Age UK Statement to 6th Working Session of OEWG on Ageing

Interactive Discussion – Follow up to resolution 69/146: Proposals and measures, best practices and lessons learned that will contribute to the promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of older people.

15 July 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I am speaking on behalf of Age UK and would like to thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

This is now the sixth meeting of the OEWG and it is Age UK’s view that time has arrived to move from deliberation to action.

We have been heartened to see how engaged Member States have been in the core task of the Open-Ended Working Group to seek better protection for the rights of older persons. The proposals put forward by Member States are all significant in that they share this common purpose. It is our view that there is widespread consensus that urgent action is required to better protect the rights of older people.

This ambition, however, is not matched by the evidence of what is actually being undertaken at national level. In broad terms, the written contributions of Member States focused on a narrow range of issues relating to the perceived care and safeguarding needs of older people rather than a human rights analysis of the barriers older people face in realising their full range of economic, cultural, social, civil and political participation rights.

The main barrier that older people around the world face to the enjoyment of their rights is the pervasive experience of ageism and the discriminatory treatment that is associated with it, but Member States have given very few examples of concrete steps being taken to tackle ageism and outlaw harmful age discrimination.
A new convention that explicitly prohibits age discrimination and articulates the full range of state obligations towards older people is essential. Only such a convention can bring about the necessary paradigm shift from older people being considered as passive recipients of welfare to the recognition of older people as active rights holders.

The decision to draft a human rights convention is not to be taken lightly and we acknowledge the importance of the deliberations that are taking place both within this chamber and without. But we believe the time has firmly arrived when we need to shift our attention from the question of "if" there should be a convention to the question of "when".

We wait with anticipation the considered view of the Independent Expert in her final report to the Human Rights Council in the autumn of 2016 and hope this will become a watershed moment for taking this important decision forward.

We are at great pains, however, to stress that we do not expect any actor, governmental or non-governmental, to put on hold efforts to address the human rights of older persons. The growing urgency of the situation of older people around the globe is such that we need both improved implementation of existing mechanisms and the collective force of an international convention.

We urge Member States to begin preparing for the drafting of a convention and to take every effort to implement now the many good initiatives that have been shared in this forum.

Name: Katherine Hill, Strategy Adviser - Equality and Human Rights
Age UK
Email: katherine.hill@ageuk.org.uk

Age UK
Tavis House
1-6 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9NA
T 0800 169 80 80 F 020 3033 1000
E policy@ageuk.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk

Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is Tavis House 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA.