Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
(Bangkok and online, 29 June–1 July 2022)

Agenda Item 2: Review of progress and challenges in accelerating the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES AUSTRALIA

1. I thank the Chair.

2. Excellencies and distinguished delegates, Community Legal Centres Australia is a NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2003 – almost twenty years.

3. We are the national peak body for 170 community legal centres (CLCs) in Australia. Our members provide legal and related assistance to older persons, and some specialise in assisting older persons with elder rights-specific issues.

4. While this forum is new for us, its context is not.

5. For over two decades, we have participated in UN processes addressing the unmet human rights of older persons, including the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, where we have attended since the 4th Working Session in 2013.

6. In that Group, we have been calling for a convention to address the gaps and deficiencies in human rights protections for older persons, many of which were laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic, the impacts of the digital divide, climate change and natural disasters.

7. You have heard the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons emphasise the need for a convention in her opening address.

8. While calling for a convention, we have asserted that MIPAA – a social development process – cannot alone remedy the legions of abuses and violations older persons face. It has not reduced the invisibility and isolation of older persons, nor has it eliminated entrenched aspects of age discrimination and ageism, now overwhelmingly prevalent in our communities and in older persons’ lives.

9. MIPAA itself recognises that human rights and social development are complementary. They are not at odds with each other. They are mutually reinforcing, and in that sense, both essential parts of the global policy landscape and the rule of law. Older persons need both to be guaranteed healthy, safe and fulfilling lives.
10. MIPAA recognises its own complementarity with human rights standards and relies on human rights to be successful in achieving its objectives; a central theme of the MIPAA includes, “[E]nsuring the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights of persons and the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against older persons…”

11. This cannot be achieved without the right tools for the job at hand.

12. Given so many contemporary reports of older persons’ continuing human rights abuses and violations, this process must take conscious steps to recognise the need for a new, specific convention on the human rights of older persons.

13. I thank the Chair.

*** STATEMENT ENDS ***

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1 MIPAA Part I, paragraph 12(e).