

STAKEHOLDER GROUP ON AGEING

CURRENT GOVERNANCE AND LOOKING FORWARD

Who we are

The Stakeholder Group on Ageing is currently an alliance of the NGO Committee on Ageing in New York¹ and the HelpAge International Global Network². It was formed to advance the interests of older persons in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

This alliance builds on long standing and ongoing collaboration on ageing within the United Nations system, including at the first Vienna Assembly on Ageing (1982); the Copenhagen Social Summit (1995); the 2002 Madrid World Assembly on Ageing and subsequent dissemination of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA); periodic global, regional and national reviews of the implementation of MIPAA; successive meetings of CSocD; promoting the rights of older persons globally and within the UN through the Open Ended Working Group on the Rights of Older Persons; raising the profile of ageing and development within the United Nations and its specialized agencies on an ongoing basis, collaboration through the International Day of Older Persons and through the global campaigns Age Demands Action and Action 2015

A brief history

Prior to 2013, the HelpAge International Global Network was the only international ageing organization active in the post-2015 processes. Having recognized that the MDGs made no reference to older persons, it was committed to ensuring that issues related to older persons and global ageing were included in the post-2015 agenda. The NGO Committee on Ageing in New York became engaged in the post-2015 process following the 25 September 2012 UNHQ "Open Dialogue with the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda" - where older persons were never mentioned - but did not become fully involved with the process until early 2013. Then a "Post-2015 Sub-committee" of members of the NGO Committee on Ageing in New York from about a dozen interested NGOs³ was formed and active collaboration to raise the profile of ageing began.

Written statements and oral interventions to the Open Working Group on SDGs, visits to missions and other collaborative advocacy efforts were made in the names of individual NGOs, or in groups, from June 2013 through March 2014. Since April 2014 statements and policy papers for the Open Working Group and

¹ See www.ngocoa-ny.org

² 117 Affiliated organisations in 70 countries

³ AARP, American Psychological Association, Gray Panthers, Guild of Service, HelpAge-USA, International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, International Council on Social Welfare, International Federation on Aging, International Longevity Centers, and International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

the Intergovernmental Negotiations have been made under the Stakeholder Group on Ageing, generally with the logos of HelpAge International and the NGO Committee on Ageing/NY included and widely disseminated at national and regional level by members of the alliance.

Since coming together in June 2013, the Stakeholder Group on Ageing has frequently joined with individual Major Groups and the disability community in formal statements to the interactive dialogues, and partnered together for side events, documents and other joint advocacy.

Older persons were referenced as a stakeholder group in the Rio+20 outcome document, "The Future We Want" (A/RES/66/288, paragraph 43). The Stakeholder Group on Ageing has been actively engaged in areas related to sustainable development, as contemplated in paragraph 16 of A/RES/67/290.

Current Governance and Accountability

The primary goal of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing is to make issues of ageing visible and to embed concerns of older persons within the post-2015 development agenda. Policy positions and statements are arrived at by consensus through in-person meetings, email, weekly telephone conference calls and quarterly strategy meetings. The head of Strategic Alliances of HelpAge International and the Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing/New York, have been the functional equivalents of Organizing Partners for the Group, providing leadership and final sign-off on statements. These procedures have worked well, even in the absence of formal Terms of Reference and operational policies. At the same time, it is recognized that a more formal structure will be necessary as work proceeds to the SDG implementation, monitoring and review stages.

Oversight of the work of the Post-2015 Sub-committee of the NGO Committee on Ageing has been provided by the governing body of the Committee, its Executive Committee, which receives reports on the Stakeholder Group activities at its monthly meetings. To date all NGO's participating in the Stakeholder Group on Ageing have also been members of the NGO Committee on Ageing New York, which welcomes new members and encourages collaboration and partnership with other groups and stakeholders. The fact that a majority of the members of the Executive Committee have also been active members of the Post-2015 Sub-committee, has also contributed to oversight of the SDG work. Within HelpAge International senior management has overseen the work of its staff and network partners working on the post-2015 agenda, with planning and regular reporting procedures in place, and engagement with the global network through meetings, communications and advocacy activities.

Inclusiveness and transparency

The Stakeholder Group on Ageing's collaborative work on the SDGs is relatively recent, as noted above, and has an effective and simple structure. Priority has been given from the start of the negotiations both to developing joint positions

and to reaching out to other constituencies and groups - the Women's Major Group, the Children and Youth Major Group, the Indigenous Peoples Major Group, the Local Authorities Major Group, the NGO Major Group, persons with disabilities, volunteers, the business sector - stressing the need for attention to be given to demographic trends, visibility and inclusion of older women and men and referencing "of all ages" to ensure inclusiveness. Close liaison is maintained with DESA Focal point on Ageing, the DSD and the SG office throughout. This outreach strategy, within the United Nations and beyond, is at the heart of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing approach, reflecting the fact that attention to ageing and visibility of older persons within development negotiations have heretofore been limited. The Stakeholder Group on Ageing's work has not been as broad-based and inclusive as desired, within its membership. This was noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing:

"Compared to other areas of activism, the number of civil society organizations led by or dedicated to the development of older persons at the national and international levels is low .and in the majority of cases their capacity to interact with governments and influence policy on behalf of their constituents is low. Of the organizations that do exist at the national level in developing countries, many are focused on the provision of welfare-type services for older persons." (E/CN.5/2014/4, paragraph 53.

As noted above, the Stakeholder Group on Ageing has worked under the umbrella of HelpAge International and the NGO Committee on Ageing/NY, with a variety, though perhaps a limited number, of organizations as members. However, while the Stakeholder Group on Ageing's collaborative work on the SDGs is relatively recent, as noted above, its current simple structure has nevertheless worked effectively. At the same time, priority has been given from the start of the SDG negotiations both to developing joint position papers and statements. In relation to the major groups and other stakeholders, such collaborative efforts have resulted in building awareness and connections, and incorporating each other's concerns in many position papers and statements. While such collaboration has been on an informal basis, it is recognized that "leaving no one behind" would require more formal mechanisms to ensure strengthened partnerships so as to allow Major Groups and other Stakeholders to take full advantage of the political space created at the HLPF, (spelled out by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290). The Stakeholder Group on Ageing stands ready to participate in discussions concerning coordinating mechanisms to strengthen inclusiveness and to enhance effective participation in the HLPF when it considers implementation, review and monitoring of the SDGs.

Looking forward

Looking forward to the implementation of the post-2015 agenda, the Stakeholder Group on Ageing is preparing to organize itself to be an ever more effective force for ensuring continued visibility of the age dimension of the sustainable development goals, and the adequate monitoring and reporting thereon. It

recognizes that to be effective advocates for older persons in the future work of the HLPF when it discusses SDG implementation at the national, regional as well as the global level, the Stakeholder Group on Ageing must establish a meaningful and participatory model of governance to ensure a transparent and accountable civil society engagement at regional and national levels. Simultaneously, we will look forward to the establishment of adequate mechanisms for stronger and more effective coordination among all UN Major Groups and Stakeholders.

We look forward to learning at the EGM how and to what other organizations have done to ensure openness, transparency and accountability. We are certain there are lessons to be learned and applied as the Stakeholder Group on Ageing - with support and guidance from DESA and the HLPF Working Group further develops its own organization and governance structure.

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