

Historic UN Resolution Advances Human Rights of Older Persons

On April 3, 2025, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a landmark resolution, establishing a new intergovernmental working group to draft an international legally binding instrument (UN convention) on the human rights of older persons. This resolution highlights a global commitment to promote and protect the human rights of older persons.

Historical moment: After the UN General Assembly concluded the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, which throughout 14 years of work highlighted substantial gaps in the protection of older persons' rights, the Human Rights Council mandate to draft a legally binding instrument. The resolution adopted at the HRC58 today, driven by a core group of nations including Argentina, Brazil, The Gambia, the Philippines, and Slovenia, received very strong support from sixty-eight cosponsoring countries, including thirty-three members of the Human Rights Council.

Today's resolution not only paves the way for a new convention but also sets an historical milestone in the promotions of older persons' human rights worldwide.

Significant Contribution of NGOs: The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons and the NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva ably organised and coordinated the advocacy at the 58th session of the HRC. Many organisations such as Age International, AARP, Age Platform Europe, BAGSO, the International Federation on Ageing, HelpAge International, The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, The International Longevity Centre Global Alliance, Soroptimist International and many others were present in Geneva in person and online. NGOs have been instrumental in advocating for a Convention and the drafting of this resolution. Their relentless efforts, including delivering multiple statements, hosting a side event and participating in the informal negotiations, have been key in mobilizing support, raising awareness, and influencing discussions at the UN.

Impact of the Adopted Resolution and future Convention: The newly adopted resolution establishes a working group that will negotiate and draft, a legally binding instrument enshrining older persons' rights into international law.

Next Steps: With the resolution now in place, the focus shifts to the consultation and drafting under the continued guidance and contribution of the Core Group of the resolution, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. Civil society organizations will meaningfully engage and play a crucial role in this process providing expertise and advocacy. This historic development will influence parallel and future international discussions, including the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing and the upcoming Social Summit in Qatar, shaping broader human rights and social policy frameworks.

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