Statement by Counsellor Yao Shaojun of the Chinese Delegation to the United Nations at the General Debate of the Sixth Session of the GA Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing

(14 July, 2015, Conference Room 4)

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to congratulate you on your election as the chairman of the working group. You can count on China’s support for your work and that of other members of the Bureau. Older persons are a precious asset for society and the issue of ageing has a profound impact on social and economic development. How to actively and effectively respond to the ageing of the population is a major issue facing the entire international community. In this connection, China wishes to make the following observations:

First, addressing the question of ageing is the responsibility of the government and the society as a whole. Governments should play the leading role, increase policy support and guidance in this respect, take a holistic approach encompassing economic, legal and administrative means, and strengthen inter-agency coordination to form synergy in improving the well-being of the elderly. Meanwhile, we should encourage and support the participation of enterprises, social organizations, families and individuals in meeting the needs of the elderly. The role of the market should be given full play to improve the service system for the elderly and develop service industry in this field.
Secondly, addressing the issue of ageing should be based on economic development. Ageing has brought about numerous problems affecting social and economic development. It is necessary to vigorously develop economy to acquire strong economic power as a basic guarantee for efforts to address ageing issues. The issue of ageing should be incorporated in the overall development plan and the special needs of the elderly in poverty eradication, medical care, social protection and voluntary employment taken into full consideration, in order for them to fully share the fruit of development.

Thirdly, addressing the issue of ageing requires further international cooperation and respect for differences. It is the common goal of all countries to protect the rights and interests of the elderly. The international community should pay attention to the special difficulties facing the developing countries and provide financial and technical assistance to them. China welcomes the inclusion of ageing factors in the draft Post-2015 Development Agenda. Meanwhile, there is no “one size fits all” approach to address the issue of ageing, and efforts in this regard should take into consideration each country’s national conditions and level of development, and follow a step-by-step approach.

Fourthly, addressing the issue of ageing needs to play a full role of the existing international framework. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing provides guidance to countries in seeking to develop policy on ageing. The working group should, as mandated by the GA, continue to push for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action and study questions such as the world trend of ageing and current mechanisms of protection and their deficiencies. In light of the serious divergence of views on drafting a new international legal instrument, we need to keep patience, go step by step, and conduct consultations on equal footing with a view to expanding common understanding.

Mr. Chairman,

The Chinese nation has established since ancient times the good tradition of respecting, supporting and helping the elderly. China has now entered
the stage of fast population ageing, with over 200 million older persons. The Chinese government pays great attention to this issue and has set it as a long term strategy of the nation to tackle the problem actively. A series of measures have been taken to eliminate the discrimination against older persons, safeguard their legitimate rights and interests, and help them to make voluntary contribution for the society. We have established a legal system with the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly as the centerpiece, implemented multiple development plans for the benefit of the elderly, and set up committees on ageing at various levels from the central government to local administrations. We have improved our basic pension insurance system, basic medical insurance system and social security system. As part of our effort to improve the well-being of the elderly, we have sped up the effort to establish a social service system for the caring of the elderly, develop service industry targeting the elderly, and improve the service system for the elderly who are left behind in rural areas.

China will continue to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation and promote the coordinated development of the cause of the elderly with that of the economy and society, thus contributing to the efforts of the international community to address the issue of ageing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.