

16th meeting of the UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing
20 November 2023

UNECE Executive Secretary – Opening remarks

- Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,
- It is my pleasure to welcome you to Geneva for the first time since I joined UNECE in September. I am glad to meet you all and to reaffirm UNECE's commitment to the important work of this group.
- Last month, we hosted the UNECE Regional Conference on the International Conference on Population and Development. There, **we heard a lot about ageing as a population megatrend in the UNECE region**. We talked about the challenges but also the opportunities associated with population ageing, and the ongoing need to support and invest in individuals across the life course. We heard from several countries about progress towards building a society for all ages. We also discussed gaps and setbacks that put older persons at risk of being left behind.
- Speakers and member States **echoed many of the goals and objectives of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and last year's Rome Ministerial Declaration** - they called for the mainstreaming of ageing in public policies, to combat ageism, and for renewed efforts to guarantee the human rights of older persons. The Conference really **highlighted the need for regional cooperation** around population ageing. In that context, **the work of this group is absolutely crucial for the UNECE region**.
- The Standing Working Group on Ageing remains unique in the UN system in providing **a regional platform and institutional mechanism** for inter-governmental exchange, mutual learning, and collaboration between member States and with research institutions, civil society and international organisations.
- I would like to acknowledge your dedication, as well as the guidance of the Bureau of the Standing Working Group on Ageing and the support of my colleagues in the Secretariat. I also wish to **thank member States who have supported the programme of work through voluntary financial**

contributions. These have broadened the scope and relevance of the work of the Group in recent years, and I hope that such contributions will continue so that UNECE can strengthen this area of activity even further.

- You have a busy agenda ahead of you. You will adopt a new programme of work for the next five years. You will also begin to tackle the **ambitious task of updating the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action.** This will reflect the **changed realities, emerging challenges, and new priorities** in the region. As you undertake this strategic and visionary work, please know that UNECE remains fully committed to this process, and to supporting member States in strengthening their policy frameworks on ageing.
- Thank you again for being here and for your dedication to this important work. I wish you all fruitful deliberations and a productive meeting.