



## 2022 ROME MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

“A Sustainable World for All Ages:

Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities Throughout Life”

1. We, the representatives of the member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), gathered at the fifth Ministerial Conference on Ageing from 16 to 17 June 2022 in Rome, Italy, reaffirm our commitment made in the Berlin Ministerial Declaration (2002), and subsequently confirmed by the León (2007), Vienna (2012), and Lisbon (2017) Ministerial Declarations to fulfil the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (MIPAA), and to ensure older persons' full enjoyment of all human rights, indivisible and inherent to all human beings, regardless of age.
2. We celebrate significant longevity gains in the UNECE region over the last decades thanks to medical progress, better living and working conditions, increased welfare, and advances in public health. This enables older persons to stay healthy and active longer and to be more involved in their communities, giving our societies increased opportunities to benefit from their manifold contributions to the economy, society and families as active citizens and volunteers, consumers, caregivers, and as sources of experience and knowledge.
3. We recognise that older persons are becoming the fastest-growing segment of the population in the UNECE region, and we need to be more aware of and respond to the heterogeneity of their capacities and the inequalities accumulated over the life course, while respecting that older persons are not a homogeneous group, but diverse in their situations, identities, needs, preferences, and opportunities.
4. We acknowledge the significant progress made in implementing RIS/MIPAA over the past five years in particular towards recognizing the potential of older persons, encouraging longer working lives and the ability to work, and ensuring ageing with

dignity. The frameworks on active and healthy ageing, age-friendly environments, and mainstreaming ageing are gaining recognition. We also welcome the growing engagement in ageing policy matters from civil society and public and private stakeholders.

5. We are aware that the implementation of RIS/MIPAA has occurred during times of major demographic, political, social, and economic changes. The last years have been marked by increased pressure on private and public finances as well as on health and social services, together with a growing awareness of the impact of climate change, digital transformation and emergency crises, including pandemics, armed conflicts and disasters. There are still challenges to be addressed and necessary policy improvements to be made to better leverage the potential of older persons, including:
  - a. further developing sustainable, accessible, and adequate social protection systems covering social security, universal health care and inclusive, quality social services, in particular long-term care services, that help to mitigate cumulative inequalities and prevent old-age poverty and exclusion;
  - b. focusing on health promotion, including raising awareness of and access to sports, physical activity, healthy nutrition, and other preventive health measures over the life course;
  - c. enhancing the involvement of older persons and their representatives in law- and policymaking at all levels to better reflect their rights and diverse needs and interests;
  - d. making all environments, including physical, social, technological, and digital environments, more age-friendly and accessible for all, and increasing the availability of adapted housing and assistive devices;
  - e. recognizing the intersectionality between disability and ageing across different areas of everyday life, and addressing obstacles older persons with disabilities face, including by promoting universal design and adaptations as a prerequisite for age-friendly environments;
  - f. creating flexible conditions for longer and healthy working lives, ensuring inclusive labour markets and decent work for all ages, preventing and responding to gender inequalities, old-age poverty, and social exclusion;
  - g. eliminating persistent gender inequalities by addressing the different impacts of demographic change on women and men through dedicated measures, including by mainstreaming gender in all policies and by collecting, using, and analysing sex- and age-disaggregated data;
  - h. combating ageism and the perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination based on age in all spheres of society;
  - i. adopting policies that strengthen inter- and intragenerational cooperation and solidarity, considering the needs of both current and future generations;
  - j. better recognising and supporting the important role of both formal and informal carers, particularly older women, and promoting a distribution of care work that is not gender-based;

- k. fully recognising the active participation of older persons and the contributions they make to the functioning of our societies including in emergency and conflict situations.
6. We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures taken to fight it, have underscored a range of societal challenges and opportunities. The pandemic has:
- a. disproportionately affected persons in vulnerable situations, including those belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic groups and those living in institutions, and showed the importance of intra- and intergenerational justice, inclusion, and gender equality;
  - b. highlighted the vulnerability of many older persons who have been at higher risk of severe illness and mortality, and in some cases have faced difficulties accessing essential services, including testing, vaccination and treatment, and have been exposed to ageism and discriminatory care rationing. Public health measures such as physical distancing, restrictions in nursing homes, and temporary closures of day-care centres for older adults have caused and deepened social isolation of many older persons with serious consequences for their mental and physical health;
  - c. demonstrated the need to strengthen the capacity, emergency preparedness, and coordination of the health and long-term care sectors, in particular the protection of persons in vulnerable situations, and to develop flexible and innovative models of care across different settings to prevent vulnerability;
  - d. made clear that difficult public health decisions affecting older persons need to be guided by a commitment to dignity and the right to quality health and social services;
  - e. highlighted the need to better guarantee the full enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, including being able to speak for themselves and to exercise their right to individual autonomy, participation in decision-making, freedom of movement, and social participation;
  - f. underscored the importance of solid and inclusive welfare systems and solidarity in mitigating the economic and social consequences of crises;
  - g. demonstrated the strong engagement by civil society, volunteers of all ages, local communities, and families to improve the situation for older persons and others in need;
  - h. demonstrated older persons' contribution to our societies, exemplified by retired health and care personnel who returned to duty on a voluntary basis and supported the functioning of health and social care systems;
  - i. emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation, including through sharing of good practices, experiences, knowledge, and data.
7. The near future will be characterised by the reshaping of our societies based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. As we recommit ourselves to RIS/MIPAA, which has for the last 20 years provided a framework for addressing the cross-sectoral and multidimensional issues of ageing, we stress the need to ensure the full enjoyment

of human rights by older persons. We also acknowledge the importance of implementing ageing-related policies in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its aim of 'leaving no one behind' as well as the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) and its vision of 'a world in which all persons can live long, healthy lives'. We see that new challenges such as the ongoing digital transformation and climate change are rapidly transforming our societies. Informed by the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and achievements so far, we consider discussing adjustments to the international framework for ageing-related policies to address such challenges.

8. We commit ourselves to engage in initiatives for the exchange of information and good practices, for regional cooperation and capacity enhancement on ageing among UNECE member States and all relevant stakeholders, including older persons and their organizations.
9. We aspire to realize a sustainable world for all ages and to join forces for solidarity and equal opportunities throughout life. We are determined to work in a truly collaborative and multilateral partnership to achieve the following policy goals by 2027:

### **I – Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life**

We commit to promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life by:

10. *adopting* concrete policy measures aimed at ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights by older persons, enabling individuals to seize opportunities for active and healthy ageing throughout the life course, unleashing the potential for expanding healthy life years while considering the diverse situations of older persons, gender differences, and combating inequalities to enable everyone to take part in and contribute to all spheres of life;
11. *involving* older persons and their organizations in a constructive and meaningful way in the law- and policymaking processes at all levels to ensure that their rights, needs, and interests are taken into account in policies, programmes, and laws that affect them;
12. *mainstreaming* gender in policies that promote active and healthy ageing, taking into account the diverse needs and situations of all individuals over the life course;
13. *facilitating* older persons' participation in social, cultural, and civic life, and promoting lifelong learning;
14. *investing* in strategies and activities and *involving* all actors of society to promote a healthy lifestyle over the life course by encouraging and facilitating physical activity, healthy nutrition, and preventive health interventions, and strengthening mental health and well-being, especially among older persons;

15. *investing* in the creation of more age-friendly environments by implementing innovative housing solutions, smart urban and rural planning, appropriate recreational infrastructure, and accessible public transport and mobility services; through the meaningful participation by older persons in this process, strengthening their autonomy and independence and enabling them to age safely in a place of their choice, while recognizing the value of the intergenerational approach to improve the lives of people of all ages, in line with WHO guidance on age-friendly environments;
16. *adopting* concrete measures to combat loneliness and social isolation among older persons, including by supporting initiatives in local communities and by civil society, stimulating increased social engagement, participation, and intergenerational solidarity, encouraging volunteering and social innovation, and enhancing digital skills;
17. *promoting* a positive culture and image of ageing by making the diversity among older persons an asset and by highlighting the manifold contributions of older persons to society;
18. *protecting* older persons against ageism and all forms of discrimination in all areas by adopting or strengthening the implementation of laws and other instruments at the local, national, or international level, by modifying existing instruments based on discriminatory or stereotypical attitudes or practices, by establishing educational and awareness-raising programmes and campaigns, and fostering intergenerational activities, dialogue, and support;
19. *improving* the protection of older persons, particularly women and persons with disabilities, including mental impairments, or in situations of dependency, from all forms of violence and abuse, whether it is physical, psychological, sexual, gender-based, or economic, as well as from neglect;
20. *acknowledging* that violence is a criminal act which can take place at home, in institutions, shared housing, or the community, posing significant public health concerns and reducing the victim's potential for active and healthy ageing; *making sure* that national domestic violence legislation addresses all forms of violence against older persons and provides relevant support services, adequate complaint mechanisms, and equal access to justice for older victims of violence;
21. *promoting and facilitating* the participation of older persons in the labour market to achieve longer working lives as a vital part of a sustainable and inclusive economy, social participation, financial security, and well-being of older persons;
22. *improving* active labour market policies that respond to an ageing workforce including tailored support for older jobseekers and encouraging employers to use age-management practices, promote intergenerational dialogue in the workplace, enhance skills development and family-friendly working arrangements, and to provide healthy,

safe, and accessible workplaces that prevent work-related accidents and occupational diseases;

23. *developing* sustainable, inclusive, and equitable pension schemes and improving pension systems' coverage; *establishing* adequate pension entitlements that account for periods of unpaid care over the life course and prevent old-age poverty;
24. *facilitating and investing* in formal and informal learning opportunities for older persons beyond professional education to strengthen their potential for a fulfilled life in old age while also improving participation in lifelong learning among the adult population;
25. *promoting* user-friendly digitalisation, *enhancing* digital skills and literacy to enable older persons to participate in an increasingly digital world, while also *ensuring* the right to access to information, participation, and services through access to digital devices and the Internet, and to suitable offline or other secure alternatives in user-friendly and accessible formats;
26. *supporting* innovation for the silver economy and *valuing* the continued production and purchasing capacity of older persons and their contribution to social and economic activities by encouraging designers, businesses, and public enterprises to provide smarter digital, financial, and other services; *developing* more age-friendly products and services by involving older persons in their design and development;
27. *encouraging* the establishment of independent bodies, for example, ombudspersons, at national, subnational, and local levels that can mediate the rights, needs and interests of older persons in all areas of society.

## **II - Ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families**

We commit to ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families by:

28. *applying* a person-centred and age-friendly approach to care, *ensuring* the greatest degree of independence, autonomy, and dignity through universal and equal access to health, social, and long-term care services, built on the principles of prevention, early intervention, and integrated care, including support for families, paying attention to accumulated disadvantages across the life course;
29. *continuing* to promote sustainable investments in all health and care services, in particular to develop and continuously improve long-term care systems in cooperation with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders;

30. *improving* the terms of employment and working conditions of health and social care workers, including adequate staffing and occupational health and safety, access to education and training along with other dimensions of decent work;
31. *building* on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to older persons' rights, needs, and preferences regarding their personal freedom, privacy, autonomy and self-determination, including in health crises and other emergency situations;
32. *taking appropriate measures* to prepare for the anticipated increase in demand for long-term care services through comprehensive strategic planning for sufficient capacities both in quantitative and qualitative terms, based on equitable and sustainable financing. This will entail ensuring the availability of an appropriately qualified health and care workforce, improving management in care facilities, and cooperating with all relevant stakeholders, including national, subnational, and local authorities; health, social, and long-term care providers; academia; civil society; as well as older persons and their representatives;
33. *prioritising and investing* in skills and competence development and continuous training of health and social care workers in geriatric, gerontological, and digital skills to meet the evolving needs for quality and innovation in care; *investing* in research and innovation to provide knowledge-based training and practices in health and social care, including awareness-raising and training on ageism, and older persons' right to privacy and individual autonomy;
34. *recognizing and supporting* the continued role of informal and family care as an important part of care provision by providing advice, relief, and social protection, taking measures to help balance paid work, care, and private life, and strengthening intergenerational solidarity as well as a more equal distribution of care work between women and men;
35. *ensuring* the high quality of health, social, and long-term care services based on quality management, monitoring, auditing, and continuous improvement by involving care workers, informal carers, older persons, and other relevant stakeholders; *assuring* that services are provided in dialogue with care receivers and that there is a system of assessment in place for those who consider they are not receiving the services to which they are entitled;
36. *expanding protection* from neglect and abuse in all care settings through the adoption and effective implementation of protection mechanisms, including measures for prevention, complaints, and intervention;
37. *developing, regularly updating, and implementing* national and subnational plans to address dementia and the provision of quality health, social, and long-term care services

to ensure participation, dignity, and quality of life for persons with cognitive and mental impairments, as well as support for their family and informal carers;

38. *addressing* the growing need for adequate palliative care services through their integration into the continuum of care and support, and *ensuring* an end of life with dignity;

### **III - Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages**

We commit to mainstream ageing in all policies to create a society for all ages by:

39. *developing* or *strengthening*, where existent, a national strategic framework or process for mainstreaming ageing to support the systematic consideration and integration of both individual and population ageing aspects into all policies at local, subnational, national and international levels, including through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant international policy frameworks;

40. *enhancing* age- and gender-sensitive research and sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data collection on population ageing and the diverse situations of older persons to inform evidence-based policies, monitoring, and evaluation;

41. *building* a mainstreaming approach that is human rights-based, life-course-oriented, evidence-based, gender-responsive and equitable, and that considers ageing from both a societal and individual perspective, and reflects and recognizes multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and the diverse needs, preferences and opportunities among older persons;

42. *coordinating* ageing-related policies across all levels of government through establishing or strengthening of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to ensure systematic mainstreaming of the ageing dimension in all public policies;

43. *building* capacity on mainstreaming ageing by developing methodologies for age- and gender-sensitive analysis and impact assessments of new laws and policies;

44. *developing* a participatory stakeholder engagement approach in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort to ensure that older persons and organizations that represent them are listened to and actively involved in meaningful cross-sectoral dialogue and collaboration on ageing between all relevant actors in the public and private sector, academia, social partners, and civil society;

45. *strengthening* the protection of older persons' full enjoyment of human rights, including by addressing the challenges underscored by emergency and conflict situations and the COVID-19 pandemic and enhancing international cooperation in this regard.

## **Final remarks**

46. Bearing in mind the discussions, suggestions, and recommendations collected during this fifth Ministerial Conference on Ageing, we recognize and appreciate the important role of the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing as the main intergovernmental body fostering regional dialogue, cooperation, and capacity-building on ageing. We will continue to contribute to its activities and to further strengthen the Standing Working Group on Ageing and its secretariat.
47. We acknowledge the important role and value of RIS/MIPAA in developing and promoting for the past 20 years ageing-related policies geared towards a society for all ages and for the benefit and well-being of older persons, at both national and regional levels. We entrust the Standing Working Group on Ageing with the task of updating RIS and exploring the possibility of also updating MIPAA to adapt ageing-related policy responses to economic, social, and digital transitions and emerging challenges, and developing further instruments to support them.
48. We appreciate the role that the UNECE Secretariat and other stakeholders will play in assisting member States in the implementation of RIS/MIPAA and the goals of the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration through, inter alia, support for developing and updating national strategies on ageing, strengthening capacities for mainstreaming ageing, and building on the lessons learned from COVID-19.
49. We recognize the importance of population ageing as a global trend that needs to be addressed in international frameworks and initiatives and we support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and global and regional initiatives such as the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism, the Decade of Demographic Resilience (2022-2031), and the activities of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, among others.
50. We express our sincere gratitude to Italy for hosting the fifth UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in June 2022.