



Commission for Social Development Sixty-first session

In-person Side Event

Prioritizing the rights of older persons for decent work, productive employment, and full participation in society

Thursday, 9 February 2023, 1:15 – 2:30pm
Conference Room 8

Background

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Political Declaration adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, marked a turning point on how the world addresses the key goal of “building a society for all ages.” This year, the priority theme of the 61st session of the Commission for Social Development calls for the creation of full and productive employment and decent work for all to reduce inequalities and advance recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. In relationship to this theme, a central objective of MIPAA is the “empowerment of older persons to fully and effectively participate in the economic, political and social lives of their societies, including through income-generating and voluntary work”.

Despite Governments operating in the context of uncertainty and increased pressure on resources as they responded to the crisis, 4 out of 7 Member States participated in the Fourth Review and Appraisal cycle, representing 84 per cent of where older persons reside worldwide. As highlighted in the Fourth review and appraisal, older people continue to face disadvantages that limit their full participation in society, including in the area of employment. Acknowledging diversity in old age entails putting in place systems that support older persons who are unable or choose not to work, while enabling others who can and wish to work to continue doing so. However, bottom-up reporting from Member States for the Fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA reveals that multiple challenges persist.

Older persons continue to face barriers in participating in labour markets, accessing social protection, and thus face economic insecurity. According to the OECD, poverty rates among older people are higher than those of the general population. Older persons often experience age-based discrimination in the formal work sector resulting in diminished employment opportunities, early retirement, wage disparities and limited access to skills development. Age-based discrimination may compound other forms of discrimination based on gender, race and disability, furthering inequalities, economic insecurity, and exclusion from labour markets. Additionally, many older persons participate in the informal work sector, which may limit their income, access to good working conditions and recognition in society. Older women particularly bear this burden, often taking on informal work, including caregiving and familial duties.

Older people's exclusion from the workforce, lack of recognition of informal work and inadequate access to lifelong education, training, and skills development places many at-risk of financial insecurity, harm, and poverty. Access to labour markets is not only important for meeting the most basic of needs but provides purpose, value, and fulfilment. As stated in the most recent Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, the right to work is an inherent part of human dignity. Exclusion of older people from labour markets and the lack of policies which protect older people in the work force infringes upon this right.

With rapidly ageing populations across the globe, these challenges affect the whole-of-society and must be addressed to meet targets outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and respond to setbacks brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the midst of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, older people must be prioritised in the global recovery actions.

Objectives

This side event aims to highlight the specific barriers faced by older persons in accessing full and productive employment and in enjoying equality of opportunity and treatment with other workers. The side event calls for strengthening the protection of the rights of older persons, including to specifically prohibit or seek to eliminate ageism in work, which is required to meet the objectives of MIPAA and the SDGs.

Agenda and Speakers

Opening welcome remarks **Katrina Bouzanis** Program Manager, International Federation on Ageing

Introductory remarks **Daniel Zavala Porras** Minister Counselor, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations and Vice-Chair of the sixty-first session

Setting the Scene **Matthieu Cognac** Senior Multilateral Cooperation Specialist at ILO New York Office

Response from United Nations regional commissions

Moderator: **Alexandre Sidorenko** Senior Advisor, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

Lisa Warth Chief of Population Unit, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Mamusa Siyunyi Social Affairs Officer, Social Development Policy Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Simone Cecchini Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Srinivas Tata Director Social Development Division, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Sara Salman Population Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Respondent:

Good practice: *The impact of the "Interamerican Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons" on the right to work of older persons* **Francisca Perales**, Undersecretary of Social Services, Ministry of Social Development and Family, Chile (TBC)

Q&A