

**An Open Letter to the United Nations General Assembly's Open-Ended Working
Group on Ageing for the Purpose of Strengthening the Protection of the Human
Rights of Older Persons (OEWGA)**

20th of September 2021

Background

As human rights advocates from different backgrounds and regions of the world, we want a world where we can all age with rights, dignity and respect. The OEWGA can help to make this vision a reality by fulfilling its mandate to consider proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons and to present to the UN General Assembly a proposal containing the main elements of such instrument.

Since its creation in 2010, the OEWGA has held 11 working sessions. Throughout these discussions, the OEWGA has seen a wealth of evidence confirming the glaring deficiencies in the international human rights system as it relates to the human rights of older persons. This material has been presented by older persons themselves, experts from the UN system, civil society organizations, academia, governments, and national human rights institutions, who are also calling for the adoption of a convention to address these shortcomings.

The study launched by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the 11th session confirms that the development of more specific norms and standards within a new dedicated international instrument is required to ensure that no older person, regardless of circumstance, is left behind.

Despite this evidence in support of a UN convention and the further impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OEWGA has made little concrete progress towards identifying the elements of a possible new instrument and has not yet fulfilled its mandate in this regard. While there are many Member States which have actively supported a convention, the lack of consensus has prevented clear outcomes from the OEWGA.

While we recognize the importance of consensus and the need to continue to build this in the OEWGA, we also note that 146 States formally supported the Secretary General's Policy Brief on the impact of COVID-19 on older persons and committed to fully promoting and respecting the dignity and rights of older persons. This is a strong foundation from which the OEWGA must now seek to move forward.

A new UN convention would explicitly and unambiguously recognize older persons as rights holders and strengthen our understanding of human rights in older age. It would provide valuable guidance for governments and others to ensure that age discrimination is prohibited in the law, services uphold the dignity of older persons, and attitudes and behaviors towards older persons are respectful.

The OEWGA Bureau, chaired by the Permanent Mission of Argentina since the OEWGA's first session, is in a pivotal position to drive progress in this work. Thus, we call on the Bureau to take concrete steps to progress the work of the OEWGA in the inter-sessional period between the 11th and 12th sessions of OEWGA and we call on Member States to support the Bureau in taking those steps.

Recommendations for next steps

We support the proposal made by Argentina in the 11th session to establish an inter-sessional group to advance the work of the OEWGA. This group should be composed of experts from member states, civil society organizations, and national human rights institutions, with the involvement of the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons as well as other relevant experts among the UN human rights mechanisms and special procedures mandate holders. This group should be tasked to commence the drafting of the main normative elements of an international legal instrument during the inter-sessional period.

We believe that the OEWGA will greatly benefit from commencing the drafting of a proposed binding instrument without delay in an open and inclusive platform that places the participation of older persons, their knowledge, expertise and experiences at the centre of discussions.

The 12th session of OEWGA presents the Bureau with opportunities to take concrete steps. **To advance a critical discussion of the adequacy of the normative framework of the international human rights system and its implementation mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons, the Bureau should include in the agenda of the 12th session a substantive discussion of the OHCHR's analytical paper. Also, in moving forward, the Bureau should present a proposal containing a program and the modalities for the drafting of a new instrument to start no later than six months after 12th session of OEWGA.**

We call on the Bureau to take up these recommendations and urge Member States, particularly the members of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, to engage actively in with the process to bring about these outcomes.

It has been a decade since the OEWGA commenced its work. The need to fulfill the OEWGA's mandate has never been more urgent if we want to build the just and equal world we need for older persons today and for all generations to come.

We submit this open letter to the Bureau and to Member States of the UN as an expression of our steadfast commitment to assist in the fulfillment of OEWGA's mandate. In this inter-sessional period leading to the 12th session of OEWGA, we will continue to seek and build opportunities for formal and informal spaces for constructive discourse, including following up on these recommendations and call to action.

Signatories

(by country or country of HQ)

Albania

1. ASAG-Albanian Society for All Ages

Argentina

2. INPEA – Argentina

Australia

3. Advocare Incorporated
4. Capacity Australia

5. Community Legal Centres Australia
6. Elder Abuse Action Australia
7. International Longevity Centre Australia
8. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
9. National Older Women's Network Inc.
10. NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing
11. Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)
12. Seniors Rights Service
13. The Senior Agenda Inc.

Bangladesh

14. HelpAge International
15. Resource Integration Center RIC
16. Sir William Beveridge Foundation
17. UTTHAN (Unprivileged To The Humanitarian Action Need)
18. Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)

Barbados

19. Barbados Association of Retired Persons

Belarus

20. Public Union of Belarusian pensioners "Nasha Pakalenne"

Belgium

21. AGE Platform Europe
22. Entr'âges
23. S-Plus
24. Unia (Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities)
25. Vlaamse Ouderenraad vzw

Belize

26. HelpAge

Brazil

27. Instituto Qualivida

Cameroon

28. ACAMAGE
29. Ageing and Health Cameroon Association
30. Association pour la diffusion des droits humains aux peuples autochtones
(Humanitarian Law Agency)
31. Nehelp Cameroon

Canada

32. Active Aging Canada
33. Age Knowble
34. Business Launch Solutions

35. Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry
36. Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health
37. Canadian Geriatrics Society
38. Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA)
39. Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of British Columbia FAO
40. FAO
41. Fountain of Health Association
42. Grandmothers Advocacy Network
43. Health Promotion Canada
44. Institute of ethno-gerontology-Toronto, Canada
45. INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ON AGEING
46. International Longevity Centre Canada
47. LoveSong Housing
48. National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE)
49. Ontario Association of Councils on Ageing
50. Pass It On Network

Congo

51. Association Amitié Seniors et Jeunes

Costa Rica

52. AGECO

Czech Republic

53. CELLO ILC

Dominican Republic

54. ILC-DR

Finland

55. Svenska pensionärsförbundet

France

56. FIAPA
57. OLD'UP
58. International Inner Wheel
59. International Longevity Center- France (ILC-France)
60. 2Y2R Too Young to Retire - Pass It On Network

Georgia

61. The Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia

Germany

62. BAGSO - Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen
63. German Institute for Human Rights

64. HelpAge Deutschland

Greece

- 65. ANTAMA
- 66. 50plus Hellas

Iceland

- 67. U3A Reykjavík

India

- 68. Ashakiran JHC Hospital
- 69. Association for Social Solidarity and Empowerment Training Trust
- 70. DadiDada Foundation
- 71. Federation of senior citizens' associations of Tamilnadu
- 72. FREMSS ODISHA
- 73. Gharonda
- 74. Govt KNM Arts and Science College, Kanjiramkulam Trivandrum
- 75. GRAVIS
- 76. Indian Society of U3As
- 77. International Association for Religious Freedom Co-ordination Council for South Asia
- 78. International Longevity Centre India
- 79. JSS Medical College and Hospital, JSSAHER, Mysore
- 80. NIMHANS
- 81. Society for Serving Seniors

Iraq

- 82. Wasit Health Organization

Israel

- 83. ILC – Israel
- 84. The Association of Law in the Service of the Elderly

Italy

- 85. ANAP - Confartigianato
- 86. Anziani e non solo soc. coop. soc.
- 87. ATDAL OVER 40
- 88. International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)
- 89. MOVIMENTO GIOTTO
- 90. TAM telefono anziani maltrattati
- 91. 50&Più

Japan

- 92. Japan Support Center for Activity and Research for Older Persons

Kenya

- 93. Ageing Concern Foundation (ACF)

94. KARIKA AGEING & HIV/ AIDS PROGRAMME

Liberia

- 95. Liberian Association of Retired Persons
- 96. National Senior citizens Organization of Liberia
- 97. National Old Folks of Liberia

Malaysia

- 98. World Silambam Association (WSA)
- 99. World Yoga Association
- 100. Silambam Asia

Malta

- 101. University of Malta

Mauritius

- 102. Agalega Island Council
- 103. Halley Movement Coalition
- 104. Droits Humains Ocean Indien (Dis-Moi)
- 105. Dis-Moi, Rodrigues

Myanmar

- 106. Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

Nepal

- 107. Senior Citizens Welfare Association

Netherlands

- 108. JNF50PLUS Foundation
- 109. Older Women's Network, the Netherlands
- 110. Stichting Mission Lanka

New Zealand

- 111. Fantsuam Foundation
- 112. New Zealand Society of Diversional and Recreational Therapists Incorporated

Nigeria

- 113. agenigeriafoundation
- 114. Alternative Health care Initiative
- 115. Azar Initiative Empowerment for the Less Privileged
- 116. EL-AGED CARE LTD/GTE
- 117. Sound Health Development Initiative(SHIN)
- 118. Universal Peace and Violence Amelioration Centre

Philippines

119. Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE)
120. Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines

Poland

121. Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Poland
122. ELELEOS Prawosławny Ośrodek Miłosierdzia
123. Fundacja DOM
124. Fundacja Ukryte Skrzydła
125. Foundation Center for Initiatives for Society
126. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
127. KSP2050 Białystok
128. Miejska Rada Seniorów w Sejnach
129. Miejska Rada Seniorów w Sokółce
130. Ogólnopolska Federacja Stowarzyszeń Uniwersytetów III Wieku
131. Ośrodek Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych
132. Podlaska Redakcja Seniora
133. Polska 2050
134. Polski Związek Emerytów Rencistów i Inwalidów w Białymstoku, Koło nr 15 w Choroszczy.
135. Polski Związek Emerytów, Rencistów i Inwalidów Oddział Okręgowy w Białymstoku
136. Rada Seniorów Miasta Augustowa
137. Rada Seniorów w Dąbrowie Białostockiej
138. Rada Seniorów Gminy Czarna Białostocka
139. Rada Seniorów Gminy Podgórzyn
140. Rada Seniorów Gminy Supraśl
141. Rada Seniorów Reda
142. Rada Seniorów przy Marszałku Województwa Podlaskiego
143. Stowarzyszenie mali bracia Ubogich
144. Stowarzyszenie Podlascy Seniorzy
145. Stowarzyszenie Szukamy Polski
146. Stowarzyszenie UTW w Augustowie
147. Stowarzyszenie Uniwersytet Trzeciego Wieku w Sokółce
148. Świętokrzyski Uniwersytet Trzeciego Wieku
149. Towarzystwo Inicjatyw Twórczych „ę”
150. UMK Toruń
151. Warszawska Rada Seniorów
152. WRZOS
153. Wydział Nauk Politycznych i Studiów Międzynarodowych, Uniwersytet Warszawski
154. Związek Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Oddział Bohoniki

Portugal

155. APRe!
156. Sociedade Portuguesa de Psiquiatria e Saúde Mental (Secção de Psiquiatria Geriátrica)

Serbia	157.	The Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia
Slovakia	158.	Slovak National Centre for Human Rights
Russia	159.	Primorsky region veteran Fund "Soldier"
	160.	Regional Public Foundation Assistance for the Elderly Dobroe Delo
Rwanda	161.	NSINDAGIZA
Slovenia	162.	Slovenian Federation of Pensioners' Associations
Somalia	163.	African Relief Development Initiative (ARDI)
	164.	Somali HelpAge Association
South Africa	165.	International Longevity Centre - South Africa
South Korea	166.	HelpAge Korea
Spain	167.	Confederación Española de Organizaciones de Mayores (CEOMA)
	168.	Fundacion 26 de Diciembre
	169.	Grupo Servicios Sociales Integrados (Grupo SSI)
	170.	HelpAge España
Switzerland	171.	Alzheimer Switzerland
	172.	dream plan live it coaching
	173.	FAAG - Fondation pour la formation des aînées et des aînées de Genève
	174.	Greycells. Association of Former International Civil Servants for Development
	175.	NGO Committee on Ageing, Geneva
	176.	Union for International Cancer Control
	177.	WPA Section of Old Age Psychiatry
Tanzania	178.	CSYM HUDUMA*

Thailand

179. National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT)

Timor -Leste

180. Provedor de Direitos Humanos e Justiça (Provedor for Human Rights and Justice)

Togo

181. NGO: ADET

Turkey

182. Türkiye emekliler derneği

Uganda

183. Community Restoration Initiative Project

Ukraine

184. D. F. Chebotarev Institute of Gerontology of the National Academy of Medical Sciences of Ukraine

United Kingdom

185. Alzheimer's Disease International

186. HelpAge International

187. OLDALONE UK

188. Soroptimist International GBI

189. Soroptimist International

190. Age International

United States of America

191. AARP

192. Active Aging Consortium Asia Pacific

193. Alzheimer Association

194. Amer. Assoc of Family and Consumer Sciences

195. CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

196. Community Networks for Aging in Place Alliance

197. Dementia Alliance International

198. Duluth Aging Support

199. Encore Network

200. Global Action on Aging

201. Global Ageing Network, DBA International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing (IAHSA)

202. Gray Panthers

- 203. Human Rights Watch
- 204. International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care
- 205. International Association if Gerontology and Geriatrics
- 206. International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
- 207. International Society on Aging and Disease
- 208. Long Term Care Community Coalition
- 209. New Aspect Coaching
- 210. PAHO/WHO Association of Former Staff
- 211. Sisters of Charity Federation
- 212. The Dayton Foundation Del Mar Encore Fellows Initiative UNANIMA International
- 213. United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society
- 214. United Nations Association - Orange County
- 215. Wisdom of Age
- 216. Word of Life International Inc

Venezuela

- 217. Convite AC

Zambia

- 218. Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias In Zambia -ADDIZ
- 219. Senior Citizens Association of Zambia
- 220. Support To Older People-Zambia
- 221. Zambian Center for Poverty Reduction and Research Limited

Zimbabwe

- 222. HelpAge Zimbabwe
- 223. Foundation Activus