



AGE Platform Europe and BAGSO Oral Statement at United Nations General Assembly Open-Ended Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of human rights of older persons

Speaker: Dr. Heidrun Mollenkopf

Item 7. Discussion on the way forward

April 2022

Madam Chair,

I am speaking as an older woman, but also representing older persons living in the EU, who are members of AGE Platform Europe and BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations. This is the 7th time that I am attending the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. In these years we have heard many promises, but still no concrete progress towards the fulfilment of the mandate of this Working Group has been made.

At the same time, we have gathered plenty of evidence for the need for an international legally binding instrument to protect our human rights. And with every single violation around the world, I feel more saddened by the lack of action of this important body of the UN General Assembly. But how can 'tangible progress' be achieved, unless member states take decisions on the way forward?

Despite continuous commitments to listen to what civil society and Human Rights Institutions have to say, I have serious doubts this is the case when I see the empty rows in this room when we finally get a chance to speak. So, allow me to repeat once more: *we want to equally enjoy the rights that everyone else has.*

We also want the Open-Ended Working Group to retain its focus on human rights and to make links with the work taking place in the frame of the Human Rights Council.

We want discussions on how to strengthen the protection of human rights in old age to take place with older people and not in closed doors without us. This needs to be the case also when preparing EU positions for this working group sessions and when debriefing its conclusions.

We want higher levels of turnout and engagement of governments throughout and in between sessions to agree on a concrete plan to enable the working group to move forward and fulfil its mandate.

I must admit that I was afraid that this 12th session would again fail to draw any conclusions on concrete actions that governments are going to take to ensure that older people can fully contribute to and benefit from sustainable development, enjoy

economic security, have equal rights in work, and access justice on an equal basis with others.

But I feel that today is a decisive moment. Argentina's initiative to create an informal, cross regional core group gives us hope that in the intersessional time and at the next meeting of this Working Group we will be able to go concrete next steps.

I would also like to express our thanks to those Member States, including an increasing number of EU member states, who heard our calls. But we need more states to join this group of supporters to ensure that all of us – no matter our age – can live to our full potential.

In a world where people have never been able to live that long, age should not be a burden but rather an opportunity to enjoy life with dignity and equal rights. It is time to turn words into actions and with this we strongly support Argentina's initiative. You can be sure that we will support this process as much as possible.

Thank you
Dr. Heidrun Mollenkopf

For more information you may contact:

Nena Georgantzi
Human Rights Manager
AGE Platform Europe
Nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu

Ina Voelcker
Secretariat for International Policy on Ageing
BAGSO- Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen e.V.
voelcker@bagso.de