

Closing of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing

Rome, 17 June 2022

Speaking notes for Mrs. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

I am greatly honoured to address the Conference at this moment and I wish to congratulate all of you for the adoption of the Rome Ministerial Declaration.

Let me read out again the title of the Declaration: “A Sustainable World for All Ages: Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities Throughout Life”.

To me, these words are the embodiment of a commitment for even closer cooperation to achieve a world in which everyone, at any age, can live their life to the fullest. The title of the Declaration also demonstrates the consensus of UNECE member States on the importance of sustainability, solidarity between generations and of upholding human rights.

Dear colleagues,

We live in times of crisis, which may not be the most conducive to visionary and forward-looking social and ageing policies.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated our thinking and action for over two years and brought with itself the revival of many ageist stereotypes.
- We are all concerned about the recent developments in our region and the raging conflict in Ukraine where we witness the suffering of men and women, the young and the older, and an unforgivable loss of human potential across generations.
- We also observe economic, social and environmental challenges emerging across the globe.

However, during this Conference, I have seen that the topic of population ageing is taken into serious consideration in policy circles, and among researchers and civil society in our region. It may get less media coverage these days. But the topic of population ageing will stay with us in the foreseeable future and will continue to shape the future of our societies.

Having witnessed your many engaged discussions over the last days, I am confident that the topic is in the hands of responsible leaders.

I wish you determination in enacting the policies that you have today agreed on in the Ministerial Declaration.

At the same time, I would like to reassure all of you that the UNECE secretariat remains committed to assisting you in your follow-up actions.

I was happy to see that you have reaffirmed in the Declaration your commitment to the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing and your appreciation of the work of the secretariat.

I would like to mention that many of UNECE population activities rely on additional financial contributions from member States. In recent years, we have received significant contributions from a number of countries, which allowed the Standing Working Group to broaden its scope and increase its relevance. Your financial contributions also greatly supported our small secretariat team. Thank you for this.

We will continue to support the international exchanges between countries on ageing policies and good practices. We are also committed to continue our capacity-development activities to help you achieve the goals of the Rome Declaration. Let me read them out once again:

- *Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life;*
- *Ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families; and finally*
- *Mainstreaming ageing to advance a society for all ages.*

The Rome Declaration goes beyond these commitments. It spells out UNECE member States' ambition to update the Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPAA, and possibly MIPAA itself.

I salute this ambition and can assure member States of our full support to its realization. Our discussions over the past days have shown that 20 years after Madrid and Berlin, the time is ripe for an update reflecting our changed reality, emerging challenges and new priorities.

Throughout this process, we will count on the crucial support of civil society and of the scientific research community. We have strong foundations to build on, with both of these groups of key stakeholders strongly integrated in the Standing Working Group on Ageing and actively engaged in its work. We will maintain these close ties and will facilitate exchanges between governments, NGOs and researchers to achieve more inclusive and evidence-based policies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now that we are approaching the end of the Conference, allow me to express my gratitude to all government delegations, to the representatives of the civil society and the scientific community for their contributions.

I am grateful to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy and to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies of Italy for hosting the Conference.

I would also like to thank the organizing teams on both the Italian and the UNECE side, interpreters, and all those who helped us make this Conference a success.

I hope that the spirit of partnership and commitment that we have felt at the Rome Ministerial Conference will remain with us in the years ahead.

Thank you.