Mr. Chairman,

Thank you. My delegation looks forward to participating in constructive and positive discussions on this issue of significant importance under your able leadership.

Increased life expectancy, advances in medicine technology and health systems, rural migration and urbanization have led to a significant increase in the global population of elderly.

Though international efforts are strongly focused on achieving “sustainable development”, policy makers continue to face challenges of socio-economic exclusion, exploitation, discrimination, abuse and violence faced by older persons.

Mr. Chairman,

Senior Citizens constitute 8.6% of the total Indian population. The population is further expected to increase to an estimated 300 million i.e. over 19% by the turn of mid-century. This would present significant socio-economic and healthcare challenges, and would have to be addressed in a systematic and consistent manner.

In India, our constitution makers were aware to the requirements of the aged and thus, under Article 41, made provision for the right to public assistance in cases of “old age”. A number of legislative measures and policy reforms have been undertaken to provide an effective environment to secure the goals of social, economic and emotional security for the elderly. Government is also sensitive to the issue of feminization of ageing, especially in rural areas.

The National Policy for Older Persons adopted in 1999 and revised in 2011, addresses the requirements of financial security, health care and nutrition, protection against abuse and exploitation, shelter and appropriate financial discounts to senior citizens, all in order to improve quality of their lives.

The Maintenance of Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act enacted in 2007 has further strengthened the legislative framework in this area.

The National Programme for Healthcare of Elderly provides for improved health services. The Integrated Programme for Older Persons is a community based approach to improve the quality of life of older persons and the National Council of Senior Citizens advises Central and State Governments on the issue of their welfare and protections.

Several government policies and programmes ensure privileges of old age pensions, retirement benefits, tax concessions and access to various amenities in transportation and health services and provide financial assistance for setting up old age homes, day care centers, mobile medical units, counselling units and similar facilities to enable them to live a life of well being and dignity.
All this is being made possible through innovative partnerships with multiple stakeholders, including civil society, family and the community. Ageing has also been mainstreamed in numerous development programmes aimed at the upliftment of the poor and marginalized sections of the population.

Mr. Chairman,

As we make progress towards the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda with focus on eradication of poverty at its heart, we must also continue to strengthen our efforts towards the full implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Ways and means to integrate older people and their full participation into the development process as an asset rather than a burden need to be adopted. Core informal social structures such as families and communities need to be revived and invigorated, in addition to strengthening formal institutions.

If our ambition is to "Build the Future We Want", the international community and UN system must strengthen its will and commitment to address the needs of the population over 60 which is expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2030. Older persons should not be left behind unprotected, ignored or marginalized.

Mr. Chairman,

India, a signatory to the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, remains committed to taking all possible steps towards protecting the rights and dignity of older persons, and addressing implementation and protection gaps. We will continue to actively participate in the discussions of the Working Group and relevant UN fora, and act with the global community on this important issue.

I Thank You.