Thank you Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its Member States welcome the holding of the sixth meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. Let me express our thanks to the Bureau, our colleagues from Argentina, as well as the United Nations staff for their efforts in preparing this session.

Mr. Chair,

Population ageing constitutes one of the most significant demographic transformations of the twenty-first century. The European Union and its Member States are fully committed to the human rights of older persons. The EU acknowledges the serious challenges that older persons face, including when it comes to the enjoyment of their human rights. Our active participation in the previous sessions of the Working Group and our engagement during this year's session also

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
has to be seen in this context. We perceive this meeting of the working group together with its panel discussions and interactive dialogues as an opportunity to discuss measures and actions devised to improve the situation of older persons. It's an opportunity to hear from government representatives and experts, as well as from civil society actors, about their experiences, best-practices and policies and to further discuss progress and measures to improve the situation of older persons.

Mr. Chair,

The situation of older persons is very high on the agenda of the European Union and its Member States. This is illustrated by a number of recent events. In June of this year, the EU organized in Brussels a conference on innovative financing opportunities for active and healthy ageing, in the context of *the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing*. Also in June, on the occasion of the 10th World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the EU Commission organised together with the Council of Europe, AGE Platform Europe and ENNHRI a joint event on *Tackling elder abuse in Europe: a renewed commitment or a missed opportunity*.

Moreover, the EU, together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), launched the Active-Ageing Index, on which we had a joint international seminar in Brussels on 16-17 April 2015. We are grateful to the University of Southampton, whose support to UNECE and the Commission in developing the index was essential. On Thursday you will hear more on this project from its representative. This is one example of a successful cooperation between the Commission and an international organisation in the area of active ageing policy support to our MS, alongside our cooperation with the OECD, the WHO and the World Bank. We would also like to mention the European Summit on Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing on 9 – 10 March 2015 which explored how the demographic change can be turned into an opportunity for Europe through technology, innovation and new ways of cooperation. Lastly, the European Commission has published two important reports on Ageing. The first report, published in autumn last year, describes the underlying macroeconomic assumptions and age-related projection methodologies for all MS. Later on, in March this year, the EU adopted the second report with projection until 2060 of the economic, budgetary and societal impacts of these trends for policy makers.

Mr. Chair,

We sincerely welcome the opportunity to exchange more on regional and national efforts, building on the existing standards and policy frameworks that exist on different levels. The protection of the human rights of older persons requires involvement of multiple stakeholders at all levels, including the involvement of older persons themselves, beyond government and public service. In this regard, we support broad and inclusive participation of civil society organisations in the OEWG. It is important for us to note that the work of this Working Group is part of a larger discourse on ageing issues which should also take into account the social policy and
development dimension. In order to mainstream the rights of older persons throughout the work of the UN, we need to ensure a regular, coherent and comprehensive discussion within the UN on ageing issues, making proper use of existing meetings such as those of the Commission on Social Development and regional commissions within the ECOSOC. We further stress our full support for the work of the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons and call on all member states to cooperate with the Independent Expert in the discharge of her mandate.

Mr. Chair,

With regard to the specific mandate of the Working Group, I would like to recall what has repeatedly been underlined by numerous delegations throughout previous meetings: the whole spectrum of internationally recognized human rights standards and principles also cover and protect older persons without discrimination. Moreover, the current international legal framework addresses many of the issues discussed in this session, namely health, social security, accessibility, violence and discrimination. Therefore, although it is important to discuss the implementation and protection gaps, the EU remains sceptical that they are of a normative nature.

At the same time, the EU recalls its position that more can be done through the implementation of the existing Human Rights framework that also addresses the human rights of older persons and combats age discrimination. More can and should be done to address the undisputed human rights challenges, that range from abuse, discrimination, poverty and lack of opportunities and to deal with specific health issues and other challenges associated with old age.

Mr. Chair,

On the basis of our joint analysis of the situation of the human rights of older persons we share the view that there is an urgent need for improvement. At the same time, we remain proponents of the strategy that focus on a determined application of existing standards is the most effective and practical way to address the protection and implementation gaps.

This could be facilitated, for example, through an increased focus on age as a specific perspective when monitoring existing human rights instruments. There are various opportunities within the human rights system which particularly highlight age relevant issues such as the General Comments issued by the Treaty Bodies or joint reports of the existing Special Rapporteurs. In this regard we welcome the upcoming presentation by the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons at this session. The EU also considers that the various mechanisms established in the area should usefully complement each other. A comprehensive compilation which would assemble the existing standards in one document would be a concrete and swift step forward.
For the EU, it is important to emphasize that many protection gaps and measures are already being considered in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, under the umbrella of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Madrid Plan remains the international point of reference also today. Regional conferences are organized on a regular basis as part of its review. We urge all UN members and agencies to accelerate its implementation at the national, regional and international level. We agree to the need to substantially step up and support activities benefitting the implementation of current human rights instruments. We hope that this Working Group session will build on the Madrid plan, highlight opportunities to strengthen the application of existing standards to improve the human rights protection of older persons and come up with a strong call to action on all of us to do more. We also hope that it will contribute to generating the political will that is necessary to prioritize ageing issues, including the much-needed change in mind-set, to start conceiving older persons as assets and contributors, rather than as a problem and a subject of state intervention. We also recognise the relevance of the rights of older persons in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Chair,

Before concluding, let me also look beyond this session. We have been looking forward to this meeting and we will contribute actively to the exchanges. It is of utmost importance to revisit priority issues on a regular basis and we agree that much remains to be done to fully realize the human rights of older persons and to ensure their rights to life-long learning, self-determination, participation and inclusion in our societies. We would like to invite you all to join the reflection on how best to ensure a more regular, meaningful and comprehensive discussion within the UN on ageing issues, including through the use of existing meetings such as the Commission for Social Development.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.