The 4th Review of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the Arab Region

Regional Review Conference

1-2 June 2022

Concept note

I- Background

A. Ageing in the Arab Region

The Arab region has one of the fastest growing populations in the world, which has more than tripled from 123 million in 1970 to over 400 million in 2017. This remarkable increase in population, coupled with complex socio-economic developments left the majority of Arab countries struggling to ensure a dignified life for their populations.

The recent demographic changes witnessed in the region are adding additional pressures to countries. While the Arab region has been characterized by its youthful population, recent demographic shifts are resulting in a persisting youth bulge and a significant increase in the numbers and proportions of older persons, forcing governments to address often competing priorities for their different age groups. The number of older persons in the region is projected to exceed 71 million by 2050. This accelerated shift leaves a very tight window for countries to address the needs and priorities of their older persons today and of future cohorts. Large groups of older persons risk increased vulnerability and exclusion.

These demographic shifts are coinciding with significant socio-economic and political challenges that countries across the region are facing today. These challenges were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which put substantial pressure on both the societies as well as the families to cater for the needs of their older persons fully and effectively. The pandemic also accentuated the inequalities among older persons. The challenges facing ageing and older persons in the region have been highlighted in different regional reviews of global frameworks, including the regional review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), as well as the review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite some promising policy developments witnessed across Arab countries, including the adoption of the Arab Strategy for Older Persons 2019-2029, as well as the development of older persons policies in a number of Arab countries, older persons continue to be a growing vulnerable group that is facing an increasing risk of being left behind. Large groups of older persons are excluded from social protection platforms, heightening their risk of disease and poverty. Changing

social norms as a result of migration, urbanization, and modernization are impacting inter-generational support. Policy making relating to older persons remains fragmented in most Arab countries and does not respond to the needs of older persons today nor prepare for the quickly increasing numbers and proportions of older persons in the near future. The COVID-19 pandemic has further threatened the wellbeing of older persons, especially those in vulnerable situations, and highlighted the urgency of the need for coherent policies that address older person's needs, priorities and specificities.

B. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Against this backdrop, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), remains the most comprehensive and most specialized international framework that can guide global, regional and national efforts to empower and protect older persons. The plan of action and its declaration were adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002 including 19 Arab countries[1]. The adoption of the plan of action represented a recognition by the international community of the challenges facing older people in a rapidly ageing world and an attempt to seize opportunities associated with the ageing phenomenon. It constituted a turning point in addressing older persons' issues, through adopting a rights-based approach that regarded older persons as active contributors to development with worth utilizing expertise and abilities rather than mere recipients and beneficiaries of social and welfare services.

The plan of action which aims to build a society for all ages where "people everywhere are able to age with security and dignity" consists of 18 issues, 35 objectives, and 239 recommended actions that revolve around 3 main priority directions, namely: (a) older persons and development, including issues of: active participation in society, employment, income security, social protection, access to education and training, migration, intergenerational solidarity, and emergencies; (b) advancing health and well-being into old age, including issues of: health promotion, universal and equal access to health care services, training of health care professionals, mental health, and disabilities; (c) ensuring enabling and supportive environments, including issues of housing and the living environment, ageing in place, support for caregivers; protection from abuse and violence, and positive images of ageing.

C. Follow up and review of MIPAA

MIPAA's implementation is appraised every five years through an inclusive and comprehensive process, that aims to monitor progress, survey the status of older persons, and identify emerging priorities. The process is entrusted at the regional level with the regional commissions of the United Nations.

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[1] Arab countries present at the Second World Assembly on ageing were: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the Sudan, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen

The modalities of the fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA were set in resolution 2020/8[2] issued by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in June 2020. The resolution encourages countries to establish national coordination mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of MIPAA, including its review and appraisal. Additionally, the resolution urged countries to adopt a participatory bottom-up approach appraisal process by engaging all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations in all stages of the review process.

II- The fourth review and appraisal of MIPAA in the Arab region

ESCWA launched the process of the fourth MIPAA review in November 2020 in a capacity building workshop targeting nominated ageing focal points representing Member States, during which the participants agreed on the review modality in the Arab region. Accordingly, ESCWA developed a guiding template to assist member countries in drafting their national review reports. The template was presented and discussed in a regional capacity building workshop on preparing national reports held in April 2021. This first workshop was followed by a second workshop held in September 2021 to discuss progress and challenges in preparing the national appraisal reports.

As per the agreed timeline, and in line with the recommended modality set out in the resolution to ensure the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, ESCWA in partnership with UNFPA, organized two additional dialogues involving multi-stakeholders including relevant civil society organizations, academics, and representatives of Arab parliaments. The regional review process will culminate in a regional review conference that will bring together all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

III- The Regional Review Conference

ESCWA in partnership with UNFPA Arab States Regional Office, will organize the MIPAA regional review conference. The Conference will serve to assess the progress and identify the gaps in the progress to achieve MIPAA objectives across the Arab region, with a focus on the commitments made and the policies and programmes to address older persons issues. It will provide a peer learning platform for States to present their success stories and share their respective challenges. The discussions will be informed by a regional report synthesizing inputs from Arab countries, and national and regional review reports, and highlighting major trends and developments witnessed in the region since the last review in 2017.

A. Participants

The Conference will bring together representatives of governmental institutions, including ministers and high-level officials from relevant ministries and National Population Councils, in addition to parliamentarians, representatives of civil society organizations, regional organizations, UN agencies, academics, experts, and other stakeholders.

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[2] Resolution 2020/8 adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 18 June 2020 (E/2020/26):Modalities for the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002
https://undocs.org/en/E/RES/2020/8

B. Date and Venue

The conference will be organized on 1-2 June 2022. Participants can attend either online or in person in Beirut.

C. Outcome Documents

The outcome of the regional review process will include: 1) a regional review report synthesizing national review reports submitted by Member States, and 2) an outcome document summarizing the key messages emanating from the regional review conference.

Both documents will be submitted to the Commission for Social Development ahead of its 61st session, which will be organized in 2023.

D. Documentation

a. Third Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on ageing https://www.unescwa.org/events/third-review-ageing-arab-countries

b. Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002

c. ECOSOC resolution 8/2020 on Modalities for the Fourth Review and appraisal of MIPAA 2002. https://undocs.org/ar/E/RES/2020/8

d. Progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging in the Arab States E/ESCWA/SDD/2019/INF.8

e. Aging in ESCWA Member States: Third Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/TECHNICAL PAPER.12

f. Documents and presentations presented at the first and second capacity-building workshop on the "Fourth Review and Appraisal of Madid International Action Plan on Ageing" April and September 2021

g. Ageing in the arab region: statistical trends and policy perspectives: https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/publications/ageing-arab-region-statistical-trends-and-policy-perspectives

h. The rights of older persons: a review of national strategies in the Arab region https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/publications/rights-older-persons

i. Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development Reviewing the Implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, Regional Report 2018 https://archive.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/arab-regional-conference-population-development-final-report-en.pdf