

REPORT OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC
INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING
ON THE SECOND REVIEW AND
APPRAISAL OF THE MADRID
INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON

AGEING

10-12 SEPTEMBER 2012, BANGKOK



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United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok, November 2012

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UNITED NATIONS
ESCAP

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



“As we embark on shaping the post-2015 United Nations development agenda, we must envision a new paradigm that aligns demographic ageing with economic and social growth and protects the human rights of older persons. We are all — individually and collectively — responsible for the inclusion of older persons in society, whether through developing accessible transportation and communities, ensuring the availability of age-appropriate health care and social services, or providing an adequate social protection floor.”

BAN KI-MOON
SECRETARY-GENERAL
UNITED NATIONS



“With foresight and adoption of the right economic and social policies, the Asia-Pacific region can successfully prepare for the ageing of societies. National development agendas can be redefined in new and creative ways by encouraging active and productive ageing as set out in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.”

NOELEEN HEYZER
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ESCAP

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC IS EXPERIENCING UNPRECEDENTED POPULATION AGEING



By 2050

- The number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific will almost triple
- One in four persons in Asia and the Pacific will be 60 or older

OLDER WOMEN OUTNUMBER OLDER MEN



- Women comprise 60 per cent of the population aged 60 or older
- Gender discrimination against women is carried into old age

AGEING WILL HAVE PROFOUND SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS



- Shrinking traditional workforce will affect future economic growth
- Older persons are at greater risk of poverty and marginalization

ENSURING HEALTHY AGEING MUST BE A PRIORITY



- Family size and structure are changing and result in less support
- Care services are inadequate to even today's needs
- Social security systems and infrastructure need to adapt

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC CAN EFFECTIVELY PREPARE FOR AGEING SOCIETIES



- The challenge of ageing in Asia and the Pacific can be met with the adoption of the right mix of socioeconomic policies
- Social protection must take a life course approach

OLDER PERSONS HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN DIGNITY



- Older persons have the right to participate fully in all aspects of society
- Creating enabling environments is essential to promote active and positive ageing

Explanatory note on ESCAP

ESCAP is the regional development arm of the United Nations and serves as the main economic and social development centre for the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific. Its mandate is to foster cooperation among its 53 members and 9 associate members. ESCAP provides the strategic regional link between global and country-level programmes and issues. It supports Governments of the ESCAP region in consolidating regional positions and advocates regional approaches to meeting unique Asian and Pacific socioeconomic challenges in a globalizing world. The ESCAP secretariat is located in Bangkok. For more information, please visit our website at <www.unescap.org>.

Members and associate member of the Commission that attended the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 10–12 September 2012, Bangkok

Members

Armenia	Maldives
Australia	Mongolia
Azerbaijan	Myanmar
Bangladesh	Nepal
Brunei Darussalam	Pakistan
Cambodia	Philippines
China	Republic of Korea
Democratic People’s Republic of Korea	Russian Federation
Fiji	Samoa
Georgia	Thailand
India	Turkey
Indonesia	Tuvalu
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Uzbekistan
Japan	Viet Nam
Kazakhstan	

Associate member

Macao, China

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Governments of countries and areas in the ESCAP region gathered in Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 12 September 2012 for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Meeting was organized by ESCAP and brought together senior officials from 30 countries and areas from Asia and the Pacific. They were joined by representatives of civil society organizations including organizations of and for older persons, and representatives from the United Nations system.

A decade after the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Meeting served as a key regional platform for reviewing the achievements in its implementation and the remaining challenges.

The objectives of the Meeting were:

- (a) To review the progress made in the Asia-Pacific region in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action;
- (b) To consider key priorities under each priority direction in the Madrid Plan of Action for the next implementation cycle from 2013 to 2017 in the Asia-Pacific region;
- (c) To identify key areas for regional cooperation to further strengthen the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

The Governments at the Intergovernmental Meeting adopted the Bangkok Statement on the Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Bangkok Statement calls for preparing for and adapting to ageing in the Asia-Pacific region. Key recommendations include, among others, strengthening social protection systems, and adapting health systems in response to the needs of older persons through an integrated continuum of care. The Meeting also highlighted positive contributions made by older persons to their families, communities and society.

The Bangkok Statement serves as the Asia-Pacific input to the global review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to be conducted in early 2013 under the auspices of the Commission for Social Development.

Bangkok statement on the Asia-Pacific review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

We, the representatives of the members and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), assembled at the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, held in Bangkok from 10 to 12 September 2012,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 57/167 of 18 December 2002 on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, in which the Assembly endorsed the Political Declaration¹ and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002,²

Also recalling General Assembly resolution 65/182 of 21 December 2010 on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, in which the Assembly encouraged all Member States to further implement the Madrid Plan of Action as an integral part of their national development plans and poverty eradication strategies, and recommended that Member States expand the role of the regional commissions on ageing issues,

Recognizing the unprecedented pace of the demographic transition towards an ageing society in the Asia-Pacific region and the resultant far-reaching social, economic and political implications of ageing,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/14 of 22 July 2010 on the future implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in which the Council decided to conduct the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action in 2013 at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development, and acknowledged the essential contributions of the

1 *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. 1, resolution 1, annex I.

2 *Ibid.*, annex II.

United Nations regional commissions to the implementation, review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action,

Also recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2011/28 of 28 July 2011 on the modalities for the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in which the Council encouraged the regional commissions to continue to facilitate the review and appraisal exercise at the regional level, and encouraged Member States and United Nations organizations, where appropriate, to provide support to regional commissions in facilitating the review and appraisal process and organizing regional conferences to review national review and appraisal results in 2012,

Further recalling Commission resolution 67/5 of 25 May 2011 on the full and effective implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the Asia-Pacific region, in which the Commission decided to convene the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2012 to provide a regional input to the global review,

Noting that one in four persons in the Asia-Pacific region will be over 60 years of age by 2050,

Also noting the higher proportion of women among older persons,

Noting with great concern the vulnerability of older persons, in particular older women, to poverty, social isolation and violence,

Welcoming the progress achieved by members and associate members in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action since 2002, including the establishment of bodies to lead and coordinate national efforts towards the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action,

Also welcoming the holding of the Preparatory Meeting for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Beijing in November 2011,

Further welcoming the secretariat's overview of regional implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific,³ which reviews

3 E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/1.

progress and identifies gaps in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action,

Recalling that in “The future we want”, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, the Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives made a commitment to promote a safe and healthy living environment for all, particularly children, youth, women and the elderly and disabled,⁴

Recognizing that there are many challenges to be addressed regarding ageing, including income insecurity, inadequate social protection, limited capacity of health systems to address the range of chronic conditions facing older persons, the human resource gaps in meeting the needs for elderly care services, in particular, long-term care, and the provision of an age-friendly environment to encourage the active participation of older persons for the betterment of society as a whole,

Acknowledging that the rapid demographic transition in Asia and the Pacific presents significant challenges for the region and that Governments must play a catalysing role in preparing for and responding to an ageing future,

Also acknowledging that the Madrid Plan of Action provides a comprehensive and overarching framework for the preparation for and response to ageing, and the need for accelerated action in the Asia-Pacific region,

Welcoming with appreciation the role of civil society in supporting older persons and Governments on issues related to ageing,

- 1

Recommend that members and associate members:
- a

Accord priority to addressing the rights of older persons in legal and policy frameworks;
- b

Ensure coordinated multisectoral responses and the mainstreaming of ageing issues into national policies and programmes;
- c

Increase national awareness, capacity and resources to prepare for and respond to the demographic transition;

4 See General Assembly resolution 66/288.

- d Develop inclusive social protection systems, with particular attention given to older persons and their vulnerability to poverty and social isolation;
- e Accord priority to mainstreaming the gender dimension into national responses;

A

Older persons and development

- f Implement specific national policies and programmes on ageing;
- g Conduct regular reviews of national policies to ensure that ageing issues are mainstreamed into national development plans;
- h Establish or strengthen national coordination bodies or mechanisms on ageing, as appropriate, to promote and protect the rights of older persons and to coordinate resource allocation for ageing;
- i Encourage and promote the removal of barriers to the participation of older persons in the labour market through legislation, age-friendly and flexible employment policies, training and skills development, and financial support for entrepreneurship;
- j Establish comprehensive social protection systems for workers in the formal as well as informal sector, including the provision of universal old-age income security through pensions;
- k Address the special needs of older persons in rural and remote communities, older persons living in poverty, older women, and the “oldest old” (aged 80 and above), to ensure an adequate standard of living for all older persons;
- l Support the formation of older persons’ associations to provide an effective community mechanism for strengthening the voices of older persons;
- m Enhance representation of older persons in policy formulation and implementation;



B

Advancing health and well-being into old age

- n Adapt health and social systems in response to the needs of older persons through an integrated continuum of care, including preventive care, acute care, chronic disease management, long-term care and end-of-life care;
- o Develop policies and models for promoting healthy ageing to support healthy lifestyles, active ageing and the right to health care;
- p Develop strategies to meet the rising demand for elderly care, emphasizing especially home and community-based care and to improve the coverage and quality of care in formal and informal settings;
- q Allocate adequate resources for the training of caregivers, including informal caregivers and service providers, to address the human resource gaps in meeting the needs of elderly care;
- r Include geriatrics and gerontology in the training curriculum of professionals in the health- and social-care service sectors;
- s Strengthen the primary health-care system to address the health needs of the elderly population and social support systems for long-term care, including through formal and informal capacity-building mechanisms to develop and assist health professionals and social care givers;
- t Encourage community-based and non-profit organizations as well as the private sector to play a major role in the provision of elderly care services and training, in cooperation with government agencies;

Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

- U Create and promote enabling environments to support the active participation of older persons in community and society, including through increased investment in the universal design of housing, public buildings, public spaces and local infrastructure;
- V Develop public and private partnerships on research and development of more effective products, services, medicines and technology for older persons, including assistive and adaptive technologies to enable older persons to function fully in society, and have access to information and communication;
- W Pay greater attention to the heightened vulnerability and specific needs of older persons in natural disasters and emergencies;
- X Conduct research on the causes, nature and extent of all forms of elder abuse and violence, and act upon the findings of such research;
- Y Enact laws and regulations to strengthen the protection of the rights of older persons with a view to eliminating all forms of discrimination, abuse and violence against older persons, including ageism in employment, health care and other settings;
- Z Promote a positive image of ageing and of older persons through active engagement of the mass media and the voices of older persons, including recognition of the positive contributions made by older persons to their families, communities and society;

2 **Recommend that more domestic and international resources be mobilized and, in order to complement national development efforts, international cooperation be enhanced to support developing countries in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action;**

3 **Invite United Nations funds and programmes to ensure that questions of ageing and older persons are integrated in their programmes and projects, including at the country level;**

4 **Request the Executive Secretary of ESCAP:**

- a To strengthen the role of the Commission in supporting members and associate members in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action;
- b To increase the regional knowledge base on ageing to support members and associate members in their efforts to develop evidence-informed national policies on ageing;
- c To continue to facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices on ageing;
- d To raise public awareness on ageing in partnership with civil society organizations and the media;
- e To support members and associate members, upon request, in formulating forward-looking policies to prepare for and adjust to the social and economic implications of ageing, as well as mainstreaming ageing into national development frameworks, plans and programmes;
- f To assist members and associate members in building capacity to provide comprehensive social protection systems that support populations throughout their life course, including specific forms of support for older persons;
- g To submit the outcome of the Meeting to the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-first session as the Asia-Pacific input to the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, in 2013;
- h To submit the report of the Meeting to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session for consideration and endorsement.

A

Review of the progress in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific

- 1 The Meeting had before it the document entitled “Overview of regional implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/1).
- 2 The following delegations made statements during the discussion under agenda item 4: Armenia; Australia; Bangladesh; China; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Japan; Kazakhstan; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Thailand; and Viet Nam.
- 3 The Meeting recalled the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council calling, inter alia, for the full and effective implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the holding of regional review and appraisal conferences in 2012, and the conduct of the second global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action at the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development in 2013. Within that framework, the Meeting also recalled ESCAP resolution 67/5 of 25 May 2011, in which the Commission had decided to convene the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in early 2012 to provide a regional input to the global review.
- 4 The Meeting underscored the importance of both the global and regional processes for the review of the Madrid Plan of Action, particularly for the Asia-Pacific region, which was experiencing an unprecedented demographic transition. It noted that the number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific would triple, from close to half a billion to an estimated 1.3 billion by 2050. The Meeting was informed

that, overall, one in four persons in the region would be 60 years or older by 2050, while in East and North-East Asia, one in three persons would be above 60 years of age by 2050. It noted that the ongoing regional review offered a timely and important opportunity to address the key challenges of rapid population ageing, including the need to put in place a balanced set of economic and social policy responses.

- 5 The secretariat presented the key findings of a regional survey that had been conducted on the regional implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action based on responses provided by 30 members and associate members. The results showed that much progress had been achieved in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, including in the following areas: developing national plans on ageing; establishing national coordination mechanisms and focal points on ageing; strengthening social protection systems; engaging the active participation of older persons in policy formulation and review; adopting policies and plans to ensure accessible, affordable and available health-care services; providing geriatric and gerontology training; enhancing the mobility of older persons through affordable and accessible transportation options; and developing community and residential services for older persons.
- 6 At the same time, the survey identified the following remaining challenges: allocating dedicated resources to support the implementation of national plans and policies on ageing; addressing the gender dimensions of ageing; promoting employment opportunities for older persons; expanding social protection coverage for older persons; increasing investment in health-care provision; enacting and enforcing specific legislation to protect the rights of older persons; and introducing measures to address violence and abuse directed at older persons.
- 7 Several Governments reported on the results of their national reviews and appraisals of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. There was a general consensus that the Madrid Plan of Action provided effective and comprehensive guidance in identifying and addressing the challenges of ageing. The delegations of Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji and Thailand reported that their national policies and strategies on ageing were aligned with the principles of the Madrid Plan of Action.



- 8 Most Governments reported that national coordinating mechanisms were in place to ensure multisectoral responses to population ageing. It was noted that, in some countries, the Head of Government served as Chair of interministerial committees, reflecting political commitment at the highest level.
- 9 Several delegations reported on the efforts of their Governments to assess the impact of national policies and plans for older persons. The delegations of Armenia, China and Myanmar indicated that their countries had undertaken more targeted data collection and research to better inform the implementation and evaluation of policy measures.
- 10 The Meeting noted the importance of legal and policy frameworks to protect the rights and interests of older persons. The delegations of Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam reported on the establishment of legislative frameworks and provisions covering areas such as employment and social protection of older persons.
- 11 The delegations of Australia, Bangladesh, India, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand reported on the provision of financing and fiscal schemes to support programmes for older persons, including microcredit, national savings funds, community-based funds, special subsidies and various tax-based schemes. The Meeting noted that, despite such positive developments, there was a continued need for greater budgetary and financial support of programmes for older persons.
- 12 The Meeting recognized the importance of decent employment for older persons, as part of active and productive ageing. It was noted that the main obstacles impeding older persons from gaining and retaining employment were discrimination, mobility and accessibility. In that

regard, several delegations indicated that they had undertaken efforts to promote employment for older persons, including taking steps to removing barriers to employment, expanding work opportunities, career counselling and re-employment programmes.

- 13 The delegations of Armenia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Viet Nam reported on progress with regard to strengthening social protection systems, such as income support, social pension and food security schemes.
- 14 The Meeting emphasized the importance of promoting health and well-being into old age. It noted the success of some countries, including Maldives, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, in providing universal health-care coverage. The delegations of Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam indicated that their Governments had established geriatric services and gerontology training for health-care providers. Several Governments recognized that effective long-term health care for older persons required a holistic framework, including addressing the preventive and psycho-social dimensions of health care. The delegations of Armenia, Bangladesh, India, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand informed the Meeting that their Governments supported community-based care for older persons.
- 15 The delegations of Indonesia, India and Maldives noted concern about changing family structures and decreased capacity for family support and called for the consideration of measures to support the role of families and communities.
- 16 The Meeting recognized the importance of addressing gender inequality and the specific needs of older women, as well as their vulnerability to poverty and social isolation, lack of employment opportunities and access to social protection.
- 17 The importance of ensuring enabling and supportive environments was stressed by the Meeting. The delegations of Australia, Indonesia, Japan and Mongolia stressed the need to create a more supportive enabling environment, including by enhancing the mobility of older persons, adopting universal design and establishing a barrier-free environment. The delegations of Bangladesh, China, Japan, Mongolia, Thailand and

Viet Nam indicated that their Governments had established affordable housing for older persons and incentives to encourage age-friendly housing.

18 The Meeting emphasized the need to enhance medical and social care, particularly at the community level in order to support ageing in place. In some cases, those efforts had been supplemented by a system of volunteer caregivers and promoting age care networks and associations of older persons.

19 Given the wealth of experience in the region in addressing population ageing, the Meeting highlighted the value of regional cooperation, particularly in the exchange of experience and good practices on national policy and programme responses. It called upon the secretariat to continue to support Governments in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

20 The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs congratulated ESCAP members and associate members for the success of the ongoing regional review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action. She emphasized the greater focus on the rights-based approach to older persons by States Members of the United Nations, which had led to the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing established by the General Assembly in 2010.⁵ The representative drew attention to the gender dimensions of ageing, abuse of older persons and the challenge of establishing sustainable social protection and age-appropriate health and social care for older persons. She commended the secretariat for the ongoing support provided to member States on the issue of ageing.

21 The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that it would continue to support member States in promoting healthy and active ageing. He emphasized the importance of age-friendly primary health care to address non-communicable or chronic conditions through a continuum of care. He highlighted the gender dimension of ageing, including the disadvantage of older women due to, among other things, lower levels of education and participation in the labour force. He also noted the multidimensional nature of population ageing,

and expressed the readiness of WHO to cooperate further with ESCAP in addressing the impact of rapid demographic transitions on health systems.

22 The representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) underscored the need for more accountable budgets and capacity development in government, academic and voluntary organizations to strengthen the formulation, implementation and monitoring of gender-sensitive policies and interventions to address the challenge of population ageing. He stressed that the concerns of older persons should be included in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. He indicated that the outcome of the Meeting would provide a useful input for the regional review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development⁶ at the sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, which would be organized by ESCAP in cooperation with UNFPA and held in 2013. He further emphasized the commitment of UNFPA to continue to assist countries in addressing the significant challenges posed by ageing societies.

23 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provided a video message highlighting the importance of further promoting and protecting the rights of older persons through various national and international instruments, including a proposed convention on the rights of older persons.

24 The representative of HelpAge International noted that the current and past reviews of the Madrid Plan of Action had contributed to clarifying the key issues related to ageing. He stressed the importance of income security for older persons, pointing out that, while 12 countries in Asia and the Pacific had adopted or expanded non-contributory pension schemes, there remained a lack of comprehensive pension coverage in the region. The representative further stressed the importance of prevention with regard to non-communicable diseases and self-care programmes to equip older persons, their families and communities with the knowledge to lead healthy lives.

5 See General Assembly resolution 65/182 of 21 December 2010, para. 28.

6 *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.



- 25 The representative of the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) stressed the importance of old age pensions and other forms of financial protection as key to lifting older persons above the poverty threshold. He commended China and India for their commitment to poverty alleviation by extending pension coverage to those living in rural areas. He reiterated the crucial need for adequate funding to support programmes for older persons as well as ensuring their access to health care. He noted the need to address the abuse and neglect of older persons, including through legislative means. He stated that Governments in the region should remain engaged in the continued work of the Openended Working Group on Ageing on the rights of older persons.
- 26 The Meeting noted with appreciation the generous financial support of the Government of China and the Government of Macao, China, to the secretariat's ageing programme. It expressed thanks to the secretariat for its effective implementation of the ageing programme and for the quality and timeliness of the documentation prepared for the Meeting.

B

Consideration of key regional issues within the framework of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

- a Older persons and development
- b Advancing health and well-being into old age
- c Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

- 27 The Meeting had before it the document entitled “Report on the regional preparatory process for the review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific” (E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/2).
- 28 An interactive round table on the “Consideration of key regional issues within the framework of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing” was organized by ESCAP and was moderated by Mr. Larry Jagan. The following speakers addressed the round table:

Mr. Xiao Caiwei, Vice-President, China National Committee on Ageing

Ms. Mohini Giri, Chairperson, Guild for Service

Mr. Gavin Jones, Director, J.Y. Pillay Comparative Asia Research Centre
- 29 The following delegations made statements and shared experiences on key regional policies and programmes on ageing during the discussion under agenda item 5: Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Japan; Maldives; Mongolia; Nepal; and Uzbekistan.
- 30 Mr. Jones noted that the proportion of elderly would increase threefold by 2050. While, by 2050, countries such as the Republic of Korea and Japan would have the most advanced transition to demographic ageing, countries at earlier stages of population ageing, such as India and the Philippines, would undergo more rapid processes of demographic transition. In identifying the main causes of ageing as declining fertility and extended longevity, Mr. Jones stressed that declining fertility played a more dominant role in ageing for countries in the early stages of demographic transition. While noting interregional differences, Mr. Jones pointed out that there was a high ratio of older women to older men, in particular among the oldest populations. A greater proportion of older women over the age of 65 tended to be widowed or divorced than men. Mr. Jones concluded by outlining a scenario of older populations and the Asia-Pacific household in 2050. He indicated that older persons would have higher levels of education and income and enjoy better health. He also stated that there would be a greater proportion of older persons who live alone without siblings or life partners.

31 Ms. Giri called for stronger human considerations when addressing issues concerning older persons. She highlighted the erosion of the role of the family in caring for older persons and the importance of embracing older persons through attitudinal change to develop policies and programmes that could respond to the needs of older persons. She noted the importance of international human rights instruments and mechanisms to address the specific needs of older persons. Ms. Giri drew on the South Asian experience to highlight issues of gender and the rights of older persons, noting the discrimination that older women faced, and in particular widowed older women. She also highlighted the importance of Government partnership with civil society to ensure effective implementation of policies and programmes, such as health-care provision, particularly for older women.

32 Mr. Xiao illustrated the significant demographic shift to an ageing society that China was undergoing, highlighting the transformation in family structure over the past five decades. He pointed to the rapid decline in China's total fertility rate, which was now below replacement level, as well as increases in life expectancy, which had doubled since the 1940s. In response to those transformations, China had adopted several key measures through the revision and adoption of legislation, and had conducted research and implementation of national action plans. He noted that the National Law on Protecting the Rights of Older Persons (1996) was being reviewed and expected to be amended by the end of 2012. A three-year research on National Strategies of Responding to the Ageing of Population (2009–2012) would serve as an evidence base to develop a long-term strategy on ageing. Mr. Xiao concluded by sharing key areas of the National 12th Development Plan on Ageing (2011–2015), which included social security, health care, the built environment and the promotion of older persons' associations.

33 The Meeting noted the rich diversity of practices and experiences to implement policies and programmes to prepare for an ageing society and promote the well-being and rights of older persons, in alignment with the Madrid Plan of Action, in the Asian and Pacific region.

34 The Meeting acknowledged the vital role of social protection and old age pensions to ensure income security and well-being in old age. The Meeting was informed of both universal and targeted schemes for social protection in old age. The delegation of Nepal highlighted its Government's universal pension scheme, which had successfully

ensured a minimum income for older persons, providing older persons with a greater degree of empowerment, well-being and enhanced livelihoods, particularly in rural areas. Despite these successes, challenges remained, in particular in ensuring physical accessibility and eligibility of older persons to the pension. The delegation of Brunei Darussalam noted its Government's non-contributory pension scheme, which covered all citizens and was complemented by a financial monthly assistance allowance on a needs basis. The delegation of Uzbekistan highlighted its Government's policies and programmes on social protection, including access to housing, food security and medical care. With regard to targeted social protection schemes, the delegation of India emphasized the need for social protection programmes to target older persons living under the national poverty line, especially paying attention to older women living in rural areas.

35 Attention was drawn to the issue of the affordability of social protection. It was noted that, with political commitment, funds could be mobilized to ensure universal coverage. The Meeting was informed of the achievement of the Government of China in providing universal social pensions for all citizens above the age of 60.

36 The Meeting was informed of several effective measures to ensure the access of older persons to health care. The delegation of Indonesia noted its country's community health and security schemes which also covered older persons, as well as age-friendly health centres. The Government of Indonesia was making efforts to increase the coverage of these programmes and resources. The Meeting was informed that the Government of China had extended its health-care programme to rural areas. The delegation of Brunei Darussalam noted that the well-being of older persons was ensured by free health care for all its citizens.

37 The Meeting was informed that emphasis had been accorded to the implementation of evidence-based policies to ensure the well-being of older persons. The delegation of Fiji noted that research on the situation of older persons in Fiji was under way and would provide a basis for the development of an action plan to address the specific issues of older persons in Fiji.

38 In noting the similarities of challenges related to ageing experienced by many ESCAP member States, some delegations underscored the need



for regional cooperation through the exchange of national experience and good practices. In particular, the ESCAP secretariat and relevant international organizations were called upon to: (a) assess the socio-economic impact of ageing; (b) promote multisectoral coordination of policies and programmes concerning older persons; (c) support the enhancement of social services for older persons; (d) strengthen the capacity of human resources for caring for older persons; (e) promote continuing education and training for older persons.

39 The Meeting was informed of the need to highlight the positive contribution of older persons to socio-economic development. The delegation of Indonesia pointed out that the direction of policies should be based on the general premises of the empowerment of older persons and the harnessing of their potential to contribute to socio-economic development. The delegation of India noted the need to gain from the experience, knowledge and wisdom of older persons.

40 Several delegations noted the importance of partnerships between Government and civil society in order to ensure the effective design and implementation of policies for older persons. The delegation of

Fiji highlighted its country's experience in developing the Fiji National Policy on Ageing, 2011-2015, which was the first national policy on ageing in the Pacific, through wide consultations and collaborative discussions and awareness-raising with relevant stakeholders, including older persons. The delegation also noted that the National Policy reflected key elements of the Madrid Plan of Action. The implementation of the National Policy on Ageing would require a multisectoral approach and rely on the support of both government and civil society stakeholders. The delegation of India also shared its country's experiences in implementing schemes in collaboration with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, such as the operation of day-care centres for the elderly. Decentralization was also highlighted as a way to ensure the provision of elderly care and support at the local community level in India.

41 The Meeting was informed of the need to adapt policies to changing demographic structures, especially in view of increasing life expectancies. The delegation of Japan shared its country's experience in preparing for a society with a life expectancy of 90 years. In response to that demographic shift, Japan would be reviewing the General Principles Concerning Measures for the Ageing Society, which had been approved by the Cabinet in 2001, to address: (a) the need to change policies and programmes to promote participation, employment and a living environment for older persons and prepare for an ageing society, which had been based on a 65 year life expectancy; and (b) enhancing the pride and dignity of older persons to enable them to be productive members of society. The revisions would consider six components, namely changing perceptions about older persons, establishing a society security system in old age, leveraging the power of older persons, strengthening regional authority and local communities, creating a secure living environment for older persons, and preparing for a life expectancy of 90 years from a young age.

42 The Meeting noted the important and complementary roles that both family and Government would be required to play in order to respond to the needs of older persons. Changes in family structures, rural-urban migration and an increase of women in the workforce had created a vacuum in the provision of care for older persons, which would require government attention. At the same time, it was noted that the family played a crucial role in providing care and that Governments should provide support to families. In noting the valued role of the family

throughout the Asian and Pacific region, the Meeting was informed of a range of measures that Governments had put in place to encourage filial responsibility for older parents. Some countries had constitutions stipulating that children should respect and support older persons, and with specific legislation to ensure that children took care of their older parents.

43 The delegation of Cambodia stressed the importance of intergenerational solidarity and informed the Meeting of initiatives being taken to encourage family members to provide support for older persons.

44 The Meeting noted that, in addition to economic and social support, older persons needed emotional and spiritual support from children. It was highlighted that developments in information and communications technology had given younger persons added flexibility in maintaining contact with their families and providing them with financial and emotional support even when they did not live in close proximity.

45 The Meeting noted the importance of traditional values and principles to guide intergenerational relationships. The role of the family in that regard was stressed. The Meeting also noted the need to develop curriculum in schools to ensure awareness among youth on the issue of ageing and respect for older persons. The delegation of Brunei Darussalam informed the Meeting that its country's national curriculum included the Malay Islamic Monarchy Principle from primary school, emphasizing the importance of caring for and respecting older family members.

46 The Meeting noted the need to safeguard older persons against neglect, abuse and violence, in particular, how to address and prevent violence against older persons in the family. It was stressed that various measures could be put in place, such as legislation to protect older persons and the sensitization of police to the issue of violence against older persons. It was noted that greater income security also played a role in protecting older persons from abuse and neglect.

47 Representatives of civil society noted that income security in old age was essential to preserve the dignity of older persons, citing the examples of China and Nepal in introducing universal social protection schemes. It was stressed that such schemes could be made affordable



The Opening Ceremony of the Meeting symbolized the nurturing of a tree representing protection, knowledge and longevity towards achieving a society for all ages. From left to right: Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP; H.E. Mr. Santi Promphat, Minister of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand; Ms. Mohini Giri, Chairperson of Guild for Service.

and could facilitate social cohesion. Partnership between civil society and the government to promote intergenerational dialogue was highlighted.

48 In concluding the round table, the Chair expressed appreciation to all speakers and participating Governments for their valuable contributions and insights, which had ensured a stimulating discussion on critical issues and priorities to be taken into consideration in implementing the Madrid Plan of Action in Asia and the Pacific. The Chair also expressed appreciation to the moderator for his able facilitation of the discussions.

C Consideration of the draft outcome document

- 49 The Meeting had before it the draft Bangkok statement on the Asia-Pacific review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/WP.1).
- 50 The Meeting reviewed, amended and endorsed the Bangkok Statement on the Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing as the Asia-Pacific input for the global review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, to be held in 2013.

D Adoption of the report of the Meeting, including the outcome document

- 51 The Meeting adopted the present report on 12 September 2012 for submission to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session for endorsement.



Organization



Opening, duration and organization of the Meeting

- 52 The Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was convened in Bangkok from 10 to 12 September 2012.
- 53 The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Santi Promphat, Minister of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand.
- 54 In his statement, the Minister of Social Development and Human Security commended ESCAP for convening the Meeting and for focusing on a subject of increasing concern and urgency for Asian and Pacific societies. He stated that approximately 8.3 million persons, or 13 per cent of the Thai population, were 60 years old or older, and that the number of Thai older persons was projected to increase to nearly 18 million by 2030. That shift in the age structure of Thailand would result in a ratio of one older person to every four Thais in the general population; moreover, another significant characteristic of ageing in Thailand was the higher proportion of elderly women, resulting in the feminization of ageing. He referred to Thailand's evidence-informed and proactive measures to prepare for its ageing future, including the 2003 Act on Older Persons, which had established the National Committee on the Elderly to serve as the national mechanism to formulate policies on ageing and demonstrated the commitment of the Government to the protection of the elderly by enshrining the economic, social and health rights of older persons. Thailand's second National Plan for Older Persons (2002–2021) served as the comprehensive strategic plan for action and identified five priority directions for future ageing policies. These were: (a) universal provision of income security after retirement; (b) long-term urban and rural elderly care and support systems; (c) productive ageing; (d) decentralization of services to communities; and (e) universal design of public and private facilities. In conclusion,

the Minister underscored the need for enhanced regional cooperation to address the ageing future of Asia and the Pacific and ensure that the region could influence and shape the outcome of the global review process of the Madrid Plan of Action.

55 In his opening statement, the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP highlighted the significance of the Meeting, which provided a regional platform for member States to review and appraise the results of their national implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action as an input for the global review, which would take place in 2013. The Meeting also provided governments in the region and stakeholders with a collective opportunity to shape the region's response to population ageing. He noted that the Asia-Pacific region was at the forefront of the global phenomenon of population ageing, with the number of older persons rising at a pace unprecedented and a scale unmatched by any other region in the world. He added that the region was home to just over half of the world's elderly population, and, in a further 40 years, almost two thirds of the world's older persons would be living in the region. He highlighted the fact that, as the traditional working-age populations were shrinking, social security systems, infrastructure and health-care systems would experience considerable demand. He emphasized the need to foster a greater understanding of the issues facing older persons, as well as the opportunities for regional collaboration and action during the next implementation cycle of the Madrid Plan of Action. In particular, he pointed to the "demographic dividend" for which the region was poised and highlighted the need to broaden employment opportunities, including for older persons. He stressed the significance of countries in Asia and the Pacific working together to build an inclusive and caring society to empower, protect and benefit from the contribution of older persons.

56 In her keynote statement, Ms. Mohini Giri, Chairperson of Guild for Service, emphasized the need for countries to examine their existing policies and principles to ensure equity and inclusion of older persons in social and economic development. She stated that the embedded cultural belief that a person was old when he or she reached 60 needed to be replaced by the notion of productive ageing and engagement. She also stated that there was a need to shift perceptions regarding ageing and to start looking upon older persons as agents of change and also economic and political actors to be valued and respected. She emphasized that the voices of older women also needed to be included

in all decision-making. She added that, in India, efforts were being directed towards improving the lives of older persons by promoting the mainstreaming of senior citizens, especially older women, and bringing their concerns into the national development debate. Senior citizens also needed to be considered as valuable resources for countries, but that required creating environments which provided them with equal opportunities, protected their rights and enabled their full participation in society. That necessitated a change in mindset towards older persons and ageing, and enabling senior citizens' voices to be heard and for actions to follow. Such needs were greatest when it came to the experiences of older women. Ms. Giri stressed that the impact of advances in health care and longevity had not been foreseen when the first international human rights instruments had been drafted, and that, with almost no explicit references to older persons in international law, the urgent needs of that growing demographic group were not being addressed. She concluded by stating that the time had come to act collectively to meet the needs and rights of older persons. She stated that the Meeting marked a new beginning for older persons in partnership with all persons in Asia and the Pacific.

B Attendance

57 The Meeting was attended by representatives of the following members of ESCAP: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Thailand; Turkey; Tuvalu; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam. The Meeting was also attended by representatives of the following associate member of ESCAP: Macao, China.

58 In addition, representatives of the following United Nations bodies, and specialized agencies and related organizations attended: Department of Economic and Social Affairs; UNDP; UNFPA; and WHO.

- 59

The following non-governmental organizations were represented: HelpAge International; and International Federation on Ageing.
- 60

In addition, the following entities participated as observers: Lingnan University; Senior Citizens Council of Thailand; Tsao Foundation; and Zhongshan Vocational College.

C

Election of officers

- 61

The Meeting elected the following officers:
- Chair:

Mr. Xiao Caiwei (China)
- Vice-Chairs:

Mr. Mohamed Zahid (Maldives)

Ms. Jemma Baghdasaryan (Armenia)
- Rapporteur:

Mr. Russell de Burgh (Australia)

D

Agenda

- 62

The Meeting adopted the following agenda:
- 1

Opening of the Meeting.
- 2

Election of officers.
- 3

Adoption of the agenda.

- 4

Review of the progress in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific.
- 5

Consideration of key regional issues within the framework of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
- a

Older persons and development;
- b

Advancing health and well-being into old age;
- c

Ensuring enabling and supportive environments.
- 6

Consideration of the draft outcome document.
- 7

Adoption of the report of the Meeting, including the outcome document.
- 8

Closing of the Meeting.

E

Side events

- 63

The following side events were held:
- a

10 September 2012:

The side event on the “Voices of Older Persons” was co-organized by ESCAP and HelpAge and moderated by Mr. Eduardo Klien. The following persons served as panellists: Ms. Salvacion Basiano; Dr. Khin Pyone Kyi; Mr. Pongsiri Prathnadi; and Mr. Bala Tampoe. The side event provided an opportunity for those present to share their views on key issues facing older persons in Asia and the Pacific as well as on how the ideas and contributions of older persons could shape their lives and the future of their communities. The discussions highlighted the importance and value of engaging older persons in policy and planning processes.

b

11 September 2012:

The side event on the “Rights of Older Persons: The Way Forward” was organized by ESCAP and moderated by Ms. Aela Callan. The following persons served as panellists: Mr. Atif Sheikh; Ms. Rosemary Lane; and Mr. Hasmy Agam. Various perspectives regarding a possible United Nations convention on the rights of older persons were discussed. The discussions provided an opportunity to consider the impact such a convention could have, share experiences on the implementation of other human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁷ and discuss potential challenges in realizing the rights of older persons.

7

General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.



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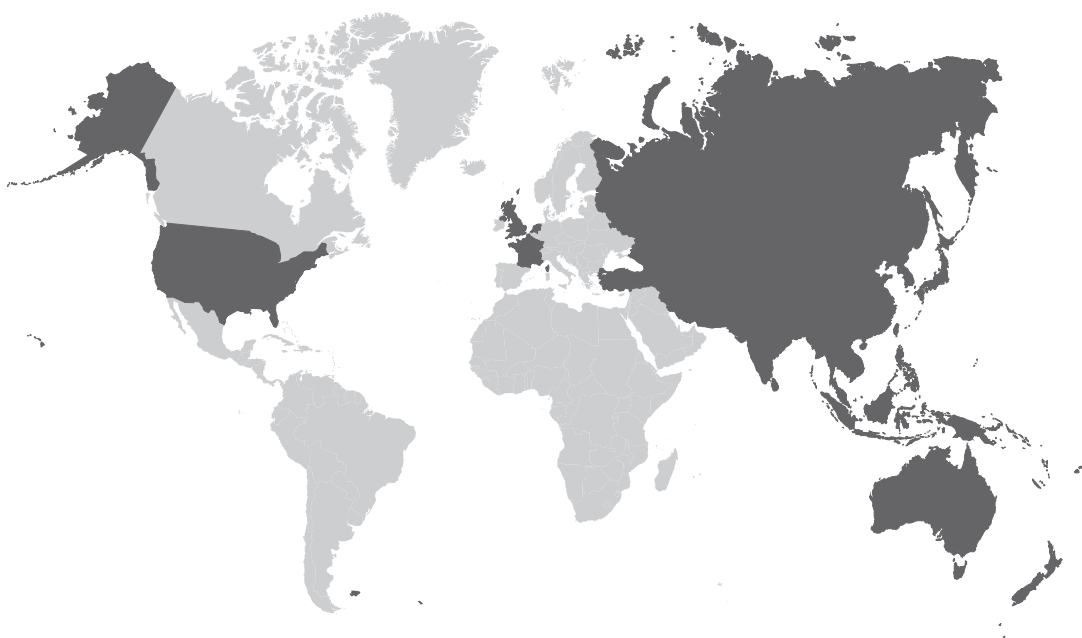
for positive ageing
in Asia and the Pacific



Annex

List of documents

Symbol	Title	Agenda item
General series		
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/1	Overview of regional implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific	4
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/2	Report on the regional preparatory process for the review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific	5
Limited series		
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	3
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/L.2	Draft report	
Information series		
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/INF/1	Information for participants	
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/INF/2/Rev.1	List of participants	
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/INF/3	Tentative programme	
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/INF/4	Relevant mandates (resolutions)	
Working paper series		
E/ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.1/WP.1	Draft Bangkok statement on the Asia-Pacific review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing	



The dark shaded areas of the map indicate ESCAP members and associate members.

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