Mr. Chairman,
Let me begin by congratulating you and other members of the bureau on your well-deserved election. We are confident that your able leadership will surely lead the session to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Chair:
02. The world has been witnessing an unprecedented demographic transition. More people are now living healthy and longer life. The number of older persons is expected to be more than double to over 2 billion in 2050 and nearly 8 in 10 will live in less developed regions. No doubt we have reasons to celebrate. The numerical growth of elderly persons around the world is an eloquent testimony of the effective policies and planning undertaken by the Governments towards ensuring improved healthcare services, nutrition, medical facilities. At the same time, one cannot ignore socio-economic impact of this transition and subsequent need for effective policy interventions that the situation warrants.
Like all other countries, Bangladesh is going through the demographic transition. It is projected that by 2050, 20% of the country’s total population will be older population which means, one in every 5 people will be a senior citizen by 2050.
Elders in our society are commonly considered as the guardian of ancestral values. However, due to various socio-economic changes and transformation in the familial structure these traditional values are gradually eroding. Furthermore, rapid urbanization, migration along with different social and economic factors are posing challenges to our long tradition.
The Government of Bangladesh is extremely sensitive to the current demographic shift. The constitution of Bangladesh, the supreme law of the land, guarantees equal rights to all. It also spells out special provisions for social protection programmes targeting different groups including older people. Our National policy of ageing embraces the spirit of the Madrid Plan of Action not only by defining a person
at or above the age of 60 as senior citizens, but also incorporating important provisions of poverty reduction, health care nutrition education and training intergenerational communication and solidarity, security in life and property, special fare and reserved seats for seniors in public transportations. The national health policy considers special emergency health care services for vulnerables including older persons on a priority basis. The country has enacted a new law on the maintenance of parents. Recent changes in some existing laws such as increase of the age of retirement from 57 to 59 and existing provisions of pension, gratuity, group insurance and benevolent fund aspire to ensure dignity and well-being of senior citizens after retirement.

The government has been implementing a special safety net project called “Old age allowance since 1998, years before the adoption of the MIPAA. The coverage of this programme is gradually being expanded by phases.

Mr. Chairman:
Family remains the primary source of support and care for its senior members. In a cordial family environment elders receive the unconditional love and care which no old home or safe home can provide. Therefore, our national plans and programmes are shaped in a way to support individual members of the family. Our vibrant civil society and development partners have been partnering with the government in all its effort.

Mr. Chair:
As the world is undergoing a silent demographic revolution, there is an urgent need to adjust our policy interventions so that our elders have their rightful place in the society, at the same time society can reap the benefit of their wealth of experience and knowledge.

While Madrid Plan of Action sets the stage for integrating elders in national policies, the non-binding nature of the Action Plan poses a challenge in translating the commitments into concrete action. There is an urgent need to address the existing normative and implementation gap at the international level by considering a specific international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights of older persons. Madrid Plan of Action can be an important basis for formulating such an instrument.

Mr. Chair,
As we are at a critical year of finalizing the new sets of development agenda for the next 15 years, we need to strengthen our partnership and cooperation so that no one is left behind and that our society can move forward through building upon the contribution and experience of our elders.

I thank you Mr. Chair.