Lord Ahmad
Minister of State
Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London, SW1A 2AH

16 April 2024

Dear Lord Ahmad,

We are writing as organisations concerned with the rights of older people globally to urge the UK Government to take every possible measure to secure and strengthen the protection of the rights of older persons. As you know, UN discussions regarding the rights of older persons in New York are reaching a critical phase. The Government has an important role to play both in the negotiation of the recommendations coming out of the intersessional process, as well as in the discussions that will take place in the 14th Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) in May. This is an opportunity for the UK to take the global stage and be seen internationally as a leader in promoting the rights of older persons.

We would like to share with you our expectations for what we hope the Government will bring to these discussions.

The UK Government was part of the informal core group of Member States which drafted the language of the agreement that led to the creation of the intersessional process. It is essential that the process achieves its purpose of helping Member States to move beyond the diplomatic uncertainties that have been plaguing the OEWG. In particular, we expect the UK Government and other Member States to ensure that the intersessional process recommendations include:

- A definitive statement that gaps in the protection of the rights of older persons in all their diversity exist internationally and must be addressed.
- A recognition that existing measures are insufficient for achieving the protection of the rights of older persons.
- And that a universal legally binding human rights instrument is necessary among the responses to addressing these gaps.

Regarding the UK Government's stated position that it is open to the possibility of a legally binding instrument, we believe that the time has come for the Government to openly support a human rights convention amongst the various measures that are necessary both nationally and internationally to protect the rights of older persons.

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We also note with concern that in its submission to the intersessional process, the Government suggested that a Declaration could be considered as one of the options to be pursued. We consider that this is not appropriate as a response because:

- Declarations, like all soft law, have proved insufficient for creating legal certainty. As well, Declarations are insufficiently robust to reinforce the responsibilities and obligations of all parties for securing the rights of older persons internationally.
- Member States have already agreed a Political Declaration in April 2002 as part of the establishment of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. After 22 years, while the existing Declaration has been useful, it is clearly not enough to address the gaps in the protection of the rights of older persons that are so evident.

We urge the Government to use the upcoming negotiations in New York to make clear that only a human rights convention for older persons is adequate as a universal legally binding human rights instrument to ensure the protection of the rights of older persons.

We also hope the Government will ensure that it is represented at the highest possible level at the OEWG. We understand that Ministers from other Member States will be attending.

We look forward to working with the Government on this important agenda to ensure that the rights of older persons no matter where they are in the world are secured and protected.

If you require anything further from us, please contact Ken Bluestone, Policy Lead for Age International (ken.bluestone@ageinternational.org.uk, 0771 7766 469).

Yours sincerely,



Alison Marshall
CEO, Age International

Writing on behalf of:

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, Age UK
Caroline Harper, CEO, Sightsavers
Dr Donald Macaskill, CEO, Scottish Care
Heléna Herklots, Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Jan Shortt, General Secretary, National Pensioners Convention
Joanna Elson, CEO, Independent Age
Katherine Crawford, CEO, Age Scotland
Kirsty Smith, Chief Executive, CBM UK
Linda Robinson, Chief Executive, Age NI
Paola Barbarino, CEO, Alzheimer's Disease International
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