

## GUIDELINES I

### National level advocacy around the OEWG

Governments' positions relating to the [Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing](#) (OEWG) process are made in the capitals. National level advocacy by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) throughout the year between the OEWG sessions is therefore crucial in influencing government positions on older people's rights and a convention. Below is a list of suggested actions and approaches to take in this work.

<p><b>Preparation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research your government's position and understand the reasoning behind it in order to counter their arguments if necessary. This includes studying where available their <a href="#">written submissions</a> to the OEWG process, their <a href="#">statements</a> in the OEWG sessions, and any other public statements they have made or positions they have aligned to nationally or regionally (for example, the African Union <a href="#">Protocol</a>).</li> <li>• If your government has not made submissions or statements in the OEWG process, you will need to ask them what their position is on this process.</li> <li>• Research existing reports containing older people's feedback and talk to and consult older people to understand how they feel about the protection of their rights.</li> <li>• Look at how well older people's rights are protected by laws in your country and consider how a new UN convention could improve older people's day to day lives.</li> <li>• Look at the focus areas for the <a href="#">next OEWG session</a> and develop substantive content (see <a href="#">GAROP Guidelines II</a>) around what the normative elements of a new UN convention should be.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Building capacity and partnerships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a general lack of knowledge about the OEWG process among many government officials at different levels, as well as among some civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). NGOs can play a vital role in raising awareness of the OEWG and its mandate with these and other stakeholders.</li> <li>• Since December 2016, NHRIs with 'A' status have been granted new participatory and accredited status in the OEWG. NHRIs also hold a range of expertise and data on human rights in your national context and can be important partners for civil society in helping to build up the evidence base and stimulate debate.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GAROP members in different regions have found that organising tripartite meetings at national level involving governments, NHRIs, and older people and NGOs is a very useful way of exchanging expertise, building a common understanding and ensuring that older people’s voices and experiences are at the heart of the process of strengthening older people’s rights.</li> <li>• Once these relationships and dialogue has commenced you can aim to arrange a schedule of regular meetings to build momentum and further enrich your discussions.</li> <li>• If you are not familiar with NHRIs you can find out more, including about the NHRI in your country, on the Global Alliance of NHRIs website and <a href="#">directory</a>.</li> <li>• You could also build links with and use local and national media to raise public awareness of the rights of older people.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working with government</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst advocacy with governments all year round is valuable, the most important moments for influencing governments are around key international events (such as the 1<sup>st</sup> October, International Day of Older Persons). It is also particularly useful to engage with your government in the few months leading up to the next OEWG session when governments are planning their participation, preparing their positions, and communicating instructions to their UN Missions in New York.</li> <li>• Urge governments to actively and constructively participate in the OEWG sessions and to make submissions on the focus areas for the next OEWG session.</li> <li>• Representatives from the line ministries in the capitals responsible for older people’s rights (for example, Ministry of Social Affairs or equivalent) are better equipped to take part in a substantive discussion on the issues in the OEWG sessions because they have more in-depth knowledge of the subject area, rather than simply reading out a prepared statement. The active participation of these representatives in the OEWG sessions in New York should be encouraged.</li> <li>• Listen carefully and seek to understand the specific reasons why governments are opposed to a convention (even if you disagree with them) as a means of building a constructive dialogue.</li> <li>• Depending on the position your government is taking, it could be helpful to have a conversation about whether we need a convention or not, but it is also important to include discussion on the content of the focus areas of rights (also see <a href="#">GAROP Guidelines II</a>).</li> <li>• Aim for a balanced discussion both to highlight the positive features of the state in question regarding the protection and</li> </ul>

	<p>promotion of the rights of older people, and to identify where there may currently be gaps in laws, policy and practice that an international convention could help to address.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor what your government says and contributes on these issues both publicly, including in the UN sessions (using the links above and watching on <a href="http://webtv.un.org">http://webtv.un.org</a>), and in your meetings with them.</li> <li>• Hold your government accountable for their statements and submissions by following up directly with your government contacts as soon as they have delivered them to share your reactions and highlight where they may have failed to meet the commitments they have made to you or publicly.</li> <li>• In addition to working with governments, you could aim to secure written commitments supporting a convention from political parties when they are in opposition. Some GAROP members have produced election manifestos in the lead up to a national election including a call for a convention and encouraging the government elected to support the OEWG process. (See Age Concern NZ's <a href="#">Election Manifesto 2017</a>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Connecting ministries and missions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is often a disconnect between the government ministries in the capitals and their UN missions in New York. NGOs at the national level could encourage Member States' participation in the OEWG process by establishing a connection directly with the relevant mission contact in New York, and proactively sharing information about the process with both the government decision-makers in the capitals and their missions.</li> <li>• There is a need to build awareness and greater synergies between the discussions in New York at the <a href="#">OEWG</a>, in Geneva at the <a href="#">Human Rights Council</a>, and action at the national level. Check the online <a href="#">GAROP calendar</a> for information about upcoming events in New York and Geneva and encourage your governments and their missions to attend and contribute.</li> <li>• To be connected to other GAROP members who are actively engaging in New York and Geneva with the missions and UN bodies, contact the <a href="#">GAROP Secretariat</a> in the first instance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intersessional opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a number of events relevant to older people's rights that take place throughout the year between the OEWG sessions. These may be national, regional or international events. NGOs' active involvement in these events in the intersessional period is important as these provide an opportunity to influence and engage with the relevant decision-makers outside of the more formal OEWG sessions.</li> <li>• Older people's rights and the importance of a UN convention can be highlighted at observances of international days such as</li> </ul>

	<p>World Health Day (7 April), the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (15 June), International Day of Older Persons (1 October), Human Rights Day (10 December).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many GAROP members organise events, engage the media and other stakeholders, and invite senior government representatives to officiate or contribute.</li> <li>• Check the online <a href="#">GAROP calendar</a> for information about events you may be able to attend and send details of any relevant events to the <a href="#">GAROP Secretariat</a> for inclusion in the calendar.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NGOs working in coalition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GAROP has an important role to play as a coordinating focal point and platform for NGOs and civil society. GAROP currently has a staffed Secretariat and is developing communication with members and its online presence through <a href="#">Twitter</a> and its website.</li> <li>• Make use of <a href="#">GAROP materials and resources</a> to support your national advocacy and share your suggestions and feedback with the <a href="#">GAROP Secretariat</a>.</li> </ul>

## Further resources

See other GAROP Guidelines:

- [Guidelines II](#) – Engaging in substantive debate
- [Guidelines III](#) – Preparing oral statements for the OEWG session

See also the [E.A.I.R. Guidelines](#) from HelpAge International about how to plan and strengthen your national advocacy strategy on a UN convention.