



# Economic and Social Council

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## 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

### Report on the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

#### I. Matters brought to the attention of the Commission

1. The following decision is brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP):

##### Decision

The Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing decides to transmit the outcome document, the report on the Meeting and all pre-session documents to the Commission for Social Development at its sixty-first session, to be held in 2023, as a regional input to the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/8.

#### II. Organization

##### A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

2. The Meeting, which was held from 29 June to 1 July 2022, was opened by the Executive Secretary through a video statement. Video messages from the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons were played. The representative of Yayasan Emong Lansia, Ms. Eva Anne Jeanne Sabdon, made a statement.

##### B. Attendance

3. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission attended: Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kyrgyzstan; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Turkmenistan; Türkiye; United States of America; and Uzbekistan.

4. A Permanent Observer for Mexico attended.
5. A representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights attended.
6. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds attended: International Telecommunication Union; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and World Health Organization.
7. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended: Asian Development Bank; Asian Productivity Organization; and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
8. An observer for the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta attended.
9. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other entities attended: AARP; Ageing Nepal; Agewell Foundation; Asian Centre for Medical Education, Research and Innovation; Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition; Council on the Ageing Queensland; Development, Welfare and Research Foundation; Foundation for Older Persons' Development; Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti; HelpAge Cambodia; HelpAge International; HelpAge Korea; International Federation on Ageing; International Longevity Center Global Alliance.; International Planned Parenthood Federation; Japan Center for International Exchange; National Association of Community Legal Centres, Inc.; Soroptimist International; Tsao Foundation; Yayasan Emong Lansia; and Zhongshan Vocational College.
10. In accordance with rule 12 of the Commission's rules of procedure, the Chair and Vice-Chairs examined the credentials of all the representatives and found them to be in order.

### **C. Election of officers**

11. The participants in the Meeting elected the following officers:

Chair: Ms. Aishath Mohamed Didi (Maldives)  
Vice-Chairs: Ms. Millicent Cruz-Paredes (Philippines)  
Ms. Maziah Che Yusoff (Malaysia)

### **D. Agenda**

12. The participants in the Meeting adopted the following agenda:
  1. Opening of the Meeting:
    - (a) Opening statements;
    - (b) Election of officers;
    - (c) Adoption of the agenda.
  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.

3. Consideration of key regional issues within the framework of the Madrid Plan of Action, together with emerging issues:
  - (a) Older persons and development;
  - (b) Advancing health and well-being into old age;
  - (c) Ensuring enabling and supportive environments;
  - (d) Implementation and follow-up.
4. Adoption of the report of the Meeting and the outcome document.

#### **E. Other events**

13. The following seminars, side events and special sessions were held in conjunction with the Meeting:

(a) 29 June 2022, “Good practices for home and community care for older people”, co-hosted with the Foundation for Older Persons’ Development and HelpAge International in Viet Nam;

(b) 29 June 2022, “An enabling environment for future: focus on digital inclusion and built environments”, co-hosted with the Development, Welfare and Research Foundation;

(c) 30 June 2022, “Demographic dividend and silver economy”, co-hosted with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of India, the Ministry of National Development Planning of Indonesia, the Embassy of Japan in Thailand, the UNFPA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and HelpAge International;

(d) 1 July 2022, “Voice of older people”, hosted by ESCAP, the UNFPA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the Tsao Foundation and HelpAge International;

(e) 1 July 2022, “Older people’s associations’ development in Asia”, co-hosted with HelpAge International and the Japan Center for International Exchange.

### **III. Account of proceedings**

14. The discussions held during the Meeting will be summarized in an account of proceedings that will become available within a week following the conclusion of the Meeting and be annexed to the present report.

## Annex I

### List of documents

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/1	Overview of levels and trends in population ageing, including emerging issues, and their impact on sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific	2 and 3
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/2	Population ageing, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: synergies, indicators and data	2 and 3
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/3	Report on the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing	
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/3/Add.1	Outcome document entitled “Accelerating Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, to Build a Sustainable Society for All Ages in Asia and the Pacific”	
<i>Limited series</i>		
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/L.1/Rev.1	Provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/L.2	Annotated provisional agenda	1 (c)
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/L.3	Draft report	4
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/L.4	Draft outcome document	4
<i>Information series</i>		
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/INF/1	Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific: a summary of the results of voluntary national surveys reported by member States	2 and 3
ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/INF/2	Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific: a summary of the outcomes of stakeholder consultations	2 and 3

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<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>Information available online</i>		
<a href="http://www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-intergovernmental-meeting-fourth-review-and-appraisal-madrid-international">www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-intergovernmental-meeting-fourth-review-and-appraisal-madrid-international</a>	Information for participants	
<a href="http://www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-intergovernmental-meeting-fourth-review-and-appraisal-madrid-international">www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-intergovernmental-meeting-fourth-review-and-appraisal-madrid-international</a>	List of participants	
<a href="http://www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-intergovernmental-meeting-fourth-review-and-appraisal-madrid-international">www.unescap.org/events/2022/asia-pacific-intergovernmental-meeting-fourth-review-and-appraisal-madrid-international</a>	Tentative programme	

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## Annex II

### Account of proceedings

#### Opening of the Meeting (agenda item 1)

1. The participants in the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing elected Ms. Aishath Mohamed Didi, Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services, Maldives, as the Chair. The Executive Secretary delivered opening remarks in a video statement. Video messages from the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons were also played. Ms. Eva Anne Jeanne Sabdono, Yayasan Emong Lansia, delivered a statement.

#### Review of progress and challenges in accelerating the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 2)

2. The participants in the Meeting had before them two notes by the secretariat, entitled “Overview of levels and trends in population ageing, including emerging issues, and their impact on sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific” (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/1) and “Population ageing, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific: synergies, indicators and data” (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/2). They also had before them two information documents, entitled “Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific: a summary of the results of voluntary national surveys reported by member States” (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/INF/1) and “Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific: a summary of the outcomes of stakeholder consultations” (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/INF/2).

3. The Meeting benefited from a high-level panel discussion on agenda item 2. The panel discussion was moderated by the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The panellists were: Ms. Aishath Mohamed Didi, Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services, Maldives; Mr. Eduardo Klien, Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, HelpAge International, Thailand; Mr. Naohiro Ogawa, Professor Emeritus, College of Economics, Nihon University, Japan; and Dr. Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India, India.

4. The panellists stressed the importance of national, subregional and regional action plans for implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and national policies on ageing. They explored the role of social protection and employment opportunities for older persons, the mainstreaming of ageing in the health system, social innovations driven by older persons and the need to rethink the concept of age. Persistent socioeconomic inequalities affected the well-being of older persons. Many older women in particular had less access to social protection schemes, including health services and pensions. Information on concrete good practices was provided. Social pensions provided minimum income security to older persons, including to those working in the informal sector. Disease patterns were changing in ageing societies: noncommunicable diseases, including mental health challenges, were on the rise. The aim of health systems should be to ensure that older persons remained healthy for longer periods. Thus,

health systems had to be modified, and ageing had to be mainstreamed throughout the life cycle and in all health components.

5. In explaining differences among older persons in terms of cognitive functions, the case was made for rethinking existing concepts of age, taking into consideration factors such as the chronological age, health status and prospective age of individuals. Consequently, concepts related to the working age and retirement should be re-evaluated and ageing policies should be formulated keeping in mind the whole of society. Ageing societies had also produced several social innovations, such as self-help clubs of older persons. In that context, the exchange of information on experiences among countries and regional cooperation was encouraged.

6. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission made statements or submitted written statements: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; China; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Malaysia; Maldives; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Thailand; and United States of America.

7. The achievements, remaining challenges and priorities in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action were highlighted, as was members' commitment to its implementation. Population ageing was an irreversible demographic trend that required adequate policies. Several representatives reported on national action plans to implement the Madrid Plan of Action, as well as on subregional action plans, like the one entitled "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN", with monitoring frameworks. In some countries, councils on older persons or other kinds of coordinating bodies on ageing had been established. Information on good practices to implement the Madrid Plan of Action, such as the development of specific legislation or action plans on ageing, as well as to implement specific priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action, was exchanged.

8. Representatives stressed the importance of including older persons in the design of national policies and action plans on ageing. They emphasized the need to strengthen the rights of older persons, recognized the contributions made by older persons to society and called upon their experiences and wisdom to be valued.

9. It was also important to provide income security for older persons through employment and social protection. Information on several good practices was shared in that regard, such as providing comprehensive pension systems, including social pensions; supporting the participation of older persons in income-generating work and in volunteering; developing anti-discrimination legislation; generating employment and changing the work culture; and providing life-long learning opportunities for older persons, including in computer literacy and in preparing for ageing.

10. Difficulties in the provision of long-term care was one of the health challenges faced by older persons. Universal access to health care was stressed as a crucial tool for ensuring healthy ageing. Equitable access to quality health care and assistive devices and the provision of an enabling environment were important to ensure the participation of older persons in society. The social isolation of older persons, which had increased owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, was an area of concern. Lockdowns and internal and external barriers to health care during the pandemic had affected the well-being of older persons.

11. It was important to develop quality long-term care systems that provided a continuum of care. Unpaid family caregivers, which contributed to the provision of care, urgently needed support, including through training and social protection. Some representatives noted the shortage of paid and unpaid caregivers and reported on good practices to support community care and the independent living of older persons.

12. Technology to support older persons in accessing health care was important. Technology was also crucial in emergency situations and allowed many older persons to live independently. Thus, there was a need to provide access to technology for older persons. The importance of age-friendly and accessible built environments was stated. In that context, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported that one city in the country had been recognized as an age-friendly city.

13. Several representatives pointed out that it was important to collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and other characteristics, as appropriate, including data generated through specific surveys on ageing in order to design evidence-based policies. Cooperation between government entities, civil society and the private sector on data issues, as well as regional cooperation, was deemed crucial.

14. Non-governmental stakeholders reported on the outcomes of the stakeholder consultations held in preparation for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. During the consultations, which had been held on 7 and 28 April, 19 May and 8 June 2022, participants had highlighted the importance of adopting a life cycle and rights-based approach to population ageing. Coordination and collaboration between government entities and relevant stakeholders was important to make progress in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action. Older persons, in particular older women, continued to face challenges in accessing health care. Rehabilitation services and mental health care often received little recognition in policies. Technological barriers made access to telehealth services difficult for older persons. Those with chronic diseases often did not see their health care needs addressed during the pandemic.

15. Many older women faced multiple levels of discrimination, sometimes reflected in policies that were not gender-sensitive. Older persons of lower socioeconomic status, particularly older women, faced higher care burdens later in life. Moreover, many older women provided unpaid care for children and other older persons but had limited access to care when they themselves required it. In many countries, associations of older persons played an important role in providing health services to older persons and promoting healthy lifestyles. It was important to recognize older persons' agency by acknowledging and supporting their interest groups. The knowledge and experience of older persons had been used to address natural disasters, including those related to climate change, such as through helping communities to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of disasters. Coordination on services for older persons remained a challenge, with limited overall care strategies, age-friendly health services and adequate social pensions. Negative images of older persons were prevalent and, in many countries, elder abuse was common, including financial and psychological abuse by family members. Such abuse remained underreported owing to factors such as shame and limited avenues for communication in remote areas. There was a need to identify and increase awareness of abuse, to develop adequate policy and legal responses and to ensure the support of health professionals and social workers cognizant of complicated family dynamics. Measures for safeguarding the human rights of



older persons should be taken and welfare-based models should give way to rights-based approaches that could include the development of a convention on the rights of older persons.

16. After the summaries of the stakeholder consultations were provided, representatives of the following non-governmental stakeholders made statements on behalf of their organizations: AARP; Agewell Foundation; Development, Welfare and Research Foundation; Foundation for Older Persons' Development; HelpAge International; International Longevity Center Global Alliance; National Association of Community Legal Centres, Inc.; and Tsao Foundation.

17. Non-governmental stakeholders stressed the rapid pace of population ageing, which called for the development of policies on healthy ageing for the life cycle and for efforts to reduce disparities, to allow all people to reach their full potential. Healthy ageing policies should focus on preventing and protecting against disability. Long-term care was part of such policies, and home-care services were an important element of long-term care.

18. Older persons had made positive contributions to the economy and society. Their associations should, therefore, be more involved in all processes, as well as in action to address climate change. The need for adequate pensions for older persons was stressed, along with better working conditions and social protection for caregivers. Enabling and age-friendly environments were needed in both rural and urban areas. Successful initiatives had been launched to combat elder abuse and promote the digital inclusion of older persons. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated pre-existing social inequalities in the Asia-Pacific region.

19. Data collection efforts needed to be enhanced, as data were used as a basis for evidence-based policies. Furthermore, partnerships and innovations should be encouraged, ageing should be mainstreamed and a human rights-based and people-centred approach should be adopted, along with mechanisms to ensure that policies were implemented and monitored. Some non-governmental stakeholders called for a binding legal instrument on the rights of older persons.

20. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds made statements: International Telecommunication Union; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and World Health Organization.

21. Population ageing was recognized as an achievement of social and economic development. As a group, women were outliving men and the feminization of ageing needed to be addressed. The fact that events throughout life contributed to the situation of older persons in later years should be recognized, which is why it was necessary to take a life cycle approach to ageing and to make efforts to ensure the social inclusion of all older persons. The representative of one organization noted that there was a knowledge gap on the sexual health of older persons. The representative of another organization called for the digital inclusion of vulnerable groups, including older persons, youth, women and persons with disabilities. Concerns about the cybersecurity of older persons were expressed, as was the need to raise the awareness of related risks among older persons and their families. The representative of one organization noted that, as the population aged, good health was a prerequisite for achieving productive societies and sustainable development. States were therefore advised to develop a long-term agenda and take action to transform current health and social systems into services that supported people throughout their lives, that were grounded in

community-based integrated care and that built on existing primary health care. The United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) was an opportunity to bring about transformative change and improve the health and well-being of older people. Population ageing was not a challenge but an opportunity, as good health yielded high returns from a human, social and economic perspective.

### **Consideration of key regional issues within the framework of the Madrid Plan of Action, together with emerging issues (agenda item 3)**

#### **Older persons and development (agenda item 3 (a))**

22. The Meeting benefited from a panel discussion on agenda item 3 (a). The panel discussion was moderated by Mr. Rintaro Mori, Regional Adviser for Population Ageing and Sustainable Development, UNFPA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. The panellists were: Ms. Gretchen Donehower, Academic Specialist and Researcher, Center for the Economics and Demography of Aging, Department of Demography, University of California at Berkeley, United States of America; Mr. Maliki, Director, Population Planning and Social Security, Ministry of National Development Planning, Indonesia; Ms. Thuy Ang Ngo, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Hasu, Viet Nam; Mr. Philip O'Keefe, Professor of Practice and Director of the Ageing in Asia Research Hub, Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research, Australia; and Ms. Zheng Zhenzhen, Emeritus Professor, Institute of Population and Labour Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China.

23. The panellists spoke about the achievements, challenges and opportunities associated with implementing actions associated with priority direction I of the Madrid Plan of Action. Older persons in the Asia-Pacific region were growing in number and in proportion to the rest of the population, while also becoming healthier. Moreover, labour remained the largest source of income for older persons in the region, who were working longer and harder than in the past. Significant variations existed by country and location, as well as along gender lines. Older persons in rural areas tended to be less educated and work harder and longer than their urban counterparts, as well as be more commonly engaged in the informal sector, especially in agriculture. As a consequence, they were less likely to be covered by pension schemes or other forms of social security. In that regard, older women were at a considerable disadvantage relative to older men because fewer of them were covered by social protection schemes and because they tended to bear a disproportionate share of the burdens associated with unpaid care.

24. The panellists stressed the importance of realizing the full potential of older persons by developing effective social protection policies and interventions based on detailed analyses such as those resulting from the National Transfer Accounts project, as well as by turning care work into decent work. For the choices of older persons to be taken into account, interventions should be tailored, inclusive and flexible. In addition, a life-cycle approach was needed to more effectively invest in the health and education of young people, especially young women and girls. Following that approach would enhance the well-being of older persons while addressing inequalities and the gender dimension of ageing.

25. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission made statements or submitted written statements: China; and Philippines.

26. In the subsequent discussion, a commitment was made to contribute to providing policy incentives to support older persons by enhancing their education and health. Social protection policies should be amended so that older persons could continue to work beyond the current retirement age and so that older persons in the informal sector could benefit from social protection systems on an equal basis with others.

27. The representative of one State shared information on efforts made in that country to ensure that development outcomes effectively benefited the older population. Information on good practices for protecting the rights and interests of older persons in development processes while assisting them to achieve their own development was also shared.

### **Advancing health and well-being into old age (agenda item 3 (b))**

28. The Meeting benefited from a panel discussion on agenda item 3 (b). The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Mary Ann Tsao, Founding Director and Chairman, Tsao Foundation, Singapore. The panellists were: Dr. Anshu Banerjee, Director, Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing, World Health Organization, Switzerland; Ms. Janice Chia, Managing Director, Ageing Asia, Singapore; Mr. Soonman Kwon, President, Korea Health Industry Development Institute, Republic of Korea; and Ms. Huali Wang, Professor of Geriatric Psychiatry and Executive Director of Dementia Care and Research Centre at Institute of Mental Health, Peking University, China.

29. The panellists spoke about the achievements, challenges and opportunities associated with implementing actions to advance health and well-being into old age. Providing universal health coverage was very important. Concurrently, it was important to promote a continuum of care, from prevention, acute care, post-acute care and rehabilitation to essential long-term care. In addition, equity considerations needed to be at the forefront, with Governments playing a leading role. Contributory health insurance, despite its merits, could not sufficiently protect all segments of society. That had become evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when access to vaccines and other aspects of health care was uneven. Poorer older persons were particularly disadvantaged. In addition, the pandemic had created a global mental health crisis owing to a rise in anxiety, depression and suicide among older persons, to services being disrupted and to treatment gaps widening.

30. The panellists noted the increasingly important role of information and communications technology in health care for older persons. The use of digital health care, including teleconsultations, which had accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, had proved effective in increasing access to health care. Digital health care had the potential of reducing the burden on caregivers and of improving the care provided to older persons. Moreover, population ageing had provided opportunities for economic growth as more older persons with robust levels of disposable income sought targeted, age-related care, engaged in tourism and were active in the housing markets. Although in general older persons were not very technologically savvy, change was under way, with initiatives being launched to enhance digital literacy and promote online access to goods and services. Despite these opportunities, however, older persons in rural and remote areas remained underserved. Furthermore, there was a need to address the concerns of caregivers, especially women caregivers, and to improve the delivery of mental health services. Looking forward, a whole-of-society approach and a more efficient use of resources and a greater collaboration among Governments, civil society and the private sector were needed.

31. A representative of the Philippines made a statement.
32. The representative stressed that the mental health of older persons, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, was a priority concern that could only be addressed in a sustainable manner by regularly examining the physical and mental health of older persons.
33. Representatives of the following non-governmental stakeholders made statements: Council on the Ageing Queensland; Development, Welfare and Research Foundation; and Japan Center for International Exchange.
34. Representatives of civil society noted the benefits of enhancing mutual learning and sharing experiences among countries and called for increased research to design evidence-based policies. The challenges posed by a high prevalence of elder abuse, the non-integration of health-care systems and the limited capacities of public hospital systems were stressed.

### **Ensuring enabling and supportive environments (agenda item 3 (c))**

35. The Meeting benefited from a panel discussion on agenda item 3 (c). The panel discussion was moderated by Ms. Wendy Walker, Chief, Social Development Thematic Group, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department, Asian Development Bank. The panellists were: Mr. Andrew Byrnes, Emeritus Professor, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Mr. James Harrison, Centre for Architectural Education, University College Cork, Ireland; Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Director, International Telecommunication Union Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Thailand; Ms. Thuy Tran, Country Director, HelpAge International in Viet Nam; Ms. Christine Young, Board Member, International Federation on Ageing, and Chair, Local Government Professionals Western Australia, Age-Friendly Communities Network, Australia.
36. The panellists spoke about the achievements, challenges and opportunities associated with implementing actions to ensure enabling and supportive environments. Successes had been achieved in enabling and supporting older persons, including the disadvantaged, through community-based organizations and, for example, by enhancing food and income security, improving health care and community-based care, promoting lifelong learning and intergenerational solidarity, and raising awareness of the rights of older persons. Digital technologies were of vital importance for improving the well-being of older persons. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, efforts to increase Internet access resulted in enhanced provision of health care, learning opportunities and commercial and financial services. Moreover, information was shared on good practices relating to the promotion of universal design principles, age-friendly environments and public transport, the rolling out of cost-effective initiatives to engage older persons with dementia and carers, the establishment of community networks and the exchange of information on age-friendly challenges and ways forward.
37. The panellists drew attention to the need for Governments, community-based organizations and private entities to collaborate more, including with a view to mobilizing resources, for the benefit of older persons. They noted the importance of digital services that specifically addressed the needs of older persons, especially by promoting simple yet secure systems and devices and support mechanisms that allowed older persons to seek help. Given the high prevalence of disabilities among older persons, universal design, which also benefited society at large, needed to be more actively promoted so as to make both homes and public spaces accessible. Awareness about

universal design should be raised among diverse stakeholders, including planners and building professionals. A convention on the rights of older persons could comprehensively and better ensure the human rights of older persons and help drive action at the national and international levels.

38. Representatives of the following members and associate members of the Commission made statements or submitted written statements: Bangladesh; and China.

39. One representative shared information on experiences and good practices on enhancing enabling environments for older persons, including with regard to promoting financial sustainability, improving digital literacy, safeguarding the rights and interests of older persons and introducing laws to address age discrimination and abuse. The other representative reported on improvements made to the provision of health care to older persons, including in the context of mental health and gerontological training; the benefits of adopting a life cycle approach; initiatives to encourage more older persons to seek employment; and measures to create more age-friendly workplaces.

40. Representatives of the following non-governmental stakeholders made statements: Development, Welfare and Research Foundation; and Soroptimist International.

41. Representatives noted that, while access to health care through digital technologies was becoming more common, gaps, in particular along gender lines and concerning older persons in rural and remote areas, remained and digital inclusivity needed to be treated as a priority. Moreover, in many underserved urban areas, challenges remained, including in terms of addressing loneliness among older persons and unhygienic living conditions. These issues warranted greater attention, especially through enhanced resource mobilization.

### **Implementation and follow-up (agenda item 3 (d))**

42. The Meeting benefited from a panel discussion on agenda item 3 (d). The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Srinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP. The panellists were: Ms. Rodora Babaran, Director, Human Development, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Socio-Cultural Community Department, ASEAN Secretariat; Ms. Kirida Bhaopichitr, Director, Thailand Development Research Institute Economic Intelligence Service, Thailand; Mr. Du Peng, Vice-President, Renmin University, China, and Director and Professor, Institute of Gerontology, Renmin University, China; and Mr. Prakash Tyagi, Executive Director, Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti, India.

43. The panellists spoke about the achievements, challenges and opportunities associated with implementing and following up on the Madrid Plan of Action in Asia and the Pacific. The way in which the Madrid Plan of Action was currently being implemented differed significantly from the way in which it was being implemented 20 years earlier, mainly because of trends in rapid population ageing, higher levels of education and literacy, climate change and technological advances. Nevertheless, many countries faced resource constraints and burgeoning health-care costs, especially in the light of increased demand for long-term care, inequalities and gender concerns, including low female participation in the labour force, which meant that women tended to have little social protection. To address these and other concerns, greater political commitment was needed to promote the rights of older persons; to mainstream and harmonize ageing in the context of all

relevant policies, mechanisms and sectoral plans, while increasing multisectoral coherence; to enhance financial and human resource capacity in key sectors affected by ageing, while making the necessary institutional changes; to capitalize on digital services and develop digitally inclusive ageing societies; and to build solid evidence bases by enhancing data collection and analysis in the areas of education, health and employment.

44. The panellists noted the need to promote innovative ideas, life-long learning, skills development and positive views of older persons in ageing societies through South-South cooperation and by sharing information on challenges and good practices. Moreover, efforts should be made to ensure social, cultural and linguistic diversity and to give due consideration to gender and disability concerns when implementing relevant programmes and disseminating information. Whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches were required to achieve socioeconomic development.

45. Representatives of the following non-governmental stakeholders made statements: Development, Welfare and Research Foundation; and Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti.

46. Representatives stressed the need to enhance implementation through multisectoral partnerships and greater engagement with civil society organizations, including older persons' associations, as well as by using robust research and documentation, along with representative qualitative and quantitative data garnered from surveys. In addition, successful experiences in the implementation process should be scaled up through targeted investments, knowledge development and training at all levels of society and administration.

#### **Adoption of the report of the Meeting and the outcome document (agenda item 4)**

47. On 1 July 2022, the report on the Meeting and the outcome document, entitled "Accelerating Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, to Build a Sustainable Society for All Ages in Asia and the Pacific", were adopted.

48. The Chair opened the floor for additional comments. The representative of the Tsao Foundation made a statement commending member States for adopting a forward-looking outcome document in which the voices of older persons were taken into consideration. The Tsao Foundation could serve as a catalyst for the establishment of an alliance of older persons' associations and other civil society organizations working on population ageing.

49. Dr. Srinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP, delivered closing remarks on behalf of the Executive Secretary. The Chair closed the Meeting.