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Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



**MIPAA +20**

المراجعة الإقليمية الرابعة لخطة  
عمل مدريد الدولية للشيوخ  
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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

## Outcome document

### **Fourth Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the Arab region Regional review conference 1-2 June 2022**

#### Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Population Fund's Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA-ASRO) organized the Regional Conference to Review the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 1 and 2 June 2022. The conference was attended by representatives of governmental institutions in Arab States, including ministers and high-level officials from relevant ministries, committees and bodies, as well as parliamentarians, representatives of civil society organizations, regional organizations and United Nations agencies, academics, experts and other stakeholders.

The conference provided a regional platform to assess progress and identify gaps in the implementation of MIPAA objectives in the Arab region, with a focus on existing commitments, policies and programmes to address older persons' issues. Participants in the conference were able to exchange knowledge and opinions on their respective opportunities and challenges, and to present their success stories. Discussions were based on a regional report compiling inputs from Arab countries and from national review reports and highlighting key trends and developments in the region since the last review in 2017.

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## I. Key messages

1. Participants agreed on several key messages, which were read out by Ms. Samar Al-Sibai, Head of the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs in the Syrian Arab Republic, as follows:

- Integrate older persons' issues into strategic plans and development policies to ensure a cross-sectoral response.
- Strengthen coordination among governmental bodies on older persons' issues to ensure effectiveness, reduce waste and maximize benefits from existing potential.
- Establish national committees and bodies on older persons, expand the powers of existing committees, strengthen their role, and support them with the necessary financial and human resources.
- Strengthen the integrated rights system that consolidates the rights of citizens, including older persons, enact a special law for older persons, integrate their issues into the existing legal framework, and protect them from abuse and violence.
- Promote the work of Arab parliaments in advocating for older persons' issues and establishing laws that take into account their priorities; and intensify cooperation with older persons and national organizations dealing with their issues using parliamentary mechanisms of action, including hearings.
- Devote attention to older persons, especially during times of war and crisis and beyond, and emphasize the need for response and recovery plans to meet the needs of older persons.
- Expand social protection systems, including retirement schemes, to wider population groups, and consider intensifying bilateral cooperation between States to facilitate migrants' access to social protection benefits.
- Redesign existing retirement schemes to ensure the sustainability of pension funds in view of the unfolding demographic change in the region and the exclusive reliance of retirement schemes on social security funds. However, these funds mostly face large and chronic actuarial deficits, which may lead to a reduction in retirement and social security benefits. Therefore, national social protection bodies and social security funds should establish private retirement schemes that complement social security and enhance pension security.
- Reduce illiteracy, particularly digital illiteracy, among older persons by developing programmes targeted at older persons and those of working age today, and by investing in building their capacity.
- Encourage the exchange of knowledge and expertise among Arab countries on long-term care systems and invest in the development of the long-term care infrastructure in preparation for the demographic transition, including building knowledge and skills, establishing the legal framework for regulating the long-term care sector, and promoting the role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations in this area.
- Identify employment opportunities and skills required in the long-term care sector, train the labour force and provide young people with vocational counselling to contribute to reducing unemployment rates.
- Build a culture of intergenerational transfer of expertise in the labour market and in the private sector, highlight the added value of older persons in the labour market, and benefit from their experiences and skills that can be passed on to younger generations.
- Develop the financial literacy of people from a young age and at working age to encourage savings and investment as a pillar of financial security for future generations of older persons; and promote the role of the private sector in this area.

- Emphasize the importance of a participatory approach and involve older persons in designing national policies, particularly those pertaining to them.
- Promote networking with the non-governmental sector and build its capacity to respond to older persons' priorities and advocate for their issues.
- Promote the role of the media in advocating for older persons' issues, raising community awareness about them and breaking the negative stereotype of older persons.
- Build the knowledge base on older persons, establish centres for studies on older persons or sections in existing centres, suggest the establishment of a regional observatory for older persons, and strengthen the role of regional organizations in this area.
- Develop special indicators to measure MIPAA implementation and collect the necessary information for these indicators.
- Collect detailed and updated data on older persons and integrate them into databases; and build national capacity to produce and analyse data.
- Promote peer learning among Arab countries and exchange of knowledge and good practices on the support and inclusion of older persons, through regular meetings at the regional level.
- Adopt a global convention that defines the rights of older persons.
- Call on ESCWA and UNFPA to pursue their efforts to support policies and strategies related to providing social protection for older persons.

## **II. Conference sessions**

2. The conference agenda included seven thematic sessions aimed at presenting State reports and exploring priority issues in the Arab region.

3. The conference was inaugurated by Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme at ESCWA, who focused on the significance of concerted efforts by all relevant stakeholders and the importance of integrating older persons' issues into policies to accelerate MIPAA implementation. Mr. Louay Shabana, Regional Director of UNFPA-ASRO, delivered a statement in which he stressed the need to devote attention to ageing issues in view of the unfolding demographic transition in the Arab region.

4. During the introductory session, Ms. Sara Salman, Population Affairs Officer at ESCWA, provided an overview of MIPAA and its fourth review process in the Arab region, and presented the most prominent findings of the regional report prepared by ESCWA in partnership with UNFPA, synthesizing the national review reports submitted by 14 Arab States.

5. The first and second sessions included presentations on the voluntary reports of ESCWA member States, thus providing an opportunity to review the progress achieved in empowering and protecting older persons, and highlighting challenges, success stories, current and emerging priorities, and lessons learned. The first session was chaired by Mr. Fadi Salti Al-Khalil, Head of Planning and International Cooperation Commission in the Syrian Arab Republic. The speakers were as follows: Mr. Mohamed Miqdadi, Secretary-General of the National Council for Family Affairs in Jordan; Ms. Hessa Tahlak, Assistant Undersecretary of Social Development at the Ministry of Community Development of the United Arab Emirates; Ms. Imen Ben Cheikh, Director of the Older Persons at the Ministry of Family, Women, Children and Seniors of Tunisia; Ms. Sara Idris, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Sudanese Embassy in Lebanon; Mr. Mohamed Omar Al-Kamary, Legal Advisor to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Undersecretary of the State Council in Egypt; Ms. Hayat Hussein al- Mitayri, Director of Older Persons at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Iraq; and Ms. Fatima Abdul Aziz Al-Kaabi, Researcher of International Conferences and Agreements at the Ministry of Social Development and Family in Qatar.

6. The second session was chaired by Mr. Mohammed Miqdadi, Secretary-General of the National Council for Family Affairs in Jordan. The speakers were as follows: Mr. Fadi Salti Al-Khalil, Head of Planning and International Cooperation Commission in the Syrian Arab Republic; Mr. Ghanem Omar, Director of Older Persons Directorate at the Ministry of Social Development of the State of Palestine; Mr. Hocein Abdel Hakim, Director of the Protection of Older Persons Department at the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs in Algeria; Mr. Hamad Al-Khalidi, Director of Elderly Care Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs in Kuwait; Ms. Fernande Abu Haidar, Interim Head of the Department of Family Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon; Ms. Malika Qalbi, Head of the Department for the protection of the Elderly of the Directorate of Family, Child and Elderly Protection at the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Inclusion and Family in Morocco; Ms. Safia Bint Mohammed Al- Omairiya, Deputy Director of the Directorate of Older Persons at the Ministry of Social Development in Oman; and Ms. Hoda Naim, Head of the Seniors Committee at the Family Affairs Council of Saudi Arabia.

7. The third session included the presentation of outcomes and key messages of the Parliamentarians Dialogue and the Stakeholders Dialogue, which were both organized by ESCWA in partnership with UNFPA as part of the regional review of MIPAA. The session was chaired by Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine, member of the Lebanese Parliament and Chair of the Women and Children Parliamentary Committee, who stressed the need to adopt a different economic approach in addressing older persons' issues in the Arab region, and to consider spending on older persons' care as an investment rather than a burden, both from the economic and ethical viewpoints. She also noted the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals as a roadmap to achieve the public interest in accordance with the ethical norms of society. Furthermore, she addressed how to build solid national health systems by strengthening the monitoring system, focusing on early detection and prevention of diseases, and building responsiveness and adaptation capacity. She also mentioned that building solid health systems required networking and cooperation between different sectors. Moreover, she referred to the prevailing value system that is based on older persons' appreciation and respect as being a social and humanistic line of defence with a positive impact on older persons, and a concept that should be promoted, supported and maintained by governments through ad hoc mechanisms. Ms. Jihad Fadel, Chair of the Services Committee at the Shura Council of Bahrain, laid out the key messages that emanated from the Parliamentarians Dialogue (annex I), and expert Dr. Nabil Kronfol presented the key messages of the Stakeholders Dialogue (annex II).

8. The fourth session was devoted to exploring social protection, health insurance and priorities for ageing with dignity. The speakers concluded that the majority of social protection systems in the Arab region were not inclusive and that health insurance systems in most Arab countries increased the risk of income instability, poverty and disease among large groups of older persons. Arab Governments should, therefore, rethink social protection systems to ensure decent ageing for all.

9. This session was facilitated by Ms. Maha Abou Chawareb, Director of Foyer St. Georges in Beirut, who stressed the importance of viewing older persons as productive people and not as a burden on the economy and society. In this session, the experience of the Takaful and Karama fund in providing financial security for older persons in Egypt was presented by Mr. Mohamed Omar Al-Kamary from the Ministry of Social Solidarity in Egypt. Besides, the most prominent challenges and prospects for the provision of social protection in Mauritania were presented by Ms. Um Kalthoum Sidi Hamdino from the Mauritanian Social Work Network. A presentation on health insurance in the Arab region and the related areas of development was also delivered by Mr. Markus Loewe, research team leader at the German Development Institute. Another presentation on the ageing economy and the private sector's role in developing social protection systems in the Arab region was delivered by Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahim, CEO of Fintech Robos for Savings and Pensions Applications in Bahrain. Besides, Mr. Peter Rundlet from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) discussed the role of the private sector in developing health insurance systems.

10. The fifth session focused on developing the long-term care economy in the Arab region, and all speakers agreed on the need to provide an enabling environment to support the so-called ageing in place, develop the relevant programmes and intensify efforts to promote this concept through the provision of home-based care,

non-residential care in addition to community-based and foster care. They also stressed the importance of building the capacity of caregivers, particularly those working in the informal sector.

11. This session was facilitated by Ms. Lina Alqurah, a consultant at HelpAge international, who stressed the need for older persons to remain in their environment and homes, which would yield a positive impact on their quality of life. Ms. Shireen Hussein, Professor of Health and Social Care Policy at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, addressed the development of the long-term care economy as a prerequisite for ageing in place. Dr. Hamed al-Sinawi, Senior Consultant at the Department of Behavioral Medicine at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and Chairman of Oman Alzheimer's Society, shared the experience of Oman in caring for Alzheimer patients and preserving the dignity of older persons. Mr. Hocein Abdel-Hakim, Director of the Protection of Older Persons Department at the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs in Algeria, presented his country's experience with the Foster Families Programme for older persons and stressed the importance of this programme in promoting social solidarity. Dr. Hala Sweed from the Faculty of Medicine at Ain Shams University in Egypt shared the university's experience in building the capacity of informal caregivers for older persons. The session concluded with a presentation by Ms. Aymeline Garnier, Director of Health Projects at the European Institute for Cooperation and Development in Morocco, in which she addressed the creation of employment opportunities for young people in the long-term care sector and shared the Institute's experiences in this area.

12. The sixth high-level session was dedicated to discussing some country experiences in the region in terms of integrating ageing issues into public policies and development planning. Speakers shared lessons learned in this area and ways to advance ageing issues at the policy level in various sectors. The dialogue was moderated by Ms. Hoda Rashad, Professor and Director of the Social Research Centre of the American University in Cairo, who identified important elements for integrating older persons' issues into development. His Excellency Mr. Salar Abdul Sattar Mohammed, Minister of Justice and Acting Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in Iraq, focused on difficulties faced by older persons under the exceptional circumstances in his country, and the need to activate social protection in conjunction with the national strategy and the national review report. Her Excellency Ms. Hessa Bint Issa Buhumaid, Minister of Community Development of the United Arab Emirates, presented her country's achievements in building a better future for older persons, including referring to them as "senior citizens" in recognition of their great value and experience, organizing dozens of workshops and preparing a range of digital awareness-raising videos to improve their quality of life.

13. Mr. Walid Al-Hadid, Ambassador of Jordan to Lebanon, participated in the dialogue as representative of His Excellency the Minister of Social Development of Jordan, Mr. Ayman Al-Mufleh. He stressed the priority of integrating ageing issues into Jordanian policies, based on the sustainable development agenda, through the creation of a special fund to provide various services for older persons. Ms. Samar Al-Sibai, Head of the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs in the Syrian Arab Republic, stated that the ability of families to care for older persons was weak due to war and the migration of young people during war. She noted that problems were compounded by war and the Covid-19 pandemic, thus calling for developing a national strategy to care for older persons among other development needs. Mr. Assem Khamis, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Social Development of the State of Palestine, stressed the importance of concerted efforts with international organizations and local communities at the governmental and individual levels to address gaps in older persons' care and rights. He also called on ESCWA to contribute to the development of a convention on the rights of older persons, similar to other conventions.

14. Mr. Abdullah Ahmad, General Director of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon, noted the deteriorating situation of older persons at all levels following Lebanon's economic collapse, which called for the development of a social protection strategy that would fulfil the rights enshrined in constitutions and legal texts. He focused on the importance of engaging all sectors and adopting a life-cycle approach to development planning. He also concurred with the representatives of other crisis-affected countries, such as Iraq, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, that financial, technical and scientific support should be provided for States to improve the situation of older persons.

15. Mr. Jamal El Nil Mansour, Deputy Minister and Director of Planning and Policy at the Ministry of Social Development in the Sudan, noted the multiple problems facing his country following the period of internal conflicts. He called on the international community to devote further attention to the Sudan so that it could implement the relevant national strategy and laws as part of a comprehensive institutional intervention for service provision.

16. Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, discussed the Arab Strategy for Older Persons, which aimed to develop and strengthen all relevant services and laws. She explained that, at the initiative of Tunisia, Arab leaders had commissioned the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States to develop an Arab pilot project for the protection of older persons, which was expected to represent a paradigm shift in the joint Arab action on ageing issues by 2029.

17. The seventh session was devoted to exploring areas and mechanisms that would contribute to accelerating MIPAA implementation in the Arab region. All speakers stressed the need to implement projects that would encourage older persons' participation and integration in the labour market and focused on the importance of collecting detailed data on older persons that would help develop evidence-based and needs responsive policies.

18. The session was facilitated by Mr. Ahmed Abdennadher, expert in population and sustainable development issues, who noted that numerous achievements had been made in older persons' care, yet challenges remained significant and were exacerbated by conflicts and the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, methodologies should be revisited to speed up the implementation of agreements that States had committed to, notably MIPAA, with a view to advancing older persons' rights and issues. Furthermore, lifelong learning to empower and engage older persons in society was addressed through a presentation delivered by Ms. Maya Abi Chahine, Program Director of the University of Seniors at the American University of Beirut, who stressed the importance of this programme in providing continuous learning opportunities for older persons. The session also focused on the importance of developing geriatrics and human resources to improve caregiving for older persons, a topic addressed by Dr. Husam Ghusn, Medical Director of Ain Wazein Medical Village and Head of Geriatrics at the Lebanese University. He explained the process of developing an integrated model of care for older persons at the Geriatric Center in the Medical Village. Moreover, the role of the media in promoting older persons' priorities and breaking stereotypes about ageing was addressed by Ms. Nidal Al-Achkar, a theatre artist and founder of Al Madina Theatre in Lebanon, who touched on the suffering of older persons in many Arab countries mired in crises, particularly Lebanon. With regard to empowering and integrating older persons into the labour market, Mr. Khaled Matoussi, Deputy Director of Prevention, Planning and Training at the Ministry of Family, Women, Children and Seniors of Tunisia, presented the National Repository of Competencies of Older Persons and Retirees, which was established to encourage the participation of older persons in the labour market in Tunisia. Ms. Malika Qalbi provided an overview of Morocco's experience in establishing the National Observatory for Older Persons to develop evidence-based policies.

19. During the conference, ESCWA launched the ninth issue of the Population and Development Report entitled "Building Forward Better for Older Persons in the Arab Region" and presented a video on the policy development tool for mainstreaming ageing into policymaking. UNFPA also presented a study prepared in collaboration with HelpAge to review national strategies for older persons in the Arab region from a rights-based perspective.

20. After reading out key messages, Ms. Mehrnaz El Awady, Leader of the Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development Cluster at ESCWA, concluded the conference, stressing ESCWA's readiness to continue to support the States of the region in responding to ageing and older persons' issues. On behalf of UNFPA, Mr. Ismail Lubbad thanked the conference participants.

**Annex I**  
**Key messages and recommendations of the Arab Parliamentarians Dialogue**  
**19 May 2022**

Achieving the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) objectives in the Arab region requires coordinating efforts among all stakeholders, including members of parliaments who play a key role in advancing older persons' rights, and expressing their needs and priorities. Parliamentarians are responsible for enacting laws and legislation that enshrine the protection and empowerment of older persons, and for discussing and approving national budgets in which adequate resources should be allocated to meet older persons' needs. They are also tasked with ensuring that governments develop and effectively implement strategies and programmes targeting the most vulnerable groups, including older persons. In preparation for the fourth MIPAA review and based on the participatory approach adopted in the preparation process, ESCWA organized, in partnership with UNFPA, a meeting that gathered several parliamentarians from various Arab States.

This meeting was of great importance at the national, regional and global levels as it provided an overview of the MIPAA and its review process in the Arab region, and explored the progress made in the preparation of national review reports. Parliamentarians shared knowledge and experiences about their role and contributions to addressing older persons' issues. They also addressed challenges they face and ways to enhance their contribution to the advancement of older persons' issues for the implementation of the MIPAA objectives.

The meeting concluded with several key messages and recommendations, as follows:

1. Ensure that constitutions and laws enshrine older persons' rights and review existing laws to achieve this goal.
2. Mainstream ageing into the legislative, representative and oversight mechanisms of parliaments and into the work of parliamentary committees.
3. Strengthen the knowledge and capacity of parliamentarians and committees' staff to respond to older persons' issues in the legislative and oversight process.
4. Urge parliaments to enact laws on older persons in a manner that enshrines all their rights, including, among others, social protection, health, financial security, food, transportation and protection from violence, and to enact laws that support older persons' families and promote intergenerational support.
5. Strengthen the oversight role of parliaments in holding governments accountable for their programmes related to older persons and hold accountability sessions on older persons' issues.
6. Encourage the development of programme-based rather than item-based budgets to enhance the ability of parliamentarians to discuss, adjust and control budgets; and include older persons' issues in analysis and in budget reports to ensure law enforcement through concrete programmes and initiatives.
7. Highlight older persons' issues in final accounts that are as important as budgets to strengthen the oversight role of parliaments.
8. Promote the role of parliaments in protecting older persons, especially in times of crisis, war and recovery.
9. Strengthen networking between parliaments and various stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector and experts, to support the work mechanisms of parliaments (hearing sessions and committees' work) and enhance the role of parliamentarians in responding to older persons' issues; and intensify communication with older persons, their families and advocacy groups to support older persons, prioritize their needs and engage them in policymaking.
10. Integrate older persons' issues into the periodic review of the Sustainable Development Agenda and voluntary national reports in this area.
11. Share experiences, promote parliamentary dialogue between Arab States, and consider the establishment of an Arab parliamentary working group to advocate for older persons' issues in the region.



**Annex II**  
**Key messages and recommendations of the Stakeholders Dialogue**  
**10 May 2022**

In preparation for the fourth Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) review in the Arab region and based on the participatory approach adopted in the review preparation process including the regional review conference, ESCWA organized, in partnership with UNFPA, a stakeholders meeting that gathered representatives of human rights associations, civil society organizations and the private sector, academics and other stakeholders involved in older persons' issues in the Arab region.

This meeting aimed to share knowledge and experiences on the role and contributions of stakeholders and discuss challenges they face and their role in advocating for older persons' issues and responding to their priorities in the Arab region. It highlighted achievements, ongoing efforts and innovative practices aimed at maximizing benefits for all, and concluded with several policy recommendations and messages, as follows:

**Institutional arrangements, data and partnerships**

1. Integrate older persons' issues into the various sectors and adopt a participatory and innovative process that helps to consolidate efforts and foster coordination among all stakeholders.
2. Develop and collect data on older persons, verify the data quality and accessibility using modern technological tools, and link these data not only to statistical offices but also to an integrated national statistical system.
3. Support quantitative and qualitative scientific research on older persons, enhance researchers' capabilities, allocate financial resources to them and facilitate their work through measures that include providing them with necessary permits.
4. Establish national networks involving all stakeholders such as the public sector, civil society organizations and older persons themselves, promote participatory work and consolidate efforts among them to advocate for older persons' issues and realize benefits in this regard.
5. Build the capacity of all non-governmental actors to respond to older persons' issues, promote awareness, and allocate the financial and human resources needed for this response.
6. Establish a core regional network of actors involved in older persons' issues in various Arab countries to foster the exchange of knowledge, cooperation and advocacy on these issues.

**Older persons and development**

1. Empower older persons to benefit from their experiences, enhance their economic participation, ensure decent working conditions for them, guarantee their inclusion in social protection systems, reduce their sense of exclusion and protect them.
2. Integrate older persons into crisis response plans in a manner that responds to their needs in emergencies, particularly during crises, wars and occupation.
3. Invest in older persons' potential and change the mindset and cultural norms among older persons themselves and in society at large; and mainstream ageing in educational curricula to break the stereotype for the new generation and consolidate intergenerational solidarity.
4. Support and intensify lifelong learning and technological literacy programmes.

### **Health services and the quality of life of older persons**

1. Adopt a life-cycle approach that takes into account older persons' age and social status; and develop interlinked and consistent health programmes and services that reflect the multiple health dimensions and their correlations.
2. Develop policies and programmes that respond to the health needs of older persons and ensure various forms of care for them, including hospital care, primary health care and home-based care that requires providing training for medical and nursing staff, and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure.
3. Develop data on the health of older persons.

### **Ageing in place and the enabling environment**

1. Address the challenges posed by demographic shifts, which affect the family's ability to provide services and care for older persons; create an enabling environment for older persons to encourage ageing in place; and build a long-term care system as a supporting tool to the family and an alternative when the family is not available.
2. Strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations in promoting ageing in place by providing companionship care for older persons and building the capacity of caregivers to deliver home-based and health services, among others.
3. Strengthen the role of the media in promoting older persons' issues to break the negative stereotype associated with older persons and highlight their productive abilities.
4. Apply legislation to combat discrimination, age-based violence and abuse of older persons, particularly women, at the government, community and family levels, and develop studies and statistics on violence against older persons.