



**Statement to be delivered by H.E. Ambassador Omar Castañeda Solares,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations,
on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons**

**At the side-event in occasion of the
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD)**

“Moving from Awareness to Action through a Human Rights based approach”

United Nations Headquarters in New York, Conference Room 9

14 June 2018

Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear colleagues,

It is an honour for me to participate in this event on behalf of the “Group of Friends of Older Persons” at the United Nations in New York. The Group is comprised by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Slovenia, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and my own country, Guatemala.

First of all, allow me thank the organizers for convening this event in commemoration of the 7th Anniversary of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day: INPEA, the NGO Committee on Ageing and DESA. The Group of Friends has proudly joined as co-sponsor.

The commemoration of this day was officially recognized by the United Nations in 2011, with the purpose to raise the world voices to fight against the abuse and suffering inflicted to older persons. The theme of this year’s observance of the world day: “Moving from Awareness to Action through a Human Rights based approach”, is trying to remind us that we need to take actions to tackle elder abuse and restore the rights and dignity for all those affected, or at risk.

Elder abuse is a global and growing phenomenon, although its true magnitude is still unknown, due to lack of data, awareness, and underreporting. New estimates from World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that 1 in 6 persons over 60 is suffering from abuse, this means 141 million people worldwide.

This number is alarming, if this group of people suffering from elder abuse constituted a single, sovereign country; it would be among the top 10 most populated countries, between the Russian Federation, which has 143 million people and Mexico, which has 130 million.

The number of older persons suffering from abuse could rise up to 320 million, if no actions are taken, according to the OHCHR. The WHO estimates that up to 80% of cases of elder abuse are not reported, which means that, the number is as much as five times higher.

One of the most common forms of elder abuse is financial abuse, being it the unauthorized, illegal or improper exploitation or use of funds, property or any other resources of the older person. It is a form of violence against older persons and severely affects the enjoyment of their human rights, particularly the right to live free from violence and discrimination and the right to have a life of dignity in their old age. It triggers poverty, hunger, homelessness and other types of abuses, and constitutes an issue which deserves the attention and immediate action of the international community.

In this regard, we need to take actions to combat this serious problem, and for that it is imperative to consider that older persons are specific right-holders who have contributed and continue to play an active role in the many areas of development of our societies.

Preventing and ending all forms of abuse against older persons is crucial if we are to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, target 17.18 of the SDGs includes a clear call for all relevant population-based indicators to be disaggregated by age as a means of ensuring that the impact of development policies on persons of all ages will be monitored and that persons of all ages will have a better chance to participate in, and benefit from, development. Moreover, Member States further committed to taking into account population trends and projections in national, rural and urban development strategies and policies.

Dear colleagues,

Men and women experience old age differently. While both older men and older women face age-based discrimination, older women also face the additional cumulative effects of gender-based discrimination throughout their lives. The combination of discrimination on the basis of age and sex puts women at more of a disadvantage in old age than men. Older women continue to suffer from discriminatory laws and practices that render them more vulnerable to abuse and violence. In this sense, we express our deep concern about the fact that neglect, abuse and violence against older women often go undetected.

It is fundamental, in this regard, to foster the capacity of States to more effectively collect data, statistics and qualitative information, disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant factors as necessary such as marital status, and disability, in order to better assess the situation of older persons, and to encourage the international community and the relevant agencies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support national efforts to provide funding for research and data-collection initiatives on older persons and violence against older women, in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities presented by population ageing and to provide policymakers with more accurate and more specific information with regard to a gender perspective on ageing.

To conclude,

The Group of Friends reiterates and renews its commitment to promote and ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for older persons, including by taking measures to combat discrimination on the basis of age and sex, as well as neglect, abuse and violence, and to address issues related to social integration.

Designing and implementing policies and programmes, as well as devising adequate national, regional and international legal frameworks that effectively and specifically promote the full enjoyment of the human rights of older persons and allow their full social inclusion, as well as their participation in social, economic, cultural, civil and political life, without any restraints and free from all forms of discrimination and violence, will lead to ensure their dignity, empowerment, and their ability to fully and effectively enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms, actively participating in their societies and contributing to its development.

As the OHCHR expressed in the last session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, our population is ageing. By 2050, one in six persons in the world will be 65 years or older. It is neither imaginable, nor acceptable, to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses and violations that threaten daily 141 million of people.

Finally, allow us to recognize the valuable efforts by civil society in improving the situation of older persons worldwide and to reiterate that the Group of Friends of Older Persons will continue to work tirelessly to promote the rights of all older persons around the world.

I thank you.