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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of the relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Modalities for the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution [2023/15](#). It provides an overview of the modalities for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. The report also provides an update on the follow-up to the outcomes of the fourth review and appraisal process. It concludes with a proposed timeline for the fifth review and appraisal cycle, as well as recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

In the report, there is an emphasis on the importance of adopting a bottom-up participatory approach that would allow Member States to benefit from carefully considered assessments of the extent to which the objectives of the Madrid Plan of Action are being achieved at the local, national and regional levels. It is also noted that the year 2027 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, presenting an opportunity to reaffirm commitment to the Political Declaration and the Madrid Plan of Action.

The report provides recommendations on the modalities for the fifth review and appraisal, including the endorsement of the proposed timeline, and Member States are urged to leverage the outcomes to strengthen and advance efforts towards a society for all ages.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2023/15](#), the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission for Social Development at its sixty-third session, in 2025, a report on the modalities for the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002.
2. The Madrid Plan of Action was adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid, from 8 to 12 April 2002. It contained a call for changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels in all sectors so that the enormous potential of ageing in the twenty-first century may be fulfilled. With 239 recommendations related to 35 objectives covering 18 issues consolidated under the priority areas, the aim of the Madrid Plan of Action is to ensure that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights.
3. As the world has changed since 2002, the Madrid Plan of Action has remained a solid foundation for addressing the complex realities associated with individual and population ageing. The many different stages of development and the transitions that are taking place in various regions are recognized in the Plan, and it provides a multisectoral approach and practical tool to assist policymakers. The life-course approach promoted in the Plan is vital, as it reflects an acknowledgement that the foundation for a healthy and enriching old age is laid early in life. It highlights the importance of recognizing the contributions of older persons to society by taking the lead not only in their own betterment but also in that of society as a whole, and that the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, is essential for the creation of an inclusive society for all ages in which older persons participate fully and on the basis of equality.
4. Section II of the present report contains an overview of the modalities for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at different levels.
5. Section III, prepared in consultation with focal points on ageing in the regional commissions, contains a follow-up on the outcomes of the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.
6. Section IV contains considerations for the preparations for and observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing.
7. Section V contains the proposed timeline for the fifth review and appraisal exercise, as well as key recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

II. Overview of the modalities for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action, 2002, at different levels

8. The world has come a long way in addressing issues related to population ageing and older persons since the Member States of the United Nations joined together to build the multilateral architecture. In 1950, shortly after the establishment of the United Nations, only some 8 per cent of the world population was aged 60 and over. Life expectancy at birth in that year was estimated to be approximately 46.4 years worldwide. By the time Member States gathered for the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, in 2002, life expectancy at birth had increased to 67.1 years, and 10 per cent of the population was aged 60 and over. Today, as Member States initiate the fifth cycle of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid

International Plan of Action, 14.5 per cent of the world's population is aged 60 and over, and life expectancy at birth stands at 73.3 years.¹

9. The international community has gradually responded to this transformative demographic transition and steadily positioned itself to fully adapt, address the challenges and harness the opportunities associated with the ageing of populations. During the foundational stages of the United Nations, the needs of older persons and the focus on population ageing was comparatively overlooked. A draft declaration on old age rights was submitted to the General Assembly in 1948; however, neither the Charter of the United Nations (1945) nor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) contain explicit references to age as a ground of discrimination in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

10. In 1982, Member States convened for the first-ever intergovernmental meeting solely focused on population ageing, the first World Assembly on Ageing, in Vienna. The outcome of the meeting, the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, endorsed by the General Assembly that same year, was the first international policy instrument devoted entirely to population ageing. The International Plan was aimed at guiding policy formulation on this area, while also bolstering the capacity of Governments and other stakeholders, through 62 targeted recommendations for actions.

11. Less than a decade later, in 1991, the General Assembly adopted resolution [46/91](#) on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. The 18 principles were built across five main categories: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity. The principles were intended to underscore the essential consideration and attention required for the unique situation and needs of older persons. In recognition of the increasing impact and significance of population ageing in both developed and developing countries, 1999 was designated as the International Year of Older Persons by the Assembly in resolution [47/5](#). This initiative was aimed at promoting awareness and fostering collaboration among Governments, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to work towards more inclusive societies. Since then, the International Day of Older Persons has been celebrated annually on 1 October.²

12. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April 2002, marked a pivotal moment in international efforts to address the evolving challenges and opportunities arising from the ageing of global populations and to attend to the needs of older persons. The Assembly was a critical milestone in crafting a forward-looking global policy strategy, designed to develop a robust international response to the unprecedented demographic realities of the twenty-first century. The intergovernmental process culminated in the adoption of two foundational documents: the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, both providing a comprehensive road map for Governments and the international community to better address the needs of older persons and position ageing as a critical component of global development strategies.³

13. Acknowledging the complexities and challenges inherent in the full and successful implementation of this ambitious policy agenda, Member States articulated the need for a regular and systematic review of progress in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. They underlined the important role of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, in assisting Governments in the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, taking into account the differences in economic, social and demographic conditions existing among countries and regions. In the Madrid Plan of Action, Member States entrusted

¹ *World Population Prospects 2024: Data Sources* (United Nations publication, 2024).

² General Assembly resolution [45/106](#), para. 15.

³ [A/CONF.197/9](#), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

the Commission for Social Development with the responsibility for the follow-up and appraisal of its implementation. In addition, they called upon the Commission to integrate the different dimensions of population ageing as contained in the Madrid Plan of Action in its work. Member States viewed the reviews and appraisals as critical for effective follow-up to the Assembly and called upon the Commission to take steps to define their modalities.

14. The strong political commitment demonstrated and articulated in Madrid, as reflected in the two outcomes of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, was effectively integrated into the relevant United Nations organs and structures in the subsequent years. This facilitated and promoted the operationalization of the Madrid Plan of Action, along with its review and appraisal process.

15. In December 2002, shortly after the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the General Assembly undertook significant actions.⁴ It first endorsed the two outcomes of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, namely, the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The General Assembly also tasked the Commission for Social Development to consider the modalities for the review and appraisal of the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, thus reaffirming its role in overseeing the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. It encouraged Member States and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to the United Nations trust fund for ageing.⁵

16. In 2003, following up on these recommendations, the Economic and Social Council invited actors at all levels to participate both in the implementation and in the follow-up process to the Madrid Plan of Action. Crucially, it also invited Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to participate in a “bottom-up” approach to the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, including through sharing ideas, data and best practices, thus emphasizing the need to bolster engagement at all levels in this policy agenda (see Council resolution [2003/14](#)).

17. The General Assembly, in resolution [58/134](#), also adopted in 2003, took note of the road map for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action contained in the report of the Secretary-General ([A/58/160](#)). The Assembly, inter alia, requested the Commission for Social Development to integrate an ageing perspective in its consideration of priority themes related to the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. In addition, the Assembly requested the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women to further coordinate and collaborate through their respective bureaux on the issue of older women within the framework of their respective programmes of work.

18. In response to the request of the General Assembly to address the issue of the periodicity and the format of the review of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, in 2004, the Commission for Social Development decided to undertake the review and appraisal every five-year cycle, each focusing on one of the priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action (see [E/2004/26-E/CN.5/2004/8](#)). The Commission encouraged Member States to establish or strengthen, as appropriate, national coordinating bodies or mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Plan and ensure that their review and appraisal processes addressed both specific policies on ageing and broader ageing mainstreaming efforts.

⁴ See General Assembly resolution [57/167](#).

⁵ The General Assembly adopted resolution 35/129 to establish the trust fund as a voluntary fund for the World Assembly on Ageing and appealed to Member States to make generous contributions to the Fund. This appeal was renewed in the preparatory efforts towards the celebration of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, in particular to facilitate the fullest participation from the least developed countries (see resolution [54/262](#)).

19. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to facilitate and promote the Madrid Plan of Action through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including by developing guidelines for the review and appraisal process. The responsibilities of the regional commissions were also defined, outlining their key role in facilitating the implementation and review at the national and regional levels of the Madrid Plan of Action, with subsequent General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions continuing to highlight their role in this process. The Commission also identified the roles of other relevant United Nations bodies, funds and programmes in this process.

A. Content of the review and appraisal: two dimensions

20. Older persons are a heterogeneous group, and while the world population is ageing as a whole, the pace of this process, and the number and proportion of older persons within a specific region and country, differ markedly. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its review mechanisms were intended to reflect and accommodate this diversity, addressing the varying priorities, needs and challenges faced by different communities and Member States. The Madrid Plan of Action thus provided Governments, which bear the main responsibility for implementing the Plan, with the latitude to determine the scope of their national review and appraisal activities, ensuring the participation in decision-making processes of relevant stakeholders in the country, including organizations that represent older persons.

21. To effectively address the complexities of population ageing and the evolving needs and capacities of persons as they age, the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action can provide an examination of and offer recommendations on two different dimensions: policies targeting individual ageing and extended longevity; and those geared towards adapting societies to the consequences of population ageing. Both can be advanced through mainstreaming ageing – understood as the systematic integration of ageing issues across all relevant policy fields and at all levels of government.⁶ The review and appraisal assessment should be around the three priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments (see [E/CN.5/2004/6](#)). Policies targeted to older persons and those mainstreaming ageing have ramifications across most Governmental policy domains.

22. As populations age, the development of policies specifically targeted at older persons and addressing ageing over the life course becomes increasingly crucial. While many such policies were traditionally concentrated for the most part on social security measures, the Madrid Plan of Action contains a recognition of the importance of adopting a broader perspective and addressing how a wider set of Governmental systems, including social protection, education, labour or health, impact the well-being of older persons. The review and appraisal process for these policies should involve a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of Government programmes and activities at all levels, drawing on reports and studies from local Government entities, academia, civil society and the private sector.

23. Mainstreaming ageing requires a revised understanding of how changing age structures influence societal organization and functioning, including Government operations. The Madrid Plan of Action underscored the need to incorporate ageing considerations into national development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies. It also emphasized the importance of integrating a gender perspective into

⁶ *Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing* (United Nations publication, 2021).

all national policies and programmes in order to address the specific needs and experiences of all older persons.⁷

24. As indicated in the Madrid Plan of Action, a key aspect of its review and appraisal involves assessing the extent of mainstreaming at the national level and evaluating how ageing is incorporated into development policies. Given the multifaceted nature of mainstreaming, the review and appraisal should include an examination of various instruments, such as legislative reviews, budget monitoring and age-specific analyses of institutional capacity-building, training and advocacy. The review and appraisal should also address how mainstreaming ageing interacts with other development challenges, ensuring that ageing policies are integrated into socioeconomic planning frameworks. It is recommended that Governments, in defining the modalities for the review and appraisal, consider establishing a dedicated lead agency – whether governmental or non-governmental – to oversee the mainstreaming of ageing into national policies and to identify and rectify any existing gaps.

B. Elements of the bottom-up participatory approach

25. The review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing follows a participatory and flexible approach, as endorsed by the Commission for Social Development in its sessions in 2003 and 2004. With the adoption of this framework, Member States aimed to move away from a top-down to a bottom-up approach that would allow the intergovernmental deliberative process to benefit from carefully considered assessments of whether or not the Madrid Plan of Action objectives were being achieved at the local, national, subregional and regional levels (see [E/CN.5/2003/7](#)).

26. The bottom-up approach consists of the gathering of information through the sharing of ideas, data collection and good practices. This design is aimed at ensuring that the review and appraisal remain as close as possible to the level at which the issues arise. This type of review would lead to a more meaningful outcome, in the narrower sense by raising local issues and concerns to the global level to complement policy efforts, and in the broader sense by keeping stakeholders actively engaged both socially and politically (*ibid.*). Its participatory nature promotes the inclusion of constituents, including groups previously excluded from the development, implementation and evaluation of policies that directly affect them, in this case, older persons themselves.⁸

27. The monitoring, review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action is also characterized by its flexibility, adapting to national and local priorities based on unique challenges and opportunities. This flexible approach allows for the selection of specific objectives and actions tailored to the national and local circumstances. The process should be ongoing, as opposed to providing a snapshot in time, thus effectively feeding into various existing reporting frameworks. The bottom-up participatory approach enables Member States and intergovernmental processes to better understand the real impact and achievement of and gaps in the Madrid Plan of Action at all levels of government.⁹

⁷ [A/CONF.197/9](#), chap. I, resolution I, annexes I and II.

⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “The framework for monitoring, review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing”, 29 July 2005.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Support for national action

28. The General Assembly, in resolution [61/142](#), invited Member States to designate focal points for handling the follow-up of national plans of action on ageing and encouraged this in subsequent resolutions (see, for example, resolution [78/177](#)). The Assembly also encouraged Member States to strengthen existing networks of national focal points on ageing.¹⁰ Focal points are generally from national institutions on ageing in countries where these exist, ministries of social affairs, social development and/or social protection and ministries of health and, less predominantly, from ministries of foreign affairs and national councils for population and family affairs. Focal points play a crucial role in ensuring a bottom-up approach for the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, by coordinating with national organizations and relevant stakeholders on ageing.

29. The regional commissions closely cooperate with focal points on ageing on an ongoing basis and in particular in the lead-up to and during the regional review and appraisal meetings of the Madrid Plan of Action by holding bilateral consultations, providing capacity-building activities, updating them on relevant policy developments and facilitating platforms for intergovernmental discussions. For instance, in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, national focal points coordinate through its intergovernmental mechanism, the Standing Working Group on Ageing, as have done focal points from Member States in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) regions through, respectively, the Fifth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons and the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region, officially designated focal points on ageing from Member States meet annually to discuss priorities related to ageing.

30. In 2006, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs developed the guidelines for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing¹¹ to support national action. These guidelines were designed to assist Governments and their focal points on ageing in conducting the bottom-up review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, serving as a resource for ideas and examples to guide the design and implementation of national initiatives. In the past four cycles of review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, the 2006 guidelines have served as a basis for the support provided to Member States by the regional commissions.

31. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) continues to use these guidelines and adapts them to emerging issues. For instance, in the fourth cycle of the review and appraisal, ECA integrated issues related to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in its guidance. In ECE, the 2006 publication serves as one of the resources for the incorporation of a bottom-up participatory approach in the guidelines developed by the Standing Working Group on Ageing for each review and used to advise national reports. In Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC uses the 2006 guidelines in addition to a specific set of questions prepared for each review and appraisal cycle and, in the previous cycle, prepared its own guide for the preparation of national reports on the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. Similarly, the 2006 guidelines were central to the survey design prepared by ESCAP for the fourth review

¹⁰ See General Assembly resolution [78/177](#).

¹¹ *Guidelines for Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing: Bottom-Up Participatory Approach* (United Nations publication, 2006).

and appraisal process. ESCWA developed its own review and methodology with its member States for the fourth review and appraisal in line with the guidelines.

32. The development of the necessary human resources is considered essential in the Madrid Plan of Action at the national level to effectively mainstream ageing and the concerns of older persons into national development frameworks. The Plan also indicated that support in promoting training and capacity-building on ageing as extremely important and a priority for international cooperation, especially in developing countries. Other priorities for international cooperation on ageing include the exchange of experiences and good practices, researchers and research findings and data collection to support policy and programme development. In its resolutions, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of investing in national-level capacity-building to promote the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and urged Member States to contribute to the United Nations trust fund for ageing, thus enabling the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to extend its support to countries that request it.¹²

Consolidation of national findings at the regional level

33. The regional component to the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action is aimed at bridging national and global priorities, with the regional commissions and their intergovernmental bodies, in particular, playing a key role in liaising with their member countries, national committees and other relevant stakeholders (see E/CN.5/2003/7). In the past four cycles of review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, the regional commissions have played a key role in supporting Member States as they conduct their national reviews and participate in regional reviews. This includes: assisting Member States in their organization of their national review and appraisal exercises upon their request; organizing regional review meetings and providing technical support for consultations on negotiated outcomes, as well as the implementation of such outcomes; and promoting collaboration with civil society. The regional commissions play a strong role also by providing an analysis of the main findings of the national report, identifying key priority action areas and best practices and suggesting policy responses in the regional reports in the review and appraisal process.¹³

34. Outcomes of the regional review and appraisal exercise are adopted through intergovernmental bodies in a majority of the regions. In the previous cycle, the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in the ECE region produced the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration, entitled “A Sustainable World for All Ages: Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities Throughout Life”. The Latin American and Caribbean region held its fifth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons, also at the ministerial level, with the support of ECLAC, at which Member States adopted the Santiago Declaration, “Human Rights and Participation of Older Persons: Towards an Inclusive and Resilient Care Society”¹⁴ and welcomed the report for the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, entitled *Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean: Inclusion and Rights of Older Persons*.¹⁵ A negotiated 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” (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/3/Add.1) was also adopted at an intergovernmental meeting supported by ESCAP. In the African region, ECA organized a regional expert group meeting bringing together

¹² See General Assembly resolution 61/142.

¹³ See Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/8.

¹⁴ Available at <https://conferenciaenvejecimiento.cepal.org/5/en/documents/santiago-declaration>.

¹⁵ Available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/48568-ageing-latin-america-and-caribbean-inclusion-and-rights-older-persons>.

different stakeholders from the region, while the fourth review of the Madrid Plan of Action in the Arab region culminated in a regional review conference supported by ESCWA that produced an outcome document, in addition to the regional review report (E/CN.5/2023/6).

35. To strengthen the consolidation of national findings of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at the regional level, the General Assembly encouraged regional commissions that had not yet done so to elaborate a regional strategy for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.¹⁶ There are two regional strategies, the *Regional Implementation Strategy for Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing for the UNECE Region* (ECE/AC.23/2002/2/Rev.6), and the 2012 *San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean*,¹⁷ which replaced the 2004 *Regional Strategy for the Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*.¹⁸ In the fourth review and appraisal cycle, in the Rome Ministerial Declaration of the European Region, the member States of ECE called for the updating of the Madrid Plan of Action and the ECE Regional Implementation Strategy, as well as exploring the possibility of also updating the Madrid Plan of Action to adapt ageing-related policy responses to economic, social and digital transitions and emerging challenges and developing further instruments to support them.¹⁹

36. In the Asia and Pacific region, the fourth review and appraisal cycle for the Madrid Plan of Action produced an intergovernmentally negotiated outcome document (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/3/Add.1; see para. 34). As a result, ESCAP is considering the development of a regional implementation strategy for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action for the upcoming review cycle. The African region and the Western Asian region currently lack regional strategies for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action; however, other initiatives support efforts on issues related to population ageing within these regions. In the Western Asia region, the region's negotiated road map for the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2013, the Cairo Declaration,²⁰ may be used as a guide on issues related to population ageing. In the African context, the African Union Commission is developing a policy framework and plan of action on ageing to support its member States' response to Africa's growing ageing population.

37. Difficulties arising from constrained earmarked funding for population ageing and issues related to older persons, the limited presence of regional commissions within national contexts and inadequate or weak mandates are some of the challenges identified by the regional commissions that hinder efforts at the regional level to support both the national and regional review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

Consolidation of national and regional findings at the international level

38. The Commission for Social Development was tasked by the General Assembly with carrying out the global review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action.²¹ The global review provides Member States with a comprehensive overview of the regional review and appraisal exercises, highlighting overall trends through an analysis of the negotiated outcome documents and regional reports of the review and appraisal

¹⁶ See General Assembly resolutions 59/150 and 60/135.

¹⁷ Available at <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/21535-san-jose-charter-rights-older-persons-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

¹⁸ Available at <https://repositorio.cepal.org/entities/publication/e46d8b45-7a5a-4a39-8203-7e2267dc8b18>.

¹⁹ Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Rome_Ministerial_Declaration.pdf.

²⁰ Available at https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/Cairo_Declaration_English.pdf.

²¹ See General Assembly resolutions 59/150 and 60/135.

processes. It helps identify prevalent and emerging issues while outlining relevant policy options (see [E/CN.5/2023/6](#)). It can also offer a valuable opportunity to reinvigorate international efforts and international action in advancing the global ageing agenda.

39. The global review draws attention to the need to provide international cooperation to Governments who require it in their implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, including the review and appraisal exercise. The Economic and Social Council also calls upon the United Nations system to take concrete measures to mainstream ageing issues into their own programming and existing mandates.²²

40. A resolution on the outcome of each review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action is adopted by the Economic and Social Council upon its successful conclusion. These resolutions promote the inclusion of the findings and recommendations of each review and appraisal exercise at the international, regional and national level, in policies relevant to older persons and population ageing at the national level.

III. Follow-up on the outcomes of the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

A. The changing dynamics of global population ageing

41. Global population ageing, driven by declining fertility and rising life expectancy, represents one of the most significant demographic transformations of the twenty-first century – which has occurred or is occurring in all countries and regions. This shift is reshaping the age structure of societies, necessitating reforms of social protection systems, healthcare services and economic policies. To effectively navigate these changes, Governments should use evidence-based planning and foresight to implement policies that respond to the diverse needs of older persons, ensure equitable access to services and protect their human rights. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing provides a vital framework for guiding these efforts, although significant disparities in its implementation persist both among and within regions.

42. Demographic projections revised with new data might offer new insights into global population trends. Recent revision of *World Population Prospects*²³ represents a major shift in perspective regarding future population dynamics. A decade ago, the United Nations estimated only a 30 per cent probability that global population growth would end in the twenty-first century. Today, that probability has increased to 80 per cent, indicating a much higher likelihood of the world's population peaking before 2100, and at a lower level than previously anticipated. Current projections suggest that the global population will grow from 8.2 billion in 2024 to approximately 10.3 billion by the mid-2080s, after which a gradual decline is expected. By 2100, the global population could drop to approximately 10.2 billion, some 700 million fewer people than previous estimates suggested. This earlier-than-expected peak is largely attributed to declining fertility rates, in particular in some of the world's largest countries, such as China. The impact of these demographic shifts is already evident, as one in four people globally now live in a country whose population has peaked in size.

²² See Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/8](#).

²³ *World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision* (United Nations publication, 2024).

43. Over the next decade, from 2024 to 2034, the number of persons aged 60 years or over is projected to grow by 33.3 per cent, from 1.2 billion to 1.6 billion globally. Older persons will outnumber youth and represent more than double the number of children under 5 years of age. The most rapid increase is projected to occur in developing countries. Looking further ahead, by the late 2070s, the global population aged 65 or older is expected to reach 2.2 billion, outnumbering children under 18.²⁴ Even in countries with relatively youthful populations today, the number of older persons is projected to rise, reinforcing the global nature of population ageing.

44. The timing and pace of population ageing, however, vary significantly across regions and countries. While some countries have already reached or passed their population peak, others continue to experience growth, albeit at slower rates. In 2024, the population has already peaked in 63 countries and areas, which together account for 28 per cent of the world's population. This group includes countries such as China, Germany, Japan and the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, 48 countries and areas, representing 10 per cent of the world's population, are projected to reach their population peak between 2025 and 2054, including Brazil, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye and Viet Nam. In the remaining 126 countries and areas, the population is expected to continue to grow through 2054 and potentially peak later in the century or beyond 2100. This group includes some of the world's most populous countries, such as India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the United States of America.²⁵

45. In countries where the population has already peaked, a notable demographic shift is under way. The crossover between the number of children and persons aged 65 or older is expected to occur earlier. For example, in these countries, the share of people under 20 is expected to decline from 21 per cent in 2024 to 14 per cent in 2054, remaining at that level until the end of the century. Conversely, the proportion of those 65 or older is projected to nearly double, from 17 per cent to 33 per cent from 2024 to 2054. By 2100, older persons may comprise 40 per cent of the total population in these countries.²⁶ This rapid transformation in age structure presents unique challenges and opportunities for policymakers in addressing the needs of an increasingly older population while ensuring intergenerational equity and sustainable development.

46. Global life expectancy has steadily increased. In 2024, life expectancy at birth reached 73.3 years, marking an increase of 8.4 years since 1995. This upward trend is expected to continue, with global life expectancy projected to reach 77.4 years by 2054. By the late 2050s, more than half of all deaths globally are expected to occur at age 80 or older, compared with just 17 per cent in 1995.²⁷ However, significant disparities exist across regions. Life expectancy at birth in the least developed countries in 2024 remains lower, at 66.5 years, a difference of 6.8 years compared with the global average. In developed regions, life expectancy reaches 80.1 years, while in developing regions it stands at 71.9 years.²⁸

47. Gender differences in life expectancy also remain significant, further shaping the demographic landscape. In 2024, globally, men are expected to live 70.7 years, while women are projected to live 76 years, outliving men by 5.3 years. Although the gap is expected to narrow slightly, it will continue into 2050, with men projected to live 74.7 years and women 79.5 years, a difference of 4.8 years.²⁹ As illustrated in the figure, these findings highlight the persistent gender gap in life expectancy, with both

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2024).

²⁶ Ibid.

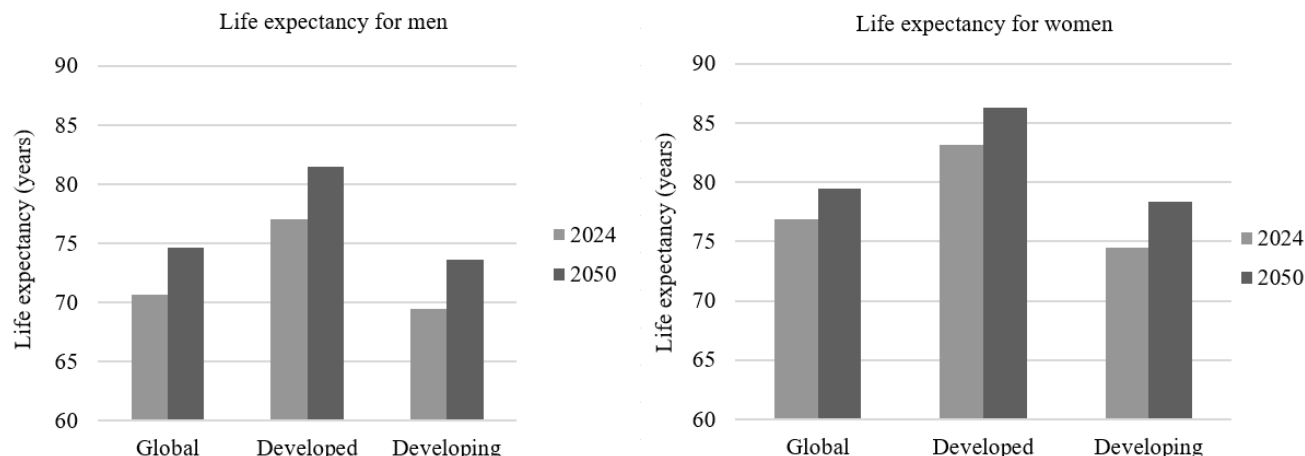
²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision* (United Nations publication, 2024).

²⁹ Ibid.

men and women projected to experience extended longevity globally, as well as within developed and developing regions.

Life expectancy for men and women: comparison of those born in 2024 and 2050 in global, developed and developing regions



Source: Calculated from *World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision* (United Nations publication, 2024).

48. These gender differences in life expectancy point to broader disparities in health outcomes, access to care and support and social determinants of health between men and women across the life course. When examining life expectancy in developed regions, the disparity becomes more pronounced. In 2024, men in developed regions are projected to live 77 years, compared with 83.2 years for women – a gap of 6.2 years. By 2050, the gap is expected to reduce slightly, with men living 81.5 years and women 86.3 years. In developing regions, life expectancy remains lower but the gender gap persists. In 2024, men in developing regions are expected to live 69.5 years, while women are projected to live 74.5 years – a difference of 5 years. By 2050, these figures will improve to 73.6 years for men and 78.4 years for women, maintaining a gap of 4.8 years. These disparities highlight the critical need to incorporate a gender perspective in all policies and programmes concerning older persons, ensuring that the specific needs and experiences of both older women and men are adequately addressed.³⁰

B. Integrating population and individual ageing into the work of the functional commissions

49. During its fifty-seventh session, member States of the Commission on Population and Development highlighted the diverse demographic patterns across countries and regions, emphasizing challenges and opportunities related to ageing populations (see [E/2024/25-E/CN.9/2024/6](#)).

50. In 2024, the Commission adopted the declaration on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, whereby member States recognized that, in a demographically diverse world, population dynamics, including differences in the pace of population growth or decline, changing population age structures, urbanization and international migration,

³⁰ Ibid.

will continue to shape the world for present and future generations (ibid., declaration 2024/1).

51. Through the declaration, the member States committed to promoting the availability of high-quality, timely, relevant, disaggregated and reliable population data, which are essential for implementing and monitoring the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and measuring progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Commission will also strengthen research on the linkages between population dynamics and sustainable development and take account of population trends and projections in development strategies and policies. This commitment will enhance the integration of ageing issues into evidence-based policy development (ibid.).

52. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixty-seventh session, highlighted the significant impact of the digital divide on older women (see [E/2023/27](#)). It recognized that older women often have less exposure to new technologies, partly owing to time spent out of the paid workforce for unpaid care and domestic work. The Commission stressed the need to close the digital gap by investing in digital literacy and skills, ensuring access to affordable technologies and digitally enabled services. It also acknowledged the barriers that older women face to education, lifelong learning and training. In addition, at its sixty-eighth session, the Commission recognized the positive contributions of older women to the economy and society, including through the provision of care and domestic work and support, while also noting the challenges that they face in fully realizing their human rights and fundamental freedoms (see [E/2024/27](#)). The Commission also recognized that issues related to social integration and gender inequality can be addressed by mainstreaming the rights of older persons into sustainable and people-centred development strategies.

C. Relationship between development, social policy and the human rights of older persons

53. The relationship between development, social policy and the human rights of older persons is fundamentally interconnected. In adopting the Political Declaration, Governments reaffirmed their commitment to promoting democracy, strengthening the rule of law and ensuring gender equality. They emphasized the importance of protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. The Declaration acknowledges the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against older persons, ensuring that, as individuals age, they can lead lives of fulfilment, health, security and active participation in their communities across economic, social, cultural and political spheres.

54. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing further solidifies this commitment by outlining recommendations for action focused on three priority directions: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and creating enabling and supportive environments. The priority directions are designed to guide policy formulation and implementation towards the specific goal of successful adjustment to an ageing world, in which success is measured in terms of social development, the improvement for older persons in quality of life and in the sustainability of the various systems, formal and informal, that underpin the quality of well-being throughout the life course.

D. Improving national capacity for policy formulation on ageing

55. In the ECA region, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized two national capacity-building workshops in Nigeria in 2023 and 2024 to enhance social care for older persons. The 2023 policy drafting workshop on geriatric social care quality assurance brought together participants from government, civil society and academia to develop policies for improving geriatric social care quality. Building on this, the 2024 training workshop on domiciliary care of older persons was aimed at integrating care quality standards into a national policy. The Director General of the National Senior Citizens Centre, *inter alia*, opened the event.

56. ECLAC has been actively engaged in promoting the rights and well-being of older persons in Latin America and the Caribbean through various initiatives. Meetings and events were coordinated in synergy with other regional bodies, including the Regional Conference on Social Development, the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and the Regional Conference on Population and Development. These efforts have been focused on addressing challenges related to care and support systems, while ensuring that the rights and well-being of older persons are respected and protected. In addition, ECLAC organized side events covering key issues such as “Moving towards care societies: challenges for the region to ensure the well-being of older persons and respect for their rights”,³¹ “Best practices in policies for older persons”,³² and “Socio-environmental disasters and the rights of older persons.”³³

57. The ECLAC, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Cooperation Programme held a regional seminar in 2024 focused on “Challenges and opportunities of population ageing: care and the silver economy.”³⁴ This initiative is aimed at promoting knowledge about the economic impact and opportunities associated with population ageing for current and future generations. It supports the design of public policies and the strengthening of national capabilities, with a particular focus on the opportunities offered by the “silver economy”, especially in the field of care and long-term care. Within the framework of the programme, a study was conducted analysing future scenarios of consumption growth among older persons in six member States representing different stages of the demographic transition: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Peru.

58. ECE has made significant progress in advancing the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing through various initiatives and activities. A key development in this effort is the creation of the Ageing Policies Database, a new initiative outlined in the multi-year programme of work of the Standing Working Group on Ageing 2023–2027 (ECE/WG.1/2023/2, annex II). This database is aimed at strengthening the monitoring of the Madrid Plan of Action and its Regional Implementation Strategy while enhancing access to information on ageing-related policies across the region (see ECE/WG.1/2023/4).

59. In 2023, ECE developed a comprehensive list of policy themes and instruments for inclusion in the database, which were subsequently discussed with the Bureau.

³¹ See <https://crds.cepal.org/5/en/towards-care-societies-challenges-region-faces-ensuring-the-well-being>.

³² See <https://crpd.cepal.org/5m/en/programme/side-event-best-practices-public-policies-older-persons-human-rights-approach>.

³³ See <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2024/es/programa/desastres-socioambientales-derechos-personas-mayores>.

³⁴ See www.cepal.org/en/events/regional-seminar-challenges-and-opportunities-population-ageing-silver-economy.

Using this taxonomy, country reports submitted for the fourth review and appraisal cycle for the Madrid Plan of Action/Regional Implementation Strategy are being systematically coded to identify relevant policies for inclusion in the database. This innovative tool represents a significant step forward in the commitment of ECE to supporting member States in implementing and monitoring the Madrid Plan of Action.

60. ECE has also undertaken several other important activities to advance the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. At the request of the Government of Georgia and in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country office, ECE conducted a training workshop on mainstreaming ageing into public policy through age-sensitive analysis for 24 government officials. This workshop built upon the methodology previously piloted in a series of training workshops for national and local policymakers in the Republic of Moldova. As a result of these efforts, ECE developed a comprehensive training package with resources available online. This package can be utilized by member States to develop strategic approaches for mainstreaming ageing across various policy fields and levels.

61. ECE has also been working to develop road maps for mainstreaming ageing at the request of member States. These road maps provide tailored policy recommendations for implementing the Madrid Plan of Action/Regional Implementation Strategy by integrating ageing considerations into broader national policies. In this context, ECE provided technical assistance to develop a national strategy and action plan for healthy and active longevity in Uzbekistan. Working in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNFPA, ECE has been developing a situation analysis and policy recommendations based on the road maps for mainstreaming ageing methodology.

62. ESCAP has been actively compiling national action plans and strategies from member States, to foster knowledge-sharing among countries, which has been made publicly available through a repository website.³⁵

63. ESCAP has strengthened its engagement with member States on ageing through a series of targeted initiatives. At the request of the Governments of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Maldives, ESCAP has provided direct support in developing and revising their ageing policies, strategies and action plans. Both countries worked with ESCAP to align their policies with the latest regional and global mandates following the fourth review and appraisal.

64. Broader capacity-building efforts by ESCAP have addressed critical topics such as the future of work, digital literacy, national transfer accounts and the development of a dashboard for ageing data and best practices. Collaboration with member States on these issues has included work with Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Tajikistan, Thailand and Viet Nam.

65. ESCAP has also amplified its efforts in promoting ageing-related initiatives by participating in major regional forums, such as the International Federation on Ageing sixteenth Global Conference on Ageing, held in Bangkok in 2023, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Population Ageing, held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2024. Through these forums, ESCAP has facilitated the involvement of government focal points, enabling the exchange of ideas and best practices among member States.

66. ESCWA has worked with 11 member States on various issues related to older persons, including conducting studies on the situation of older persons and mapping care homes. It is currently working on the development of draft strategies and action plans in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

³⁵ See www.population-trends-asiapacific.org/.

67. ESCWA has actively contributed to building the capacity of government representatives in Egypt and Yemen to mainstream ageing into national policymaking. In Egypt, a workshop was organized to raise awareness of the rights of older persons as outlined in relevant international frameworks, while also strengthening participants' ability to incorporate ageing-related issues and priorities into public policy development.³⁶ Similarly, in Yemen, a workshop was aimed at increasing awareness of older persons' rights as defined by international and regional frameworks and enhancing participants' capacity to integrate these issues into the policy development process.³⁷ An interactive approach was employed in the Yemen workshop, including hands-on sessions that provided practical guidance on how to embed older persons' concerns into existing development policies.

IV. Consideration for the preparations for and observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing

68. The year 2027 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing. This commemoration presents an opportunity to strengthen commitment to the Political Declaration and the actions outlined in the Madrid Plan of Action. It is aimed at ensuring that these outcome documents are included in the implementation of other global commitments and mobilizing resources to advance their implementation. Member States are invited to consider, galvanize interest in and explore the possibility of hosting a third World Assembly on Ageing. Such an assembly would provide a platform to celebrate and reinforce the achievements of humanity, while fostering renewed global commitment to advancing the well-being, inclusion and human rights of older persons.

V. Proposed timeline for the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and key recommendations

69. In keeping with the mandated timeline for the fifth five-year review and appraisal, the proposed calendar could be as follows:

- 2025: The Commission for Social Development, at its sixty-third session, decides on the modalities for the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002
- 2026: National reviews and appraisals
- 2027: Regional review processes
- 2028: Global review by the Commission for Social Development at its sixty-sixth session

70. **The Commission for Social Development may wish:**

- (a) **To request Member States to endorse the proposed timeline for carrying out the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002;**

³⁶ See www.unescwa.org/events/mainstreaming-ageing-policy-making-egypt.

³⁷ See www.unescwa.org/events/mainstreaming-ageing-national-policy-making-yemen.

- (b) To request Member States to undertake a national review and appraisal process, by identifying actions taken since the fourth review and appraisal;
 - (c) To request Member States to follow a bottom-up approach, by prioritizing and committing adequate resources for the participation of civil society in the planning and evaluation processes of the review and appraisal;
 - (d) To request the regional commissions to continue to facilitate, including through their intergovernmental bodies and in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and civil society organizations, the fifth review and appraisal exercise at the regional level;
 - (e) To decide that the global review and appraisal will be held by the Commission on the third day of its sixty-sixth session, in 2028;
 - (f) To decide also that the Commission, at its sixty-sixth session, will adopt an intergovernmentally negotiated resolution entitled “Fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002”;
 - (g) To decide further that the global review, subject to the rules of procedure of the Commission, will consist of two meetings:
 - (i) A high-level panel on the outcomes of the fifth review and appraisal;
 - (ii) A multi-stakeholder interactive panel discussion with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions;
 - (h) To invite a representative of older persons to deliver a statement at the opening segment;
 - (i) To invite non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council with relevant expertise to register with the Secretariat to attend the global review;
 - (j) To invite the United Nations system, including the Inter-Agency Group on Ageing, funds, programmes, specialized agencies and the regional commissions, as well as the international financial institutions, to participate and contribute to the global review, within their respective mandates;
 - (k) To encourage Member States, international institutions and other stakeholders to support the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action through voluntary contributions to the United Nations trust fund for ageing.
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