Opening Remark  
Eva Sabdono  
Executive Director, Yayasan Emong Lansia (YEL), Indonesia

Excellencies, distinguished guest, ladies, and gentlemen, good morning and may peace and health be with you all.

First of all, allow me to express my deepest gratitude to UN-ESCAP for giving me the honor deliver the voice of older persons in the Region at the UN-ESCAP IGM on the fourth review of MIPAA.

My name is Eva Sabdono, a community volunteer for many years especially for the disadvantaged older persons in Indonesia and presently Chairman of the Board of Alzheimer Indonesia and Executive Director of Yayasan Emong Lansia a non-profit community-based organization working with and for older persons with a mission to improve the quality of life of older persons in a sustainable way, so each older person can live in dignity in the widest sense of the word.

Population ageing is a global and regional megatrend and has significant implication for sustainable development.

Unfortunately, history has shown that growth and development is seldom equal, even within the finest of democracies. We have learned that older persons in many regions are still denied employment or the right to vote, are uncared for if sick, are abused in many ways, and pushed aside or forgotten in emergencies and disasters. Only a small portion have a pension, and many older persons are choked by seemingly inescapable poverty.

It is this reality, that prompts so many of us, including all distinguished ladies and gentlemen present here today, to want and strive for positive change.

Ageing may add focus on longevity, housing, environment, and chronic disease, a major contributor to the cost of health and long-term care, inevitable human losses and a declining on fixed income, but we cannot ignore the injustice of discrimination against people after they reach a particular stage of life or cross an imaginary line defining a person as old, then look at them as being different from what they were and create a basis to dismiss them from employment or deny adequate insurance or quality health care.

Ageing is the life process that is an achievement, and we should focus on ways to enlist the skills and talents and experience of those who have gained knowledge, wisdom, and sometimes better judgment, to guide those who will live beyond us.

The challenges of the 21st century require that everyone, young and old work together dispelling ageism and contributing to develop a sustainable society for all ages.

MIPAA 2002 has contributed creating that space for the engagement of older persons in the development process.
During the last MIPAA review, governments and society were aware that they need to adapt their social and economic systems to the reality of population ageing.

In this regard, I am pleased to say that on 14 September 2021 Indonesia’s President signed a Presidential Decree no 88/2021 of the National Strategy on Ageing, a collaborative and coordinative strategy for all related stakeholders, including older persons themselves, adopting a life cycle and rights-based approach in facing the challenges and implications of an ageing society.

It is understood that the circumstances of Older Persons are different in each region, but the inclusion of older persons in the development process remains a common challenge.

Although much progress has been made around the world, older persons continue to be viewed as mostly welfare recipients or as a burden on society, instead of as also vibrant, active, and valuable persons with knowledge, skills and experience that contribute to the national economy, society, communities, and families.

To build a society for all ages is not easy to reach. It will not come without setbacks, nor will it be quickly claimed. But the founding of the UN itself is a testament to human progress. In times that were more trying than ours, our predecessors chose the hope of unity over the ease of division and made a promise to future generations that the dignity and equality of human beings will be our common cause.

I would like to remind all participants at today’s meeting on the final declarations and recommendations of the parallel NGO World Forum for the Second World Assembly on Ageing (WAA) in Madrid, 5-9 April 2002, which I also attended, about the need to build not only a society for all ages but also a society which pursues well-being and social justice, and which focus on putting the human being and its dignity at the center of its objectives.

Last but not least, we request The United Nations support for an international and universal human rights instrument that would help to obligate governments to provide, protect and help older people to surmount their challenges to a quality of life with economic security, good health, social inclusion, and safety that all human beings should have a right to expect.

Distinguished guest, ladies, and gentlemen, I thank you for your close attention and for your sincere considerations.

Eva Sabdono.