on

### “Care and Older Persons: Links to Decent Work, Migration and Gender”

5-7 December 2017

United Nations Headquarters, New York – Secretariat Building, Conference Room S-2725

## Draft Concept Note

### Background

Ageing is one of the “mega-trends” that are likely to condition the prospects for achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, there are an estimated 962 million people aged 60 or over in the world, a population that is growing faster than all younger age groups. Over the next few decades, the increase in the numbers of older persons is almost inevitable, with a projection to reach 1.4 billion in 2030 and 2.1 billion in 2050.<sup>2</sup>

With increasing age and longevity, most older persons—especially those aged 80 and above—will eventually require care services. Care and support services and the manner in which they are provided are vital to maintaining the health, quality of life and independence of older persons and to fostering their social integration.<sup>3</sup> However, 48 per cent of the global population is not covered by any national legislation on long-term care, and 46 per cent is subject to means-testing which makes coverage available to older persons only when they live below the poverty line.<sup>4</sup> Most older persons are thus excluded from long-term care services, with long-term care systems characterized by extremely low levels of public expenditure, high out-of-pocket costs, and shortages of formal care workers. Yet according to a 2015 report of the International Labour Organization, the care economy is one of two commonly-identified sources of future job growth in both developing and industrialized countries (the other being the green economy).<sup>5</sup> Despite such immense growth in this field, insufficient attention has been given to the social dimensions of care for older persons, especially as regards links to decent work for care workers and the rights of care recipients, migration of care workers, and the gendered aspects of care work, as well as the affordability of care services.

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (2017). *Global Trends: Challenges and Opportunities in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables*. Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP/248.

<sup>3</sup> A/67/188

<sup>4</sup> Xenia Scheil-Adlung, “Long-term care (LTC) protection for older persons: A review of coverage deficits in 46 countries”, ESS Working Paper, No. 50 (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2015). Available from [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---soc\\_sec/documents/publication/wcms\\_407620.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_407620.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> The future of work centenary initiative, Report of the Director-General, Report I, International Labour Conference, 104<sup>th</sup> Session, Geneva, 2015. ILC.104/DG/I.

### Links to decent work

Care work takes place in a variety of settings and across formal and informal economies. Some care is delivered through publicly-funded health and social services, which overlaps with other forms of paid and unpaid care that are often delivered by family and community members.<sup>6</sup> Where care work is unpaid, it often goes unrecognized; where such work is paid, it tends to be unregulated and valued less than many other types of work, providing low wages and few if any benefits.<sup>7</sup> Informal long-term care providers significantly outnumber formal long-term caregivers, and the gap is growing. A deepened understanding of the interactions between care work and labour supply, training and qualifications, conditions of work, and wages, whether in residential facilities or in homes, is therefore needed so as to promote decent work for care professionals, which in turn impacts on the quality of care received by older persons.

### Links to gender

Since the need for care significantly increases with age, persons aged 80 and over—a segment of the global population in which women notably outnumber men—are the primary recipients of care. Across countries, care is most often provided informally in the home by caregivers who are usually unpaid female family members or friends, and whose care work may limit their ability to engage in paid work. In some cases, paid care service providers—who also tend to be women—are available for those who can afford it, but such work is unregulated and often associated with poor wages and lack of benefits. At the same time, older women are themselves frequent care providers to their spouses, grandchildren and other family members. Typically perceived to be part of the normal responsibilities of women and thus taken for granted, care work is thereby intertwined with gender stereotypes and inequalities.<sup>8</sup>

### Links to migration

Against the backdrop of underfunded formal care systems and underpaid caregivers, migrant workers play a crucial role in filling care deficits in several high- and middle-income countries.<sup>9</sup> Poverty, inadequate education, and a scarcity of livelihood opportunities often drive migrants into domestic work in more developed countries, where they carry out household chores and care for older family members. According to a 2011 report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, foreign-born workers made up more than 25 per cent of all care workers in Australia, with this figure rising to 50 per cent in Austria and Israel, and 72 per cent in Italy. Most of these migrant care workers are women.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, care-related debates and policies fall short of addressing the differential impacts of care work on caregivers who are migrants, and bridging the divergent interests of caregivers and care recipients. These include addressing the lower earnings, less secure work arrangements, and discrimination often faced by migrant care workers and ensuring adequate regulations to protect older persons, in addition to meeting the growing need for specialized and quality care for older persons.

---

<sup>6</sup> ILO decent work and the care economy. <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/care-economy/dw-and-care-economy/lang-en/index.htm> (accessed on 31 July 2017).

<sup>7</sup> UNDESA/AARP (2017) *Who Cares? The Nexus of Age, Gender, Decent Work and Care*. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/csw/2017/conceptnotecsw61.pdf> (accessed on 31 July 2017).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> ILO (2016) *Women at Work: Trends 2016*.

<sup>10</sup> OECD (2011) *Help Wanted, Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care*.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the meeting is to bring together international experts to discuss and explore the issue of care for older persons, and to deepen understanding of the links between care and decent work, gender, labour migration and human rights, as well as their implications for social policy.

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, which has selected "long-term and palliative care" as one of the two focus areas for its upcoming ninth session in 2018.

## **Methodology**

The meeting will be conducted as a series of thematic presentations that will be followed by discussions. Participants will be invited to contribute to the elaboration 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 ninth session of the Open-ended Working Group as well as to future reports of the Secretary-General.

## **Organization of the meeting**

### Date and venue

The programme on ageing of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), as the focal point on ageing in the United Nations system, will organize an expert group meeting on "Care and Older Persons: Links to Decent Work, Migration and Gender" from 5 to 7 December 2017. The meeting will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Conference Room S-2725 on the 27<sup>th</sup> floor of the Secretariat Building.

### Participants

The meeting will bring together 10-12 experts from academia, national Governments, civil society, and the UN system.

### Language

The working language of the expert group meeting will be English.