

Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid
International Plan of Action on Ageing
Bangkok, 12-14 September 2017

Name of speaker: (Mr.) (Ms.) Cynthia Valiko

Country/Organization: OHCHR - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

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Agenda Item No: 3

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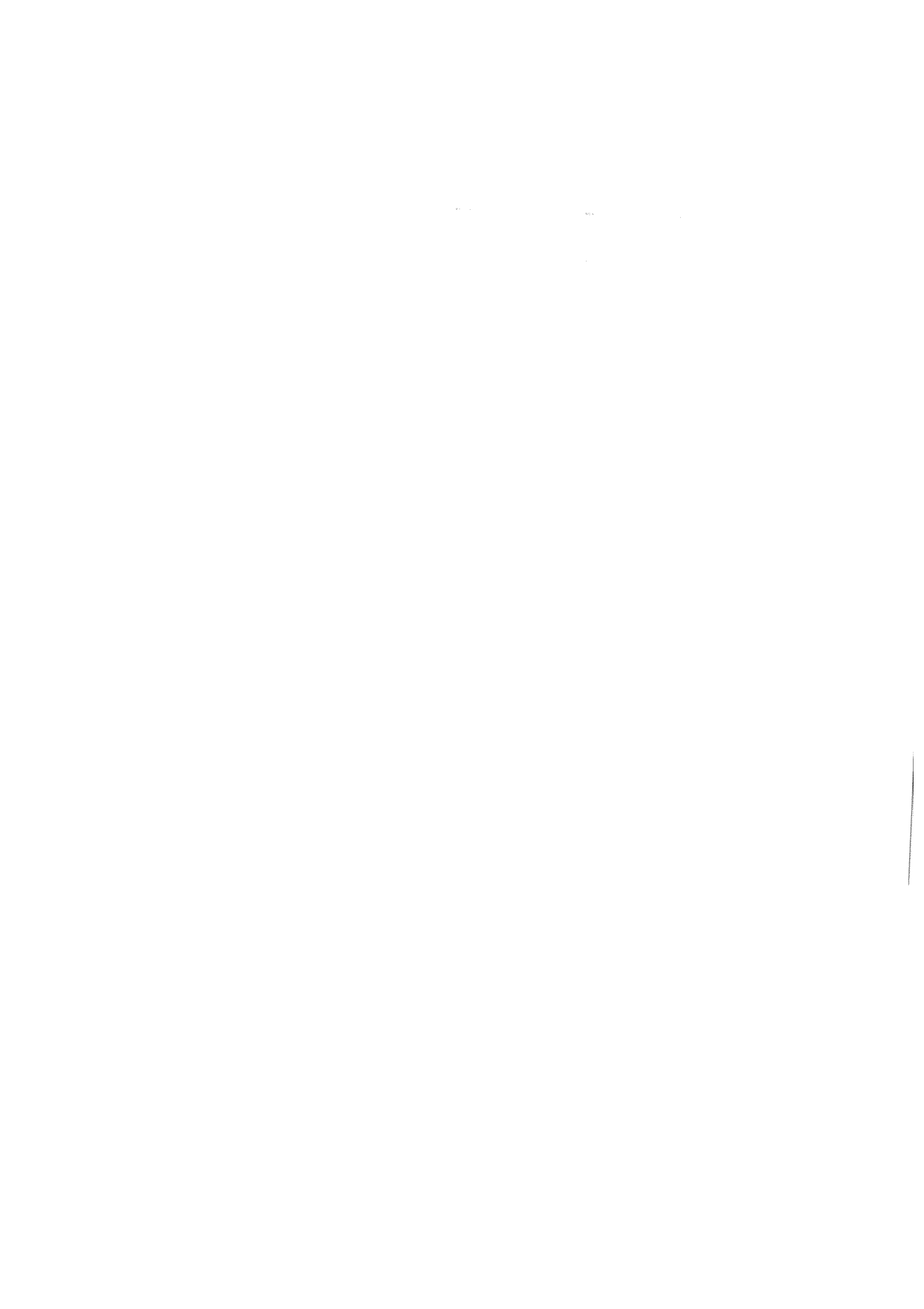
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ESCAP Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Agenda item 3 Consideration of key regional issues within the framework of the Madrid Plan of Action

Statement by Cynthia Veliko, Regional Representative, Regional Office for South-East Asia, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks a paradigm shift towards a more balanced model for sustainable development aiming to secure freedom from fear and freedom from want for all, without discrimination. Strongly grounded in international human rights standards, the new Agenda strives to “leave no one behind” and puts the imperative of equality and non-discrimination at its heart.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs comes at a time of a significant demographic transformation taking place across the world.

Population ageing is a major global trend that affects all countries. The overall trend in population ageing and growth means that the number of older persons in the world is projected to grow exponentially from almost 1 billion today, to 1.4 billion in 2030, and further to 2.1 billion in 2050. By 2050, a quarter of population living in Asia-Pacific region will be 60 years or older.

This demographic shift makes it absolutely urgent to ensure that older persons can fully participate in all spheres of social

life. We know that older persons can make critical contributions to economic and social development with their experience, skills and knowledge, both in formal and informal sectors.

Older persons, particularly older women, also play a vital role within families as care-givers for spouses, grandchildren and other relatives, which often remain unrecognized and undervalued. In addition, many older persons contribute to strengthening social capital by actively participating in community and civic life. These are all essential parts of sustainable development and resilient societies that foster the dignity and well-being of all.

This Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing Agenda review is therefore a timely opportunity to measure the progress of implementation, and also to reframe our commitments on ageing in the context of the SDGs and the rights-based 2030 Agenda in a forward-looking manner.

The ESCAP survey reveals that, while there are commendable efforts across the region, there remain significant legislative, policy and implementation gaps in the protection of human rights of older persons.

Older persons are often subjected to discrimination, neglect, exclusion and other violations in all parts of the world, across all countries. It is a sad reality that is often not acknowledged by families, communities and governments. Older persons' participation in social and economic life may also be at risk because of prevailing ageism and stereotypes that see them as burden on younger generations.

The lack of reliable, disaggregated data is another major issue. For example, the data on abuse, neglect and violence against older persons is mostly unavailable in the region.

In light of these realities and the need to ensure that effective measures are in place so as to empower older persons to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development - policymakers and development programmes must include, as a priority, older persons as active agents of the society, adopt effective legislation and policies that effectively address inequality and discrimination as well as other significant obstacles they face to fully enjoy their human rights.

In other words, a fundamental shift towards a more human rights-based approach to addressing the challenges of ageing societies, is required to fulfil the promise of “Leave no one behind”.

Concerted actions are needed to dispel ageism and change the mindset of people regarding older persons. Such actions will in turn transform population ageing into significant opportunities for sustainable development with far-reaching implications for all sectors of society, including labour markets, financial services; health care systems; new technologies; and urban planning and infrastructures.

For greater accountability towards older persons, strengthening synergies between the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing Agenda implementation process and the normative and monitoring work of the UN human rights system is critical, including the Universal Periodic Review and the Independent Expert on human rights of older persons appointed by the Human Rights Council.

Important progress is being made under the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing established by the General Assembly, towards elaborating international standards on human rights of older persons, with strong support from civil society movements. At country level, national human rights institutions play an important role in promoting transparent, participatory and inclusive national processes of implementation and monitoring.

Today, it is simply a fact of life that people are living longer, active longer and contributing longer to our well-being in the society. A Human rights-based approach to ageing will place older persons at the centre of efforts to implement the SDGs, help to address inequalities and discrimination, and strengthen the accountability of Governments and all stakeholders to enhance and protect their human rights, thereby fulfilling the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

Thank you and I wish you the best of luck on the continuation of this important work.