CONCEPT NOTE

1. Introduction

In 2023, an estimated 697 million older persons (60 years or over) are residing in Asia and the Pacific, representing about 60 per cent of all older persons in the world. They represent about 14.8 per cent of the region’s population. By 2050, the number of older persons in the region is projected to increase to 1.3 billion or 25.9 per cent of the population. Roughly one in 7 persons in the region are currently 60 years or older, and by 2050, there will be one in 4 persons belonging to this age cohort.

Women account for about 54 per cent of all older women. With increasing age, their share increases. For the group 80 years or over, they represent 62 per cent. Thus, women account for most of all older persons in the region. Women contribute to societies throughout their entire lives. In old age, they continue to support families through their work, both in the formal and informal sectors. They provide unpaid care for children, grandchildren and older family members, give shelter and emotional support, and are the backbone of families and communities.

Population ageing in Asia and the Pacific is particularly rapid, given the decline in fertility and mortality over recent years. This translates into limited time to prepare for the impacts of ageing on societies.

While longer and often healthier lives represent an achievement of social and economic development and health over the last decades, the rapid demographic shift has also shown the lack of adequate protection mechanisms for older persons and has highlighted existing gaps in policies and programmes to address the situation of older persons.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore, and often amplified, critical human rights protection gaps for older persons that have perpetuated over the years – such as discrimination based on older age, lack of social protection and access to health services, lack of autonomy and participation in decision-making, and freedom from violence, neglect and abuse.¹

Since 2011, the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, established by the General Assembly, has been mandated to address gaps in the existing international framework and to develop proposals for a

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/en/older-persons
legally binding instrument to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older persons. Since 2011, the deliberations in the Working Group are ongoing.

At the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific in 2022, member States called for promoting and protecting the human rights of all older persons, giving priority to addressing gaps and mainstreaming the rights of older persons in legal and policy frameworks, as appropriate.

This event will put the spotlight on the human rights situation of older persons in Asia and the Pacific and provide opportunities to highlight examples of policies that facilitate intergenerational solutions, taking into account a life course approach to equality, freedom and justice for all. The event will also discuss human rights protection gaps affecting older persons and a way forward to advance this agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

3. Objectives

The event will explore the following questions:

- What is the human rights situation of older persons in Asia and the Pacific?
- How does age-based discrimination and ageism manifest themselves? How do they impact the health, social and economic situation and overall well-being of older persons?
- How has COVID-19 affected the situation of older persons, in particular older women in the region?
- What are good practices and lessons learned in terms of promoting and protecting the rights of older persons? Could they serve as a reference for other countries?
- What should countries, international organizations and CSOs in the region do more (and better) to promote and protect the human rights of older persons? Are there any low-hanging fruits for fulfilling the promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for older persons?

4. Participants

Representatives of government, international organizations and relevant stakeholders are invited to attend.

Interested participants are requested to register at: https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcud-isrzljHtzuYXdgelK-veDPlld1hvww

5. Date and format

The event is organized online on 2 October 2023, 10:00-11:45, UTC+7.

The event will be recorded and posted on ESCAP website at: https://www.unescap.org/events/2023/international-day-older-persons-asia-and-pacific-2023
8. Background

On 14 December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly designated October 1 as the International Day of Older Persons (resolution 45/106). This was preceded by initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted by the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed later that year by the UN General Assembly.

In 1991, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (resolution 46/91). In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, to respond to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing in the 21st century and to promote the development of a society for all ages.

Seventy-five years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, a monumental document in the history of human rights. It is the first document articulating the fundamental human rights that are meant to be universally protected. In recognition of this milestone and looking to a future that delivers on the promise to ensure that all persons, including all older persons, fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms, the 33rd commemoration of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons will focus on the theme of “Fulfilling the Promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Older Persons: Across Generations”.

6. Background documents

2021 ESCAP Population Data Sheet
Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons in the context of climate change (A/HRC/47/46)
Report on the impact of social exclusion on older persons (A/HRC/39/50)

Additional information is available here:
- ESCAP website dedicated to population ageing
- OHCHR website dedicated to OHCHR and older persons
- DESA UN Programme on Ageing