Mr Chair,

At the outset allow me to offer you my sincere congratulations on your election to preside over this year’s Session of the Committee. Our best wishes also go to the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of the European Union. I would therefore like to make only a few additional remarks from our national perspective under agenda item 27b.

Mr. Chair,

In the belief that society has the duty to ensure that the elderly remain at its core, the Government of Malta is actively seeking to develop strategies that improve the quality of life of older persons.

Acknowledging the challenges surrounding this policy area and the necessity for a long term view, the Government has embarked on the drafting of a comprehensive Active Ageing Strategy covering a seven-year period between 2013 and 2020 to accompany ongoing and legislative changes, based on the principles of intergenerational solidarity, employability, social participation and health.

To this end, a National Commission for Active Ageing was set up to draft a National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing, and a CEO office was set up to oversee a more efficient organisation of human and financial resources. Furthermore, to mark International Day for Older Persons, the Government allocated funds to establish an Active Ageing Unit to implement the National Strategy for Active Ageing, which should be launched shortly, as well as ensure people at dementia activity centres and in long-term care are able to engage in meaningful activities.
Moreover, a multidisciplinary committee was set up to advise the Government on national regulations for care homes, while a team of geriatricians has started assessing people applying to enter long-term care, so that they can be channelled to those homes that best meet their needs.

In July of this year, an expression of interest was issued to stimulate more public-private partnerships in long-term care. In its first six months, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Aging also strengthened the University of the Third Age by contributing to the setting up of new centres around Malta. Moreover, plans to transform day centres for the elderly into active ageing centres that function as lifelong learning hubs, in parallel to the opening of day centres in new localities, are at an advanced stage.

Mr. Chair,

Work is under way to introduce legal amendments to protect older people from abuse and for harsher penalties for those convicted of crimes against the elderly. The Government considers the ageing population as a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to change opinions and presumptions about what ageing means, while rousing innovative ideas and technologies to improve the quality of older lives. The opportunity is for older people to play a full and active role in society, keeping control over their lives, even if constrained by health problems. Irrespective from which side of the coin one prefers to look at aging, there is no doubt that longer lives are something to celebrate, a triumph of human development.

Mr. Chair,

One of the difficulties which different countries are facing especially in the developing regions and in countries with economies in transition, is the acute shortage of trained personnel at all levels particularly in the field of ageing.

The Government is proud of hosting in Malta the International Institute on Ageing (INIA) set up between the United Nations and the Government of Malta over 25 years ago. The Institute has been recognized worldwide as playing a key role in the development of national capacities in different countries to address the implementation priorities identified during the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Mr Chair,

The deadline set for the achievement of the millennium development goals is fast approaching. Progress has been made, but clearly much remains to be done. Extreme poverty, the lack of access to education and health, and lack of a sustainable path for development remain tangible. Extra effort should therefore be made to reach the set targets by 2015, while the post-2015 process should reinforce Governments’ commitment to, inter alia, eradicate poverty within a set timeframe.
Yesterday, the European Union delivered a statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

My delegation believes that the post-2015 process should be based on a single comprehensive and coherent framework as this is imperative to achieve effective delivery and significant results at all levels. In this context, the Government of Malta would like to clarify its position, as it has continuously done, with respect to the language pertaining to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights. While strongly reaffirming our strong support and commitment to the full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, and the subsequent international instruments, including the Beijing Platform for Action, my delegation would like to reaffirm that any discussion and references to rights and services in connection with reproductive health cannot take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life. In this regard, any recommendation related to the Overarching Post-2015 Agenda should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health or rights or commodities.

Mr Chair,

The Government of Malta will continue to dedicate its energy and policies to maintain and guarantee social-inclusive policies in its general policy direction.

Thank you.