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## **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and  
Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Bangkok, 10-12 September 2012

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Review of the progress in implementing the Madrid  
International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific**

## **Overview of regional implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2010/14 of 22 July 2010 on the future implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (Madrid Plan of Action), decided to conduct the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action in 2013 at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development. The Council, in its resolution 2011/28 of 28 July 2011 on modalities for the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, encouraged regional commissions to continue to facilitate the review and appraisal exercise at the regional level including through consultation with relevant regional bodies, as appropriate, and member States and United Nations organizations, where appropriate, to provide support to regional commissions in facilitating the review and appraisal process and organizing regional conferences to review national review and appraisal results in 2012.

Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 2010/14 and 2011/28, and the General Assembly resolution 65/182 of 21 December 2010 on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which encouraged all member States to further implement the Madrid Plan of Action as an integral part of their national development plans and poverty eradication strategies, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted resolution 67/5 of 25 May 2011 on the full and effective implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the Asia-Pacific region in which it decided to convene the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2012.

The present document outlines progress in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action and identifies the gaps and challenges confronting the Asian and Pacific region with regard to population ageing. It is based on the responses to a regional survey on ageing sent to all members and associate members of ESCAP. Although survey responses indicate that some members and associate members are mainstreaming ageing into their national development frameworks, significant gaps remain in the preparation for and adjustment to an ageing future for the Asia-Pacific region.

On the basis of this review and the main pillars of the Madrid Plan of Action, members and associate members may wish to share experiences and findings from their national appraisal processes and define priority areas for further action to be considered under items 5 and 6 of the provisional agenda.

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	2
A. Population ageing trends in Asia and the Pacific.....	2
B. Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific at 10 years.....	3
II. Regional survey findings.....	4
A. Institutional arrangements and the Madrid Plan of Action monitoring.....	4
B. Older persons and development.....	7
C. Advancing health and well-being into old age .....	9
D. Ensuring enabling and supportive environments.....	11
III. Conclusion.....	13

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. Population ageing trends in Asia and the Pacific**

1. Ageing is increasingly being recognized as an issue central to the future development of Asia and the Pacific. Between now and 2050, the proportion of persons aged 60 years and older will double from being 10 per cent to more than 20 per cent of the world's population. In Asia and the Pacific, the number of older persons will triple from close to half a billion today to an estimated 1.3 billion in 2050. This means that one in four people in this region will be 60 years or older by 2050, and within this group, one in four will be older than 80 years of age. The proportion of elderly in East and North-East Asia will be even higher: one in three persons will be above 60 years of age. The emerging population ageing trends in the Asia-Pacific region represent one of the most important developments and demographic transformations of this century.

2. The rapid ageing of the region's population combined with increasing longevity require countries to ensure not only financial security and sustainability for a growing number of older persons, but also improved social protection systems which encompass employment, pensions, health services and the provision of enabling and supportive environments. Women are particularly at risk as they comprise 60 per cent of the population aged 60 or older in the Asian and Pacific region. Lower female labour force participation rates translate to a higher percentage of older women who are financially dependent. Likewise, the lower proportion of women holding regular jobs during their working life means that they are less likely to have income-yielding assets and receive retirement benefits into their old age.

3. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (Madrid Plan of Action) was adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid from 8 to 12 April 2002,<sup>1</sup> and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

during its fifty-seventh session in December 2002,<sup>2</sup> to address both the opportunities and challenges of an increasingly ageing population, while promoting the advancement of a society for all ages. The present document aims to review the progress of the Madrid Plan of Action in the Asian and Pacific region as part of a framework to improve the quality of life of older persons.

## **B. Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific at 10 years**

4. In its resolution 2010/14, the Economic and Social Council decided to conduct the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action in 2013 at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development. It endorsed the theme “Full implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing: social situation, well-being and dignity, development and the full realization of all human rights for older persons” for the second review and appraisal exercise. In addition, the Council, in its resolution 2011/28, encouraged regional commissions to continue to facilitate the review and appraisal exercise at the regional level including through consultation with relevant regional bodies, as appropriate, and member States and United Nations organizations, where appropriate, to provide support to regional commissions in facilitating the review and appraisal process and organizing regional conferences to review national review and appraisal results in 2012.

5. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 2010/14 and 2011/28, and General Assembly resolution 65/182, in which the Assembly encouraged all member States to further implement the Madrid Plan of Action as an integral part of their national development plans and poverty eradication strategies, ESCAP adopted resolution 67/5 in which it decided to convene the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2012.

6. In its resolution 67/5, ESCAP encouraged members and associate members to conduct a national review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action and requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices on ageing, including the monitoring and implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. As part of this effort, the ESCAP secretariat conducted a regional survey<sup>3</sup> on progress made in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action, by compiling data on national actions, the development of new policies and programmes, and examples of good practices from the region.

7. This document presents the results of the survey that was sent to all ESCAP members and associate members in May 2011. The findings provided are entirely based on the information received from 30 members and associate members.<sup>4</sup> Following the structure of the survey, the document is divided into

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<sup>2</sup> See General Assembly resolution 57/167 of 18 December 2002 on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

<sup>3</sup> The preliminary results of this survey were presented at the Preparatory Meeting for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing held in Beijing on 22-24 November 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Responses were received from: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Georgia; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation;

four sections, the first of which addresses the national coordination and policy framework, while the remaining sections cover the Madrid Plan of Action main pillars: (a) older persons and development; (b) advancing health and well-being into old age; and (c) ensuring enabling and supportive environments.

## **II. Regional survey findings**

### **A. Institutional arrangements and the Madrid Plan of Action monitoring**

8. National policies and plans have been generally established to coordinate and implement programmes for older persons. These include measures that emphasize the active participation and empowerment of older persons in the development process, provide quality health and long-term care to ensure the quality of life at all ages, and encourage support from family and the community to improve older persons' futures. Legal instruments are also essential to promote and protect the rights of older persons, particularly when it comes to the assignment of resources to the issues of ageing in policy formulation and implementation. International and regional cooperation to enhance the exchange of information and experiences on ageing has also been beneficial. One of the key challenges that remain in the Asia-Pacific region is the lack of adequate resources, both financial and human, to attend to the growing ageing population.

#### **1. National coordination mechanisms**

9. According to the survey, the majority of members and associate members—80 per cent of the respondents—have established either a focal agency or a coordinating body as an instrument to mainstream ageing into government action as well as to oversee issues concerning ageing of older persons. The agencies and bodies are usually housed in the ministries of labour, health or social welfare but they vary widely both in nature and structure from being a more permanent government structure at the ministerial level, a single-agency or an inter-agency commission or committee on ageing, or a division or branch of an agency responsible for implementation. The broad range of institutional mechanisms highlights the different strategies that are being used to tackle the needs of older persons in the region and reflects the importance countries are placing on ageing.

10. More than half of all survey respondents have established interdepartmental or interministerial mechanisms, such as commissions or committees, to ensure that government, at all levels, responds in a coordinated and coherent manner to the challenge of population ageing. The Governments of Australia and New Zealand have set up specific offices dedicated to ageing issues for older persons. The Office for Senior Citizens in New Zealand operates with its own budget and is mandated to steer, direct and coordinate interdepartmental strategies and resources on ageing-related issues. The Office for an Ageing Australia coordinates all Government efforts focused on population ageing and supports the work of the Ambassador for Ageing.

11. In Japan, all cabinet ministers are appointed members of the Ageing Society Policy Council chaired by the Prime Minister. The National Older Persons Commission of Thailand, which is also chaired by the Prime Minister,

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Samoa; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey; Uzbekistan; Viet Nam; Hong Kong, China; and Macao, China.

formulates policies for the protection and support of the elderly and coordinates the implementation of these policies with relevant organizations. The China National Working Commission on Ageing sponsors research on and the formulation of development strategies and policies on ageing and coordinates intergovernmental work on older persons. Other members and associate members, such as Bangladesh, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and Hong Kong, China, have similar interministerial commissions, committees or councils.

12. The survey reveals that responsibilities for ageing-related issues are held by government ministries or departments of labour, health or social welfare in one quarter of the respondents, namely Armenia, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Macao, China. Only 20 per cent of members and associate members did not report having an entity devoted specifically to the coordination of population ageing at the national level.

## **2. Policy framework (national policy, plan of action and legislation, including gender concerns)**

13. Constitutions play an important role in the adoption of policy instruments. The inclusion of older persons in constitutional provisions provides a basis and the framework for further legislation and policy formulation. The survey reveals that 40 per cent of members and associate members have specific and overarching legislation on older persons and that 60 per cent have policies or plans on ageing. However, some countries in the region have yet to enact a specific law on older persons.

14. Most members and associate members have a framework in place to monitor the implementation and assess the impact of national policies, plans or legislation. For example, a centralized nationwide monitoring approach has been adopted in China, whereby the China National Working Commission on Ageing holds a yearly conference to share information, monitor and coordinate work related to ageing. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference monitors the implementation of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Aged by carrying out inspections, surveys and hearings. Most of the respondents have undertaken social analyses using bottom-up participatory tools, such as satisfaction surveys and focus group discussions, to evaluate policies and programmes from the perspective of older persons.

15. National policy and action plans also need to pay particular attention to women, not only because they make up the majority of older persons, but because they are among the most vulnerable among this population group. Several countries acknowledge this. The Republic of Korea has recognized that specific policies on job creation for older women and on the expansion of pension rights for women are required. The National Plan of Action for Older Person Welfare of Indonesia contains specific policy recommendations on the empowerment of older women, such as a provision of special education and training initiatives for older women, and health programmes specifically targeting elderly women, as well as policies aimed at increasing women's employment opportunities. Nevertheless, while some countries are addressing the empowerment of older women, more needs to be done to specifically tackle gender concerns throughout the region.

## **3. Madrid Plan of Action monitoring**

16. Research on ageing and older persons is key to providing evidence-based information for the development and improvement of policies and programmes. Most respondents indicated that they had taken measures, such as the collection of data or production of statistics on specific national policies, strategies and plans of action on ageing, in preparation for the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action. Macao, China, has used the Ageing Policy Integrative Appraisal System, a tool that translates the key objectives of the Madrid Plan of Action into operational items to enable policymakers, service providers and service users to monitor, evaluate and appraise ageing policy through a bottom-up approach. The appraisal system identifies the gaps between policymaking and implementation of policies in the form of services and programmes, and also through the encouragement of an overarching government approach to ageing issues.

17. Other members and associate members have also conducted surveys and research on ageing. The Elderly Commission of Hong Kong, China has conducted multiple studies on residential and community care services for the elderly in order to provide subsidies to elders most in need, to further develop the delivery of services, including through social enterprises and the private market, and to avoid premature or unnecessary institutionalization. Malaysia has conducted several studies, including the Review of the National Policy and Plan of Action for Older Persons, which focused on aspects of reintegration and increased participation of older persons in society.

#### **4. Budget allocation and implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action**

18. Most respondents did not specify that their Governments had a dedicated budget for the implementation of policies and programmes on ageing. This was often due to resources being dispersed across all levels of government and among different agencies, departments and ministries. Evidence indicates, however, that spending on elderly has increased since the previous review was conducted in 2005. In identifying the priority areas of that expenditure, members and associate members indicated that a vast majority of resources went into the provision of old age pensions schemes. Access to affordable health care and support to older persons in emergency and conflict situations were also identified as budget allocation priorities. The amount of funds directed to research institutes and analyses on ageing as well as to train and support caregivers has increased recently, but these areas still receive the least financial support.

19. In terms of measures addressing the second review of the Madrid Plan of Action, several members and associate members have embarked on initiatives to undertake such an appraisal. Fiji, for example, has recently endorsed Ageing Policy 2011-2015, which focuses on the recognition of the contribution of older people to society, attempts to strengthen social assistance for older persons, promotes healthy living and enabling supportive environments. Other members, such as Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Maldives and New Zealand, have also taken extensive actions to review among a wider set of stakeholders, including older persons' associations, efforts to improve the lives of older persons in line with the priorities of the Madrid Plan of Action.

20. The survey responses indicate that greater budgetary support and increased human resources dedicated to ageing issues rank among countries' principal needs in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action. On the other hand, information reported under national coordination mechanisms reveal that lack of interministerial or interdepartmental coordination as well as support of

internal agencies appear to be the main impediment to the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action for the region as a whole, although it is reported as a concern for some members and associate members.

## **B. Older persons and development**

21. The first pillar of the Madrid Plan of Action calls for countries to integrate ageing dynamics within the larger context of development. The three major areas investigated under this section are: (a) participation of older persons in policymaking; (b) employment; and (c) social protection. In particular, pensions and health-care insurance are two essential components in old age support systems. This is due to several factors: the rapid ageing of the region's population; increased longevity; and a falling support ratio which is reflected by lower fertility rates, and leads to a decline of the number of workers available to support the older population.

### **1. Participation**

22. Several members and associate members have taken measures to promote the active participation of older persons in society and development. The survey reveals that two thirds of members and associate members have action plans, programmes or committees dedicated to addressing the participation of older persons in policy decision-making. For example, in Australia, China, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, a number of seats in different consultative bodies on ageing are reserved for older persons. In Sri Lanka, Turkey and Viet Nam as well as Hong Kong, China, the formulation and the implementation of national plans of action on ageing have involved civil society organizations working closely with older persons.

23. The Government of New Zealand launched a nationwide voluntary community coordinators programme to consult older persons in their local communities and gather information about their living circumstances through their connections and older persons' associations feeding into the Office for Senior Citizens. This effort provides government agencies with older persons' perspectives towards policy development and service evaluation. In other members and associate members, such as Australia, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea and Macao, China, consultative and evaluative committees for a specific policy or programme have been established with older persons being appointed as members. The Government of Samoa has also implemented activities that promote women's participation while the Government of Uzbekistan has set programmes to promote intergenerational participation.

### **2. Employment**

24. The main obstacles impeding older persons from gaining and retaining employment are discrimination, mobility and accessibility limitations, and rapid changes in required skill sets. Special programmes supporting training and employment opportunities for older persons are therefore of paramount importance. The promotion of decent employment for the elderly is essential to their inclusion in an active and productive society, and contributes significantly to addressing the increasing pressures of population ageing and the resulting needs for social protection and health insurance. Eliminating barriers to employment is essential for facilitating the alleviation of old age poverty by minimizing dependence on income support.

25. A third of the survey respondents did not report any specific measure to increase employment opportunities for older persons. Nonetheless, some

interesting schemes pertaining to training programmes and policies have been implemented to support older workers. The Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines have educational assistance programmes that encourage senior citizens to pursue different types of technical and vocational training. Moreover, in the Philippines, private companies are entitled to a 15 per cent reduction on taxes of income paid to older workers. In the Russian Federation, citizens of pre-retirement and retirement age have access to assistance in finding suitable employment, including consultation, information and training.

26. Many of the members and associate members have introduced actions that promote employment opportunities for older persons. The state pension law of Georgia does not require that pensions be withdrawn from retirees who work in non-public, scientific and academic institutions. In New Zealand, which does not have a mandatory retirement age, the percentage of labour force participation of people aged 65 years and older rose from 14 per cent in 2008 to close to 20 per cent in 2011. The Ministry of Social Development of New Zealand, in a report issued in 2011, highlights the economic potential of older persons and the need to raise awareness about the value of older workers. China has launched the Silver Age Action Program, which organizes retired intellectuals to apply their scientific and technological knowledge and expertise to aid the advancement of underdeveloped regions of the country. Between 2003 and 2010, the contribution of older workers and volunteers through the programme is estimated to have benefited 200 million people and created economic benefits worth five billion Chinese yuan (approximately \$780 million).

### **3. Social protection (pension and health insurance)**

27. Pensions are the cornerstone of any social security system. In Asia and the Pacific, each country has its own distinctive social protection or social security system which reflects its socioeconomic and cultural circumstances. Yet, social protection and social security systems in much of the region are still rather weak or being developed. As such, the majority of workers either enter old age without a pension or keep working in the informal economy due to income insecurity. Future efforts need to ensure a basic social protection floor for everyone, including a pension, regardless of whether the older person has contributed to a scheme during his or her working years.

28. Retirement protection through a flat-rate benefit for all older persons meeting the age and length criteria is only available in a few members and associate members in the region, including, among others, Australia, Georgia, Japan, Maldives, New Zealand, Samoa, Thailand, Turkey and Macao, China. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan also have programmes that provide close to universal coverage. Results of a survey conducted in 2007 in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea indicated that 98 per cent of elderly men and 87 per cent of elderly women were receiving a pension.

29. The Government of Uzbekistan recently passed a Cabinet resolution on additional measures to implement the United Nations Millennium Development Goals that aim to intensify targeted social protection, improve the living standards of senior citizens, increase coverage and improvement of social services, introduce new social technologies, and improve housing and living conditions of seniors and pensioners. The Government pays particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and widows. Also of note, women in Uzbekistan, who for various reasons do not have the required minimum length of employment, are also legally protected.



30. Concerning health care, most countries have sought to ensure the provision of adequate health-care coverage for the entire population, which becomes increasingly costly with ageing. A reduction in the burden of health expenditures can make a significant contribution towards alleviating poverty in old age. Older persons facing low or no income and rising medical expenses are one of the most vulnerable sections of the population. Very few members and associate members, with the exception of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Macao, China, report universal coverage of public health services. Health insurance is compulsory in the Russian Federation, where implementation of the compulsory medical insurance plan is financed by the Federal Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund as well as by territorial funds of compulsory medical insurance in the form of individual non-profit financial and credit institutions, guaranteeing citizens the right to free medical care.

31. Other members and associate members, such as China, the Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Hong Kong, China, are making efforts to reach universal coverage of health services in the near future. In the case of Turkey, older persons who do not have health insurance and cannot afford medical treatment expenses have an opportunity to access a so-called “green card”. The green card holders are exempt from health-care charges. China has focused on the rural sector through new rural cooperative medical insurance schemes in which farmers participate voluntarily. These schemes are funded by individual payments and government subsidies.

## **C. Advancing health and well-being into old age**

32. The second pillar of the Madrid Plan of Action calls for countries to advance health and well-being into old age. The promotion of health and well-being is the core of healthy ageing not only through increased longevity, but by living a better and healthier life into old age. Under this priority area, the principal issues addressed in the survey were: (a) health promotion and well-being throughout life; (b) geriatric and gerontology training for health-care providers; (c) self-care and support systems; and (d) HIV and older persons with disabilities. In particular, the subjects of accessibility, affordability and availability of health-care systems were taken into consideration.

### **1. Health promotion and well-being throughout life**

33. The survey shows that 80 per cent of members and associate members have in place policies, programmes or plans to ensure the provision of accessible and affordable health-care services. The responses, however, reveal wide difference in the initiatives being implemented across the region. There are generally two types of provisions: the first is universal health-care coverage that is either fully or partially funded by the government; the second is the integration of older persons in specific health-care schemes, or so-called preferential arrangements. Several countries provide free health-care services to older persons but age and other requirements to qualify for these benefits vary among them.

34. A few countries in the region, such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, confirm having universal health-care systems in place to ensure free access to services for all citizens. These members have well established health-care systems that provide services at various levels to ensure the provision of a continuum of services for older persons. The Russian Federation has established the programme Healthy Russia, which promotes healthy values, such as healthy eating, staying active and fit

and timely preventive medical examinations for adults and children, as well as informs the population about free public health centres. This programme has increasingly benefited the new generation of persons 60 years and older. Malaysia has introduced health-care facilities for the elderly to support family members or guardians who work. These centres provide recreational indoor and outdoor activities, health services and therapy as well as skills training and volunteer services to facilitate older persons' interaction with each other and the local community.

35. In relation to active ageing, China has established a national database and an information centre for older persons with specialized expertise. Hong Kong, China has an Elder Academy Scheme and Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project which focuses on promoting continuous learning for older persons, including the provision of tertiary education, enabling older persons to pursue a university education. Viet Nam has implemented a programme called High Tree, Large Shadow with the objective of increasing social lives for the elderly through integration into the community. The programme not only supports older persons' health and active lives, but also educates younger generations to respect older people and learn from them.

## **2. Geriatric and gerontology training for health-care providers**

36. Most respondents offer geriatric and gerontology training for health-care providers, with governments tending to give this area a substantial budget allocation. Also, many of them have tertiary education institutions, which provide diploma or degree-level courses, as in the case of the Russian Federation and the Philippines, or have local units to provide tailor-made or in-house service training, as is the case of Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, Viet Nam and Macao, China.

37. Some countries, such as Australia, Bangladesh, China and New Zealand, provide geriatric and gerontology training using a life-long learning approach under the vocational training category. Competency is clearly articulated into a qualification framework with a built-in career ladder. It is, for example, included in Aged Care Workforce Fund of Australia, which provides a continuum of training and education that encourages people to work in the elderly care services sectors. Also of note, the Bangladesh Association for the Aged and the Institute for Geriatric Medicine study the socioeconomic and health situation of older persons and investigate issues particularly relevant for this population group.

## **3. Self-care and support systems**

38. Most respondents recognize the importance of promoting self-care of older persons and initiatives to involve older persons in the development of social and health-care programmes. New Zealand has pioneered an integrated care service delivery model to support older persons living at home. To promote rehabilitation at home, the Government is collaborating with community therapy service providers and specialist geriatric medical care professionals to supply education and training to patients, caregivers and family members. The Government of Australia, under the National Health Reform Agreement, has been strengthening consumer engagement and enhancing the voice of older persons in health-care services. China promotes several award schemes, such as Action for Helping Seniors to Regain their Eyesight, Millions of Seniors Fitness Campaign and Awards for Healthy Seniors, to encourage society as a whole to focus on and support the elderly.

39. Thailand has established elderly clubs in all provinces of the country. The clubs promote specific activities aimed at encouraging self-care and social participation of older persons. Viet Nam sponsors a similar scheme referred to as “Club of the Older Persons” to promote the physical and spiritual health of older persons through sports and open-air activities, as well as the exchange of experiences and sentiments of their present lives. India has established the Integrated Programme for Older Persons in order to profit from older persons skills, talents and experience for the benefit of society, as well as to re-establish their status in society. On the International Day of Older Persons, several activities take place in state capitals of India to facilitate relationships and exchanges between older and younger generations.

#### **4. HIV and older persons with disabilities**

40. Survey responses reflect that very few members and associate members have addressed HIV and disabilities in the context of older persons. Most responses include HIV in the context of the society as a whole with no emphasis on the elderly. Difficulties in primary physical functions, which increase with age, are also seldom addressed in the context of older persons. Hong Kong, China promotes an approach aimed at integrating older persons with disabilities into the community by providing rehabilitation health and transportation support services.

41. The Republic of Korea has established a community-based rehabilitation system to provide rehabilitation services that include treatment, health management and education counselling for older persons with disabilities, and promote their social participation. Mental health needs of older persons are more widely addressed in survey responses, but the integration of this and other types of disability still requires further acknowledgment in the region, specifically in support of the elderly.

### **D. Ensuring enabling and supportive environments**

42. Ageing is a continuous process requiring a person to gradually adapt to their changing environment in response to different needs and personal conditions. The third pillar of the Madrid Plan of Action emphasizes the importance of affordable and accessible housing and a liveable environment. It not only refers to the physical environment of housing but also to the emotional and psychological security of a home and of a community that enables older persons to live independently. The main areas addressed under this section are: (a) ageing in place; (b) mobility and transportation; (c) training and accreditation programmes for caregivers; and (d) addressing abuse, neglect and violence against older persons.

#### **1. Ageing in place**

43. Ageing in place is a concept which encourages governments to introduce measures to enable older persons to continue living in their own homes and communities. Based on responses to the survey, only a limited number of members and associate members have identified policies or programmes to enable older persons to remain in their own homes. Hong Kong, China provides subsidized housing that incorporates age friendly design in public rental housing. The Government of Viet Nam has been piloting a model of “social houses” to specifically care for single older persons in the community. Between 2007 and 2010, Uzbekistan implemented a programme aimed at protecting single elderly, pensioners, and persons with disabilities, with the objectives of providing in-house social services, introducing a service

network for older persons and pensioners, and arranging for an annual medical assessment, hospital and outpatient care and home nursing care for senior citizens as well as providing them with free medical supplies.

44. Several members and associate members, such as Australia, Bangladesh, China, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Viet Nam reported initiatives that provide housing to the elderly. Some countries, such as Indonesia and Sri Lanka, have adopted regulations related to accessibility of facilities to ensure that communities are accessible, safe and comfortable for persons with special needs including older persons. Australia has also introduced innovative measures for ageing in place through its Liveable Housing Design programme aimed at benefiting the elderly by designing homes that take into account physical limitations of the elderly and can be adapted to respond to changing needs with minimal costs. Australia is also building special residences for homeless older persons.

## **2. Mobility and transportation**

45. The majority of respondents report having provisions related to affordable and accessible transportation for older persons such as discounts, special fares, concessions or exemptions and priority seating. In New Zealand, older persons are eligible for a SuperGold Card which offers free transportation at off-peak travel times. Other members and associate members, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, reported having legal measures to ensure barrier-free environments for older persons and ease of access to facilities.

46. The Ministry of Railways of India has earmarked separate counters at various passenger reservation system centres for senior citizens. In addition, a quota of seats is reserved for older persons, while the provision of wheelchairs at stations for older persons and persons with disabilities is also included. Macao, China sponsors an innovative programme entitled "Love Transport" which provides a non-emergency ambulance service to and from hospitals for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Persons who have difficulties in utilizing public transport are also eligible to use the Love Transport service.

## **3. Training and accreditation programmes for caregivers**

47. Concerning the quality of elderly care services, half of the respondents provide quality community and residential services for older persons. Standards are more clearly defined for residential care services, which are commonly enforced by laws and regulations. Still, only a few members and associate members in the region indicated that they have in place a specific accreditation system. Australia, for example, has a dedicated agency providing ongoing monitoring by means of site audits and unannounced visits. Armenia, through the National Institute of Labour and Social Researchers, is developing special training programmes for caregivers. Similar programmes also exist in Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Turkey as well as in Hong Kong, China and Macao, China.

## **4. Addressing abuse, neglect and violence against older persons**

48. The Madrid Plan of Action recognizes the risk of potential neglect, abuse or violence against older persons, especially elderly women, and calls for action to eliminate all forms of abuse by creating support services for older

persons. Only a limited number of members and associate members indicate that they have specific legislation to protect the elderly against forms of abuse. According to survey responses, legislation on violence and abuse is framed in general terms against vulnerable groups. A few members and associate members, such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, China and Macao, China, have specific programmes that focus on the protection of older persons.

49. The Government of Australia has implemented several initiatives in this area including the Australian National Aged Care Advocacy Programme which provides free and confidential services to promote the rights of people receiving residential and community aged care services. Another initiative of note is a scheme on Aged Care Complaints to provide security for older persons to live in a safe and secure environment. Data on violence against older persons are also reflected as a key component to protect the elderly. Hong Kong, China has adopted various strategies to prevent elderly abuse, such as investigating these types of abuse by strengthening data collection and improving statistical analysis, raising awareness and strengthening public education on the subject, and conducting training for frontline professionals and non-professionals.

50. Japan has been implementing the Act on Prevention of Elder Abuse, Support for Caregivers of Elderly Persons since 2005 at the municipality level by focusing on early detection and response to abuse. Sri Lanka has a specific maintenance board for elders as part of its Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in which victims of abuse can appeal directly to the board to seek redress. In Maldives, behavioural change programmes conducted in partnership with civil society organizations and the private sector have helped raise public awareness of issues related to abuse. The Republic of Korea has similar protection programmes including one that establishes shelters for abused older persons.

### **III. Conclusion**

51. Most members and associate members have made progress in developing national plans with specific institutional arrangements that address ageing from an interministerial or intergovernmental approach. The wide range of institutional mechanisms, however, highlights the broad number of approaches and policy mechanisms used to address the needs of older persons in the region, reflecting the increasing importance countries are placing on preparing for and responding to ageing populations. Increased finance and human resources support is one of the more pressing challenges towards implementing the Madrid Plan of Action, however, survey responses indicate that countries have made progress in investing in professional staff dedicated to the improvement of older persons' lives.

52. In terms of older persons and development, several members and associate members have taken positive steps to promote the active participation of the elderly. These initiatives, however, need to boost the employment of older persons as well as provide comprehensive social protection systems. The main obstacles to older persons gaining and retaining employment are discrimination, mobility and accessibility limitations, and the rapid change in required skill sets. Programmes supporting the training and employment opportunities for older persons are therefore of paramount importance. The promotion of decent employment of the elderly is key to their inclusion in an active and productive society and contributes to alleviating the growing

pressures a larger elderly population places on the provision of social protection and health insurance.

53. Although the Asia-Pacific region reveals distinctive social protection and social security systems reflecting countries' varied socioeconomic and cultural circumstances, the majority of members and associate members' social protection and social security systems still lack comprehensive coverage and fall short of providing adequate levels of support. Efforts are being made across the region to ensure a basic social protection floor for everyone, including a basic pension, regardless of whether the older person has contributed to a scheme during his or her working years. Countries have sought to ensure the provision of adequate health-care coverage for the whole society, which becomes increasingly costly with an ageing population. Survey responses have demonstrated that the reduction in the burden of health expenditures by increasing older persons' active involvement in society can make a significant contribution towards reducing poverty in old age.

54. The advancement of health and well-being into old age is a priority for members and associate members in the region as reflected in survey responses. Efforts have been seen in ensuring the accessibility, affordability and availability of health-care systems. These endeavours vary greatly among governments in terms of the extent of provision. Survey responses indicate that geriatric and gerontology training for health care is offered predominantly across the region with many governments giving it a considerable budgetary allocation, but information provided also suggests that issues related to self-care, older persons living with HIV and older persons with disabilities need to be addressed more significantly.

55. Most members and associate members have acknowledged the importance of ensuring enabling and supportive environments for ageing in place. Innovative measures have been taken in the provision of accessible housing for older persons, ranging from the development of universal standards to providing affordable public and private housing units. The survey also indicates that most countries in the region have in place programmes to provide affordable and accessible transportation for older persons. Innovative forms of care service provisions were revealed as well, while training to formal and informal caregivers is provided in most members and associate members to ensure the continuum of care and services for older persons. A key gap, however, continues to be the lack of clear policies and programmes addressing possible neglect, abuse and violence against the elderly.

56. There is a need to focus more on the impact of ageing in the region. Progress thus far in addressing this important demographic transition has varied widely throughout Asia and the Pacific. Survey responses indicate that some members and associate members are mainstreaming ageing into their national development frameworks but despite this, significant gaps remain in the preparation for and adjustment to an ageing future for the Asia-Pacific region.

57. The Madrid Plan of Action provides a comprehensive framework to improve the lives of older persons and to effectively prepare for and respond to this important demographic transition. Its review process offers a timely and prominent opportunity to address the main challenges of ageing and to formulate concrete actions to enhance the livelihoods of older persons. As the region with the greatest number of older persons, Asia and the Pacific has the opportunity to lead the way in responding to the challenge of ageing and to build an inclusive society for all ages.

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