

**Statement of Older Persons Constituency, Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism ,
Presented by A.Sankar,Executive Director, Empower India.**

Eight Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable APFSD: “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific” virtually held on 23/03/2021.

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.ver good afternoon to you all. This is Arumugam Sankar, Executive Director, from Empower India representing the Older People constituency of Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism.

The COVID-19 pandemic is among the gravest global health and economic crises in history. Millions of people had been infected and died worldwide. This pandemic affects all of us but having the greatest impact on those already experiencing poverty, poor health, and discrimination.

Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic at all levels of governance have exposed significant gaps and systemic failures in the protection of the human rights of older persons. Across the Asia-Pacific region, older persons have been denied their human rights, discriminated against on the basis of their age and subjected to ageist hate speech, stigmatization, prejudice, abuse and neglect.

Failure to consider and address these issues will result in a more serious, and without specific and inclusive measures for older persons, we are slowly putting our lives on the edge.

We, the older persons constituency recommends the following:

1. **Universal social pension for older persons.** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the economic vulnerability of older persons especially the poor and marginalized. Providing them a monthly pension will ensure basic income security. A decent pension that will give them peace of mind and will not make them dependent on their children and grandchildren who also lost their jobs due to the pandemic.
2. **Accessible health programs and services** to older persons especially in times of pandemic. This includes equitable distribution of vaccines, older persons living in poverty and socially and geographically isolated are at risk of being among the disadvantaged groups who are most likely to be left behind, despite facing risks of serious illness and death from COVID-19.
3. **Accessible information.** The COVID-19 pandemic has once again reinforced the challenges in getting information with diverse groups of older persons, as well as those with literacy challenges, those without digital/telephone access, those who do not speak the language used for communication, and those with sensory or cognitive disabilities.
4. **Availability of age and sex disaggregated data.** Across the Asia-Pacific region, older persons have faced significantly higher risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19. Due to gaps in available age and sex disaggregated data about the spread of the virus, no detailed, complete picture of the extent of infection, serious disease and mortality among different age groups is available.
5. **Approval of the proposed UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons** that will provide a guide on how to fully respect the rights of all older persons in all their diversity and trigger the changes in law, policy and practice to make this happen.

Thanks to All .