

# Toolkit on how to engage with UN processes on the rights of older persons

## How can you influence the discussions at the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing?

The next session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) will take place from the 30th July till the 1st August in New York. Now is a good time to consider engaging with this UN working group that discusses how to improve the protection of the rights of older people worldwide, either by attending the meeting or working at the national level to influence your Member State's position in the OEWG.

### ***What is the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing?***

The [Open-ended Working Group on Ageing](http://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/) (OEWG) is a working group of UN Member States, civil society and other stakeholders that has met annually in New York since its establishment, by a resolution at the 2010 UN General Assembly. The OEWG's main purpose is strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons worldwide. The mandate of the UN OEWG is to examine the existing international framework in relation to the human rights of older persons, and to identify possible gaps and how best to address them, including the possibility of new human rights instruments. In December 2012 the General Assembly expanded this mandate to consider and report on what should go into a new international legal instrument on older persons' rights. The OEWG also serves as a forum to discuss the challenges to the enjoyment of rights of older persons in different parts of the world and to debate whether there is a need for additional UN mechanisms, such as a convention.

### **1) Obtain accreditation to participate:**

Civil society organizations do not need to have ECOSOC consultative status to participate in the OEWG process. All NGOs with an interest in older people's rights can accredit to the process and join the session in New York. The guidelines for accrediting for the 5th session are not yet available, but please continue checking the official OEWG website for updates: <http://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/>

### **2) Engage at the national level:**

a) Meet with government representatives

Although the OEWG meets in New York, government representatives at the UN take their instructions from their governments in capital cities. Civil society organisations, therefore, have a critical role to play at the national level in

- Informing government representatives in capital cities about the importance of the OEWG.
- Encouraging their government to participate in the work of the OEWG.
- Providing information on discrimination against older people and violations of their rights to government representatives in capital cities and in New York.
- Discussing with Government which issues that you think need to be raised at the OEWG.

- Informing your government about [AGE's position](#) in the OEWG.
- Calling for the involvement of civil society in the national delegation to the OEWG, as it was proposed [in the last OEWG session](#).

The optimum timing for such meetings at national level is in **June or early July 2014** in the run-up to the OEWGA meeting in New York when Member States are formulating their positions and preparing to communicate instructions to their Missions in New York.

An inter-ministerial approach may be required at national level – for example it may be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry for Culture, Ministry of Social Services, and/or the Ministry of Interior, or the equivalents /others in your country that will be responsible for this issue.

b) Work with other civil society organisations to advocate for the rights of older people by co-ordinating efforts and coming together to organise and share work.

c) Mobilise national public opinion and bring the issue to the media's attention whenever possible and use social media such as Facebook, Twitter to spread the word.

d) Talk to your Parliamentarians about the move towards a UN convention and encourage them to take this up and promote debate within Parliament, in their constituencies and with your national government.

Do not forget to inform AGE Platform Europe ([nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu](mailto:nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu)) about the outcomes of the contacts you make at the national level, which will help us in the preparation of our participation in the OEWG!

## How can you engage with the new Independent Expert on the Rights of Older Persons?

On May 8<sup>th</sup> **Ms.Rosa Kornfeld-Matte (Chile)** was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older people. This new position in the UN human rights system aims to consolidate an understanding around older persons' rights and foster the implementation of measures that contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons.

The below information prepared by HelpAge International, explains the functions of the Independent Expert and how you can work with him/her during his/her mandate

### **What will the new Independent Expert on older people's rights do?**

The new Independent Expert on the full enjoyment of the human rights of all older persons was established by the Human Rights Council in its September 2013 Resolution A/HRC/RES/24/20.

[http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/24/20](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/24/20)

This Independent Expert is appointed with a 3-year mandate. The resolution creating the Independent Expert specifically tasked her/him with:

- Assessing how existing international human rights instruments have been implemented in relation to older people's rights, identifying both good practice and implementation gaps
- Assessing the human rights implications of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

The Independent Expert will also:

- Report to the Human Rights Council on an annual basis, with its first report in September 2014 and a final comprehensive report in September 2016
- Go on fact-finding visit countries and make recommendations on how States they can better promote and protect older people's rights
- Produce thematic reports on specific human rights issues to further understanding of the human rights challenges older people face and that serve as a guide on human rights norms and standards
- Communicate with Member States on either individual cases or structural issues of concern in relation to enjoyment of the rights of older people
- Raise awareness of the challenges older people face in realisation of their rights
- Attend the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing annual sessions in New York.

### **How does this fit in with the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing?**

Whilst the work of the Independent Expert will complement and contribute to that of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, it cannot replace it.

The Open-ended Working Group is an inter-governmental body that has been tasked through General Assembly Resolution A/67/139 with identifying the main elements of a new legal instrument dedicated to the rights of older people. This discussion among Member States is critical to build consensus around the need for and what should be in such an instrument. This consensus building process amongst Member States is essential to deliver a strong instrument and the political will to implement it once adopted and ratified.

### **What opportunities do civil society organisations have to engage with the new Independent Expert?**

Civil society organisations are one of the groups of stakeholders that the Independent Expert is mandated to consult with in her/his work.

#### **1. Mandated assessments in Resolution A/HRC/RES/24/20 on the implementation of MIPAA and existing international law**

Civil society organisations can

- Suggest priority areas for assessment
- Provide written evidence and recommendations as part of Independent Expert's consultation on the assessment
- Suggest who should be invited to any expert group meetings convened by the Independent Expert for the assessment
- Comment on the conclusions drawn by the Independent Expert in her/his final report on the assessments

#### **2. Fact-finding country visits**

Civil society organisations can

- Suggest and advise on which countries to visit.
- Provide the Independent Expert with information on older people's rights in the country to be visited
- Meet with the Independent Expert during the country visits
- Arrange meetings for the Independent Expert with older people and other civil society organisations during the visit

- Invite the Independent Expert to visit project sites during the visit

### **3. Thematic studies**

Civil society organisations can

- Suggest areas for thematic studies
- Provide written evidence and recommendations as part of Independent Expert's consultation on the study
- Suggest who should be invited to any expert group meetings convened by the Independent Expert for a thematic study
- Comment on the conclusions drawn by the Independent Expert in her/his final report on the thematic study

### **4. Communications to Member States**

Civil society organisations can

- Send information to the Independent Expert on individual cases or structural violations of human rights in a specific country and request that she/he communicate with the government on this

### **5. Annual reports to the Human Rights Council**

Civil society organisations can

- Make oral statements commenting on the contents of the Independent Expert's annual reports

### **6. Awareness raising and information sharing**

Civil society organisations can

- Invite the Independent Expert to speak at events
- Encourage the Independent Expert to comment on specific issues e.g. reports or research findings published, statements made by others etc.
- Encourage the Independent Expert to make statements around specific days e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> October IDOP and 15<sup>th</sup> June WEEAD

### **7. Interacting with other human rights mechanisms to improve how they address older people's rights**

Civil society organisations can

- Suggest areas of joint work or collaboration with existing UN treaty bodies, the UPR and other special rapporteurs, independent experts and working groups.

### **8. Engagement with the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**

Civil society organisations can

- Encourage the Independent Expert to use his/her influence and standing with this process to ensure that the debate is both substantive and furthers understanding of necessary standards and norms to protect and promote the rights of older people.

## **Useful resources:**

### **Special Briefing: AGE action to strengthen older persons' rights worldwide**

- [English version](#)
- [Version française](#)

### **[AGE contribution to the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the OEWG](#)**

### **[AGE contribution to UN DESA call for NGO input](#)**