

PREPARING FOR THE 11TH OEWG SESSION:



# COVID-19 Guide

Messaging and Resources  
January 2021

## Background

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) process and our year-round advocacy momentum. It also exacerbated and sharply exposed the inequalities, discrimination, and ageism faced by older people world-wide. This reinforces the evidence of inadequate protection and violations of rights in older age demonstrated in the work of the OEWG and further strengthens the case for a UN convention. There is now more high-level attention and political momentum around older people's human rights than ever before.

The 11<sup>th</sup> session of the OEWG will take place from 29<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This is a huge opportunity to push hard for our common goal of a UN convention to become a reality. It is vital that we are ready to move together and collectively as a Global Alliance and that you as members mobilise at national level to influence your governments.

## Aim of this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide you with shared messages that link COVID-19 with our campaign for a UN convention in order to build government support in the weeks running up to the 11<sup>th</sup> OEWG session. It provides you with:

- **Common messages to provide clarity and consistency in our advocacy at national and global level.** This draws on the work by members on effective framing and communication around a convention and on GAROP's positions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **A compilation of resources to support your national advocacy.** These are the most relevant and useful resources for building political support in the run-up to the 11<sup>th</sup> OEWG session.

This guide is designed to complement further resources that will be shared with you in early 2021 in the run-up to the 11<sup>th</sup> OEWG session, for example templates for letters to governments, guidelines for NGOs to produce video messages and our joint Global Alliance statement.

See our website for more information and advocacy resources: <http://www.rightsofolderpeople.org>.

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# Our Core Message for Governments

**Common Opening:** *COVID-19 has affected older people disproportionately globally. Systems and societal responses to the pandemic have led to unnecessary deaths, increased poverty and elevated discrimination against older people. This reinforces the need to act on the consensus already reached by governments at the global level that more needs to be done to strengthen the protection of older people's rights.*

**Tailoring to context and call to action:**

**Countries with poorer COVID-19 response**

*In our country, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the lives of older people in this country.*

*You have an important opportunity now to work with other governments in the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing's 11<sup>th</sup> session and be part of the solution.*

*We have seen that government policies and action can make all the difference to our health and wellbeing. As we rebuild our systems and services, we must make sure they are fit for purpose in a world where we will all be living longer. A UN convention would help governments, the private sector and others make sure these services respect older people's rights.*

**Countries with stronger COVID-19 response**

*We congratulate you on the effective measures that you put in place in our country to deliver a strong response to the COVID-19 pandemic in this country.*

*Your leadership in this area is now urgently needed in the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing's 11<sup>th</sup> session to ensure that the rights of older people everywhere can be fully protected in future.*

*As we rebuild our societies we can choose to do so from a place of equality and dignity. A UN convention on the rights of older people would provide the specific guidance that governments and others need to make the right decisions and build the fair and just society we all want.*

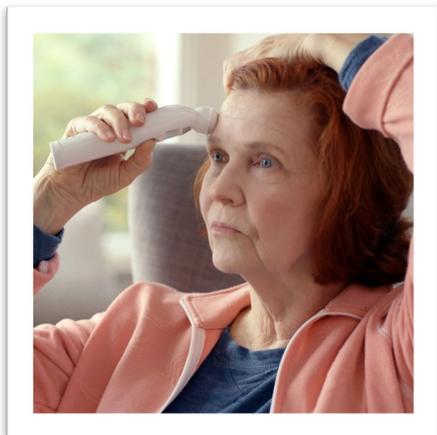
**Common Closing:**

*We need to act now. This crisis has shown how important it is to protect our rights when we're older so that we can have equal opportunities to survive, to live with dignity and to contribute to our communities.*

*A UN convention on the rights of older people ensures age discrimination is prohibited in the law; services uphold older people's dignity; systems empower individual potential; and attitudes and behaviours towards older people are respectful. This is a world that we need for older persons today and all generations tomorrow.*

Use the following tips to enhance the effectiveness of your content and impact of delivery:

- Craft your local message with your own advocacy styles and approaches. Some NGOs are more technical and advisory, others are more activist and confrontational. There is strength in your diversity as members of the Global Alliance and you know what the most effective tactics are for your organisation and your government.
- Include and reinforce our shared message above, whatever your own style and approach. Voicing the same shared message across the globe gives us a stronger and louder advocacy voice.
- Elaborating on the shared message or your own ideas with local examples drive the point home with clarity and stronger impact. You do not need to use exactly the same words; the ideas underpinning the messages are more important than repeating the exact wording.
- Ask older people to speak and share examples from their own experience of the pandemic because the message will be particularly powerful coming from their voices.
- Work in coalition with other civil society organisations and stakeholders, such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), to raise these messages with your government through letters, meetings, or the media. This kind of unity and coordination is more likely to have an impact on governments.



## Our Guide to Key Resources

This table compiles some of the resources that are the most relevant and useful for achieving our common goal of a new UN convention in the run-up to the 11<sup>th</sup> OEWG session. Most of these resources relate directly to COVID-19. Some of them pre-date the pandemic but can still be helpful in influencing governments at the current time. They are organised in a way that helps you to quickly find the tools that you need and strengthen your arguments and advocacy work. For further information please see:

- [COVID-19-related resources here](#).
- [Advocacy resources and links here](#)

### Examples of growing government support and consensus

- [Joint statement](#) by 146 States that strongly supports the UN Secretary General's Policy Brief on COVID-19 and older persons (English only).
- [EU Council Conclusions October 2020](#) – particular focus on digitalisation but useful for demonstrating EU consensus on taking a rights-based approach to older people's issues. It can be helpful for governments in other regions, such as Africa, to highlight this growing support from the EU in this process (Also available in [French](#), [German](#) and [Spanish](#))
- [EU Presidency Trio Declaration on Ageing](#) – a further demonstration of a shift in the EU towards a more human rights-based approach to ageing (English only)

### Templates and tools to support your advocacy activities

- [HelpAge's 'It's About Rights' toolkit](#) – specific guidance on COVID-19 messaging and advocacy templates to link the pandemic to older people's rights (also available in [Spanish](#) and [Russian](#))
- [GAROP Advocacy Timeline](#) – sets out the key milestones in our OEWG annual advocacy calendar and provides tools to help you engage (webpages can be translated into multiple languages using the automatic translation function and some documents are also available in other languages)
- [FAIR guidelines](#) explains how to develop an advocacy plan to build your government's support for a new UN convention (also available in Arabic, Russian and Spanish [here](#)).

### Specific information about your government

- [Country information sheets](#) compiled by HelpAge containing details of your government's OEWG attendance record and statements and positions (English only)
- [COVID-19 Law Lab](#) – compiles legal documents from 190 countries to help implement strong legal frameworks to manage the pandemic. The aim is to ensure that laws protect well-being and adhere to international human rights standards. (Webpages can be translated into multiple languages using the automatic translation function although documents are in original language only).

(Continued overleaf)

## Our Guide to Key Resources (Continued)

### Examples of high-level UN decision-makers' support

- UN Secretary-General's [policy brief on COVID-19 and older persons](#) (English only)
- UN Secretary-General's [response](#) to [civil society letter](#) about older people and COVID-19 (English only)
- WHO Director-General's [response](#) to [GAROP letter](#). (English only)

### Positions and analyses by independent human rights experts

- [UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons - COVID-19 report](#) (Available in all 6 UN languages)
- [UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons – World Elder Abuse Awareness Day statement](#) (English only)
- [Joint statement from UN human rights experts](#) (English only)

### Older people's rights, COVID-19 and the case for a UN convention

- [Discussion paper](#): *'Time for a UN convention on the rights of older persons. How the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need to protect our rights in older age'*. This paper covers some of the main areas of human rights that have been discussed in the OEWG. (English only)

### GAROP statements and positions through COVID-19

(All statements below can be translated into multiple languages using the automatic translation function on the GAROP website).

- [Postponement of the 11th OEWG session](#)
- [World Health Day statement](#)
- [Open letter to the UN Secretary-General](#)
- [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day statement](#)
- [International Day of Older Persons statement](#)
- [Letter to the new Chair of the OEWG](#) and [her response in December 2020](#)

## Contact

Secretariat of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People: [info@rightsofolderpeople.org](mailto:info@rightsofolderpeople.org).