Opening Remarks | 8 May 2025

High-level meeting on Ageing - General Assembly, 79th session

Delivered on behalf of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues,

It is an honor to join this high-level meeting addressing the urgent need to strengthen the human rights protection of older persons.

Today, I speak on behalf of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions—GANHRI. GANHRI unites 118 National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from every region of the world.

GANHRI warmly welcomes this High-Level Meeting and commends the President of the General Assembly for creating this critical space for dialogue. We express appreciation to the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) for its tireless efforts and valuable contributions over the years.

As populations age in every region, the imperative to uphold the human rights of older persons becomes ever more pressing. Older persons continue to make vital contributions across all sectors of society. Yet many still face age-based discrimination, social exclusion, and unequal access to essential services, often compounded by other forms of marginalization.

As National Human Rights Institutions, we witness directly the barriers older persons face in exercising their rights. NHRIs globally monitor and report on rights situations, handle complaints, advise governments, inspect care facilities, and raise public awareness. Through direct dialogue with older persons, we ensure their experiences inform and shape laws, policies, and practices at national level.

In my country, for example, since 2019, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has implemented significant reforms, including the establishment of a specialized department for older persons' and persons with disabilities' rights. We use a twin-track approach, advancing targeted initiatives while ensuring inclusivity across its broader work. Through research, advocacy, legal review, education, and investigations, we strive to ensure that older persons are seen, heard, and protected. We have published annual reports on the human rights situation, including two dedicated reports focusing on older persons and persons with disabilities. At the regional and international levels, we have advocated for the ratification of the African Union

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Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons, submitted reports to UN mechanisms, and consistently supported calls for a dedicated global instrument.

GANHRI plays a crucial role by bringing together NHRIs and amplifying their collective voice and expertise. We document national trends, good practices, and protection gaps, leveraging this evidence to inform global action. Our coordination ensures NHRIs speak collectively at the UN, providing grounded recommendations that support older persons. Therefore, guaranteeing meaningful participation of GANHRI and NHRIs in UN processes is essential to ensure global efforts benefit directly from NHRI expertise and experience.

From NHRIs' experiences worldwide, we clearly see the gap created by the absence of a binding international instrument on older persons' rights. This gap leads to fragmented protections and increased vulnerability.

We therefore strongly welcome Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/58/13, a landmark step toward addressing this gap and advancing older persons' rights globally. This development, in alignment with Decision 14/1, represents long-overdue progress in securing the rights and dignity of older persons worldwide.

As we move forward, we encourage all Member States to:

- Address structural ageism and promote empowering narratives on ageing by working with NHRIs and partners to shift public discourse.
- Mainstream ageing into national policies on development, climate, and human rights, aligning with the 2030 Agenda's principle of leaving no one behind.
- Support the establishment of a dedicated binding treaty on the rights of older persons, ensuring active and meaningful participation of NHRIs and civil society. Their direct experience, expertise, and role in bridging global standards with national implementation are critical to making global commitments a reality on the ground.
- Allocate sufficient resources to processes such as the recently established Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG), to ensure an effective legal framework protecting older persons.
- Build upon regional instruments, such as the African Union Protocol and the Inter-American Convention, to inform and strengthen a global treaty on older persons' rights.

GANHRI stand ready to contribute, with the collective expertise and commitment of our global membership. Let us seize this opportunity to collaborate inclusively, turning commitments into concrete actions to ensure older persons live with dignity, security, and empowerment.

Thank you.

GANHRI unites, promotes and strengthens National Human Rights Institutions to operate in line with the Paris Principles and provides leadership in the promotion and protection of human rights

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