

“Statement of Support to the UN Secretary General`s Policy Brief on The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons”

In the face of the unprecedented spread of COVID-19, we strongly support the appeal by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for countries to promote responses to the pandemic based on the respect of the rights and dignity of older people as well as global solidarity. In this regard, we welcome the release of the Policy Brief of the United Nations Secretary-General on the impact of COVID-19 on older people.

We express our deep concern regarding the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the lives of older persons.

We recognize that, while the pandemic spreads among persons of all ages and conditions, older persons are at a significantly higher risk of mortality and severe disease following infection, with those over 80 years old dying at five times the average rate.

At a time when international and intergenerational solidarity is needed the most, we express our deep concern over the escalation of ageism, including age discrimination and stigmatization of older persons, which aggravate their vulnerabilities.

We also recognize that solidarity between generations at all levels, within families, communities and nations, is fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages.

We are aware that some protection measures adopted to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic can exacerbate the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by older people not only regarding their access to healthcare services, life-saving treatments and access to social services, but they can also have negative impacts on their jobs, and pensions as well as their mental and physical health.

We are deeply concerned about distressing reports indicating instances of neglect and mistreatment as well as high rates of mortality due to COVID-19, which are affecting older people living in nursing homes and care institutions.

We are also concerned about the situation of older persons who are quarantined or locked down with family members or caregivers and who may also face higher risks of discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect. In this regard, we must scale up our efforts and strengthen measures to protect older persons, particularly older women, from any form of gender-based violence and abuse, such as domestic violence.

We also express deep concern about the threats faced by older people in humanitarian settings, where overcrowding, limited healthcare, nutritious food, water and sanitation, and barriers to humanitarian assistance can exacerbate their risks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognize that older persons make substantial contributions to sustainable development efforts, including through their experience and their active and meaningful participation in society. In that sense, it is imperative to fully empower older persons to allow them to effectively make that contribution as rights holders and active, autonomous and independent agents and beneficiaries of change.

We strongly believe that measures taken as a response to the COVID-19 must include the participation of older people, be inclusive of their specific needs and ensure their right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, ensure their access to life-saving treatments, and protect their social and economic wellbeing on an equal basis with others.

We must all work together to strengthen the international and intergenerational solidarity to promote responses that foster healthy ageing and the human rights and dignity of older people during COVID-19 crisis and the recovery process.

We therefore commit to fully promoting and respecting the dignity and rights of older people and to mitigate the negative impacts during and after the COVID-19 pandemic on their health, lives, rights and wellbeing. We further commit to working with all partners to strengthen global and national targeted responses to address the needs and rights of older persons and foster more inclusive, equitable, resilient and age-friendly societies.

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