

Lived Experiences, Collective Advocacy: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument on the Rights of Older Persons

Side event at the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Background

Civil society organisations, including older people and their representative organisations, around the world have been advocating for the recognition and protection of the rights of older persons for decades, including within the work of the United Nations' Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG). In its recent substantive Decision adopted at its 14th session in May 2024, the OEWG addressed the gaps in the international human rights system and recommended the adoption of a new international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons as a way of closing those gaps.

Subsequent to this Decision, the General Assembly (GA) adopted a resolution in August 2024 that concluded the work of the OEWG and urged relevant UN bodies, including the Human Rights Council (HRC), to further consider the recommendations adopted by the OEWG in the Decision.

This is a critical juncture, as during this session, the HRC will consider a procedural resolution, tabled by a core group of Member States, to establish an open-ended inter-governmental working group to start drafting a new international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons. It is essential that this process allows for the full, effective and meaningful participation of civil society, especially of older people and their representative organisations.

This side event provides an important platform for participation, with older campaigners from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America participating in a discussion about their experiences, reflecting on the progress made, and underscoring the importance of continuing the work that has already been achieved. It will focus on their advocacy journey, the challenges they have faced, and why they are calling for a convention that could meaningfully improve the lives of older people in their regions.

Sponsors and organisers

The side event is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations in Geneva and co-organised by the German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO), the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) in partnership with the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) and the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva. We are grateful to HelpAge International and AARP for their generous support for this event.

Additional co-sponsors will be confirmed in further promotional materials about the side event.

Objectives

1. To highlight the advocacy efforts of older campaigners and provide a space for them to share their personal experiences and why they are committed to a new international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons.
2. To underscore the importance of the HRC building on the progress made over 14 years at the OEWG.

3. To raise awareness of the positive change that a new international legally binding instrument would bring about in older people's everyday lives.
4. To build solidarity around the experiences and aspirations of older people claiming their rights in different regions of the world.

Date Thursday 13th March 2025
Time 14:00-15:00 CET
Venue Room XXIV, Palais des Nations, Geneva
Language The side event will be in English only

Hybrid participation and webcast coverage will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Visit this webpage for more information: <https://rightsofolderpeople.org/hrc58-side-event/>

Programme

14:00-14:05	Welcome and housekeeping by the moderator, Mr. Alejandro Bonilla Garcia, Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva and older persons' rights campaigner from Mexico.
14:05-14:10	Opening remarks by H.E. Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations in Geneva
14:10-14:35	Conversation with older campaigners moderated by Mr. Alejandro Bonilla Garcia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Ermira Pirdeni, Albanian Society for All Ages - Mr. Elijah Mwega, KARIKA Kenya - Dr. Halida Akhter, Society for Health Promotion Links (SHPL), Bangladesh
14:35-14:45	Interactive discussion with all participants
14:45-14:55	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Ambassador Božena Forštnarič Boroje, Director-General, Directorate for Multilateral Cooperation, Ministry For Foreign and European Affairs, Slovenia - Ms. Rose Gahire, Co-chair of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP)
14:55-15:00	Thanks and close by the moderator