Ladies and Gentleman,

I am here to convey best wishes of Govt. of India to this esteemed forum and the countries represented in that. India has been one of the strong supporters of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002. The country has taken several landmark steps in implementation of the Action Plan approved as a part of MIPAA. I propose to briefly place before you progress made in India in pursuance of the Plan of Action approved in MIPAA 2002.

Prior to that, I would like to place on record the contribution that India has made in the field of geriatric care where the family system has stood strong to protect and provide care to the elderly population. The family system in India has been the bedrock of a culture that believes in inter-generational bonding and respect to the elders. India has about 137 million elderly and except for very small percentage, all of them are under the care of the family system. When the building rock of the society i.e. family is strong that edifice is bound to be strong and long-lasting.

The Policy for the welfare of elders in India is based on a firm faith that elders should not be considered as a burden on the society or those who require support for existence. We believe that elderly population bring with them a treasure of knowledge and lifetime of experience which can be used in building a strong nation. We therefore are looking at engaging the elderly population in productive activities and thereby aiding productive ageing. In
pursuance of this faith, Govt. of India has launched several initiatives, some of them I state as below:-

a) Formation of Elders into Self-Help Groups and allowing them to choose the productive activity which is aided by the State. These SHGs, named as AGRASR are being formed across the country with the help of NGOs such as HelpAge India. We aim to constitute approx. 0.2 million elders into these groups in the next 4 years.

b) An electronic real time IT platform has been developed for matching the demand for the services of the elderly and supply of such services by the elderly/retired persons. This platform which is launched on 1st October, 2021 is being strengthened by bringing in multiple NGOs/industrial players so that every interested elderly person can find a work of his choice on the electronic platform.

c) In order to provide an IT based solution for resolving the grievances of the elders, a National Helpline called ‘Elderline’ has been launched on 1st October, 2021. So far, about 0.8 million calls have been received on this Helpline. The helpline has field level extension workers who reach out in case of serious cases of injury, abuse or threat. We propose to further strengthen this helpline and reach out to more people across the country.

d) There are destitute elders who require support of the Old Age Homes. The Govt. has taken upon itself the responsibility of opening one Old Age Home in every district which will be fully funded by the Government but run by an NGO. This collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors is going to help in sustainable solutions to address the problems of the destitute elders.
e) The social security net for the elderly has been one of the biggest programmes of the Government of India. Both the Federal and Regional governments have together identified more than 21.5 million elders who receive pension from the government on a monthly basis. All of them receive this pension through a Direct Benefit Transfer mode, directly into their bank account.

f) The healthcare for the elderly is one of the pious duties of the State. A National Programme of Healthcare for Elderly has been started in the FY 2010-2011 to provide geriatric care facilities to the lowest echelons of the health care system i.e. Primary Healthcare Centres. The programme also aims at developing geriatric specialists. We are starting a programme called PM-SPECIAL under which we propose to train 0.1 million people as geriatric caregivers. These caregivers would be linked through a geriatric care virtual market place to balance the demand for geriatric care services and supply of highly trained geriatric caregivers. This will allow easy access to various services requiring geriatric care support to the trained geriatric care givers.

g) We are going to launch a special health insurance package also under the Ayushman Bharat which is dedicated to providing cashless medical cover to the elders who are not having family support. This programme will be launched during the current year and we expect that it will be further strengthened based on the experience of this year.

h) The country has launched a huge campaign named Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana which is a national programme for providing assisted living devices to the elders from economically weaker sections. This programme is being implemented on a campaign mode across the country.
i) In order to address the issues of elderly abuse, however small such instances may be, India is implementing the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. The Act reiterates the responsibility of the children to take care of their parents and elders. Cases where this is not done, the aggrieved elders can approach Tribunals which is set up within the easy reach of the elders. These tribunals function on a small trial and reconciliation mode in order to provide quick justice.

j) In order to promote the private sector initiatives and to promote innovation in the field of elderly welfare, the Government has instituted a scheme called The SeniorCare Age Growth Engine (SAGE). Under this, Government contributes equity to the selected start-ups which come out with innovative solutions for the welfare of the elders. The Government is also engaging private sector initiatives in creating elderly living spaces by bringing in guidelines that promote a regulate such ventures. We also recognize the contributions made by individuals, institutions and non-government organizations for the welfare of elders and they are given National Award called Vayoshreshtha Samman on 1st October every year.

I will end by stating, taking care of elders has to be a national programme where the governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector, families and society at large participate in a coordinated manner. I give my best wishes to all the countries and all the participants here and by sharing each other knowledge and experiences together we can build better tomorrow for elders.

Jai Hind