



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

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National statement delivered by

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**14 session –
Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing**

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Belgium welcomes the convening of the 14th session of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing. My country is committed to the protection and promotion of the human rights of older persons.

As we are ageing, we all run the risk of facing a range of challenges that can significantly impact our physical and mental well-being. Discrimination in the enjoyment of our human rights should not be one of these challenges. In Belgium, the anti-discrimination legislation protects individuals from discrimination based on specific criteria. These criteria are enshrined in law, making it illegal and in some cases punishable to discriminate against someone based on any of these grounds.

Today, we would like to highlight the importance of accessibility for older persons, in particular regarding infrastructure. By making our environments more accessible and inclusive, we can help to break down barriers and ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to participate fully and equally in society. The “Universal Design” principle outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a crucial step towards ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals and can play a significant role in promoting the full enjoyment of human rights by older persons in their daily lives.

In Belgium, both at the federal and regional level, efforts are being undertaken to ensure that older persons are protected from discrimination and can fully participate in public life. For instance, the Flemish region has developed a policy plan for the elderly, amongst others to promote the inclusion of older persons in public life and decision-making processes through advisory councils of older persons at the municipalities. The Brussels-Capital region has developed new intergenerational housing programs, like "CALICO" Care and Living in Community, a co-housing project offering a generational and social mix to the mutual benefits of all. Meanwhile, the Walloon region has developed an inclusive housing project for older persons aiming to build inclusive, autonomous, and supportive housing equipped with the latest technology.

Last but not least,

An illustration of our commitment to promote the human rights of older persons at the international level is the fact that Belgium was one of the approximate 40 UN Member States submitting a response to the co-facilitators' questionnaire on 'the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how to better address them'. While a new instrument on the human rights of older persons will possibly shed light on the challenges and discrimination they encounter, the feasibility of such an instrument requires further work and any consideration should be consensus-based. Much remains to be done to better implement the current instruments at our disposal, which should be given priority. Furthermore, a possible new instrument should also be considered in the light of existing regional initiatives (and existing regional Conventions) to avoid any risk of duplication. Belgium remains committed to engage constructively with all existing UN human rights mechanisms as well as within this Open-Ended Working Group.