

5 May 2020

**An Open Letter to the UN Secretary General in response to the release of the 'Policy brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on older persons'**

*Prepared by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP)<sup>i</sup>*

Dear Secretary-General,

We congratulate you for your UN Policy Brief 'The impact of COVID-19 on older persons' released on 1<sup>st</sup> May. We appreciate this important focus on older persons and thank you for your valuable leadership in this area.

We welcome the emphasis you place on the human rights and dignity of older persons in all their diversity. The focus on the range of interdependent human rights impacted by this pandemic is crucial, including the right to life, health, autonomy and independence, care and support, palliative care, social security, and freedom from violence, abuse and neglect. We support you in calling on States and all stakeholders to step up our collective efforts and implement the Brief's recommendations in these areas as a matter of priority.

COVID-19 has exposed the global nature of ageism and the systematic and persistent denial of older persons' human rights. These challenges are not confined to a single country or region, they are universal and more urgent than ever. We share your view that the absence of an international legally-binding instrument dedicated to the rights of older persons is likely to contribute to some of the failings and human rights violations that we are now witnessing around the world.

We fully support your recommendation to build stronger legal frameworks at national and international levels to protect the human rights of older persons, including by accelerating the efforts of the General Assembly's working group to develop proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons. We trust that Member States of the UN General Assembly's Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing will now accelerate their efforts to develop proposals for a UN convention on the rights of older persons.

We call on your leadership to ensure that the UN mobilises fully behind your vision of dignity and the protection of the rights of all older persons in response to COVID-19 and beyond. In particular, we ask that you give the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing the full backing and support of the UN to ensure that its crucial work of strengthening the international legal framework with respect to the protection of older persons' human rights can be achieved.

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**<sup>i</sup> About GAROP**

The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) is a network of over 360 civil society organisations from 80 countries working together so that all older people can live free from discrimination and are able to fully enjoy their rights. We believe a UN convention on the rights of older persons is essential for older people to fully enjoy their rights.