



## **Joint Statement by AGE Platform Europe & BAGSO**

### **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 6. Follow-up of the focus areas of the twelfth session – Discussion on normative inputs**

**4 April 2023**

Mme Chair, distinguished Delegates,

I am speaking on behalf of AGE Platform Europe, the Umbrella organisation of more than 100 EU member organisations, and BAGSO, the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations.

Our work has uncovered that economic security remains an issue for many older people also in Europe. Several older persons are left out of economic support packages. Pension indexation is not always an obligation, neither is it proportionate to inflation. Costs for long-term care often outweigh pension income. The digitalisation of public and banking services can leave some older persons without access, information or control of their social benefits and personal finances.

In our view, a UN convention would be an important step to secure that older citizens are of equal value to society. However, for 14 years now there has been a discussion

as to whether the rights of older people are fully secured in all areas, and, if not, how gaps can be closed.

Distinguished representatives of Member States, when I report on this working group at national and international events, I often hear mocking laughter, combined with the question of whether this is a "never-ending" working group.

I feel this question is justified – at the same time the mockery is extremely hurtful. It is an expression of a deeply age-hostile disregard of both, the Governments' and civil society's efforts to secure the rights of old people – and that means the rights of all people, also yours.

The question is justified because for 14 years, NGOs, and since 2016 also National Human Rights Institutions, have been showing here how the rights of older persons are being abused around the world. Various studies (*most recently the Analytical Study by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of 2022 (OHCHR)*) have repeatedly found that the existing human rights system is unsystematic, incomplete, and fragmented and that more recent developments such as digitization, climate change or armed conflicts have not yet been considered.

Nevertheless, we hear again and again that there are enough laws, and there are still repeated calls for gaps to be identified, while at the same time concrete legal solutions for well documented legislative gaps are prevented from being drafted and proposed.

This completely contradictory approach cannot lead to a satisfactory end. I therefore appeal to your common sense: Stop this paradoxical behaviour!

Use these days to live up to your responsibility for your mandate, and use the proposed informal consultations proposed by the core group to finally get consensus on the gaps and an international, legally binding instrument until we meet again in 2024.

And I would like to ask the distinguished panelist how a Convention could support governments' efforts and how to meet best their obligation to secure the rights of their older citizens?

Thank you!

Listen to the statement on UN WebTV:

<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1m/k1me2bp2xr?kalturaStartTime=4131>

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