NHRI Engagement Strategy on IGWG for the elaboration of a Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons

Background

On 3 April 2025, the Human Rights Council adopted the Resolution 58/13, which represents a significant milestone in advancing the human rights of older persons. This resolution establishes an **Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG)** to elaborate a draft international legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. This historic step follows decades of persistent advocacy by a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, independent experts, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).

The resolution explicitly recognizes NHRIs as a key stakeholder in this process and encourages them to "contribute actively and constructively to the work of the working group." Building on this recognition, it would be important for NHRIs to engage with the IGWG in a coordinated and strategic manner from the outset, so that their practical experience and insights can meaningfully shape the development of the new instrument.

NHRIs contributions to date

Human rights of older persons have been a thematic focus of GANHRI for many years.[1] Ever since its creation, the Working Group has shared information, raised awareness, and encouraged cooperation among NHRIs on the human rights of older persons.

The main work of GANHRI Working Group on Ageing and the Human Rights of Older Persons (WG-HROP) has been supporting NHRI's contribution and engagement with UN mechanisms, especially at the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA)[2] and the Human Rights Council (HRC),[3] and raising awareness to GANHRI members on the existing gaps for the protection of older persons rights.

Additionally, GANHRI regional networks have given the protection of older persons prominence with an active engagement and dedicated working groups.

[1] GANHRI Strategic Plan 2017-2019, 2020-2022, and 2023-2027.
[2] During the existence of OEWGA the WG-HROP sent out information on its activities to interested NHRIs, organized preparatory meetings before the OEWGA session and debriefings after the session, organized and presented joint statements.
[3] WG-HROP has presented statements on behalf of NHRIs at the HRC on the rights of older persons, especially on the annual report of the UN Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons.

Just in the past year with guidance from GANHRI Bureau, GANHRI WG-HROP has laid a strong foundation for NHRI consultation and engagement in the promotion of a Legally Binding Instrument:

- **Global Survey (2024):** GANHRI conducted a survey among members to objectively assess ongoing efforts in addressing the rights of older persons. The survey's findings confirmed the need for GANHRI to provide capacity building and facilitate the sharing of best practices among NHRIs. It also highlighted NHRIs support for a dedicated international legally binding instrument.
- Position Paper (2024): Based on the survey, the WG-HROP, with the support from the Head Office, developed and published a position paper to support all GANHRI members in their efforts to strengthen the protection of older persons' rights.
- Information on the State of debate (2025): This year, GANHRI WG-HROP issued a paper noting the shift of discussions on older persons' rights to the Human Rights Council in Geneva and called NHRIs to engage in this process through reporting, advocacy, participation, and future monitoring.

Emerging Roles for NHRIs

As the IGWG begins its work, NHRIs may choose to focus on strategic contributions. The GANHRI WG-HROP identifies the following key roles for NHRIs in this new process:

- **Substantive contributions:** Providing expert input into the treaty-drafting process based on their national experiences, legal mandates, and direct engagement with older persons.
- **National-level advocacy:** Engaging with their respective governments and national delegations to encourage a strong rights-based approach, including the advocacy for legislation for the protection of the human rights of older persons and support for the new international instrument.
- **Partnership and coalition-building:** Collaborating with civil society, older persons' organizations, the UN and regional networks to amplify advocacy efforts and ensure a unified voice.

A Two-tiered engagement strategy: the WG-HROP's proposal

To ensure that GANHRI members are well prepared to contribute to the work of the IGWG and to future monitoring responsibilities under a possible Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, GANHRI WG-HROP proposes a two-tiered engagement strategy. This approach is designed to facilitate broad participation while also enabling deeper, more technical contributions from institutions who wish to dedicate further resources and efforts in

advocating for a legally binding instrument. The strategy will be developed and implemented in close cooperation with the GANHRI Head Office, which will provide overall coordination, institutional guidance, and support across both tiers.

Tier 1: Broader engagement and awareness-raising

This tier seeks to involve all GANHRI members by ensuring regular information flows, shared understanding of developments, and opportunities for engagement at global and regional levels. The GANHRI Head Office and the WG-HROP will work jointly to coordinate activities, maintain consistency in messaging, and support participation across the membership.

Objective:
To ensure that all NHRIs are able to follow IGWG developments, deepen their understanding of the evolving normative discussions, and effectively disseminate relevant information within their respective national and regional contexts.

Key actions:

- **Information dissemination and awareness-raising**: In coordination with GANHRI Head Office, the WG-HROP will share updates on trends in the rights of older persons and circulate official IGWG documentation before and after each session. This collaborative approach aims to encourage active engagement from all GANHRI members, including through regional consultations where NHRIs can provide insights grounded in their national experience.
- **Capacity development:** The WG-HROP, working closely with GANHRI Head Office, regional networks and interested NHRIs, will deliver targeted activities such as thematic seminars and comparative analyses of existing regional instruments (e.g., the Inter-American Convention, the AU Protocol). These efforts will help highlight normative gaps and support future NHRI monitoring functions. Delivery will reflect the capacities and availability of participating institutions.
- **Contributing to national dialogue:** NHRIs may explore opportunities to bring human rights perspectives into national conversations concerning older persons, including through public reporting, thematic advice, or participation in legislative or policy discussions.
- **Supporting awareness-raising efforts:** Institutions may consider fostering public awareness on discrimination, ageism and other human rights concerns affecting older persons, including through partnerships with civil society, academia or service providers.

- **Strengthening data collection and monitoring:** Within their monitoring roles, NHRIs could reflect on ways to gather and analyze information on the situation of older persons, including barriers to rights enjoyment, and share such findings with relevant authorities and international mechanisms.
- **Contributing to implementation of international recommendations:** NHRIs may choose to support follow-up to recommendations from the UPR, treaty bodies or special procedures, including those relating to older persons, by advising on implementation pathways at national level.
- **Facilitating participation:** Some NHRIs may wish to promote or support the participation of organizations representing older persons in consultations, policymaking and review processes.

These suggested avenues aim to support NHRIs in identifying engagement options that align with their mandate, local context, and strategic priorities.

Tier 2: Dedicated engagement – optional pathway for interested NHRIs

This tier is open to all GANHRI members—whether or not they participate in the WG-HROP—who wish to contribute more actively to discussions surrounding the legally binding instrument. It is designed for institutions that choose to play a more sustained and hands-on role in IGWG process, with the WG-HROP supporting coordination.

Objective:
To enable interested NHRIs to contribute with substantive inputs to the IGWG process. Where appropriate and following established procedures, particular submissions may be considered for presentation as GANHRI statements once adopted by the GANHRI Bureau.

Possible areas of contribution:

- **Substantive input and drafting:** The WG-HROP may facilitate opportunities for NHRIs to collaborate on joint written submissions, draft oral interventions for the IGWG, develop briefing materials, or provide input on specific articles or clusters of rights addressed in the LBI discussions.

- **Participation in the IGWG sessions:** Interested NHRIs may consider preparing written or oral contributions for the IGWG, thereby supporting informed discussions and contributing to the documentation submitted to the HRC.
- **Collaborative engagement:** NHRIs opting for intensive participation may explore cooperation with civil society partners and academic experts when developing substantive inputs. The WG-HROP, with the support from the GANHRI Head Office may explore opportunities of joint activities or side events to enhance visibility and collective impact during IGWG sessions.

Conclusion and next steps

This strategy will serve as a guiding framework for the WG-HROP in supporting GANHRI members over the coming years. NHRIs may consider how their national and international engagement could relate to these shared goals, taking into account their mandates, priorities and institutional contexts. The WG-HROP remains available as a space for exchange, coordination and voluntary collaboration among interested institutions.