



## KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of Gilles Bauwens, First Secretary, at

### 13th Session of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing Item 7

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New York, 10/04/2023

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Belgium welcomes the fruitful discussions that took place during this 13th session of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing. My country is committed to the realization of the human rights of older persons and therefore welcomes the work of this session as an excellent tool to better mainstream the human rights of older persons.

We would particularly like to thank the representatives of civil society for their contributions and their crucial work in general on this matter. The participation of civil society, including older persons themselves, is indeed important to enrich our discussions and should be given due recognition.

Over the years, opinion on ageing appears to become slightly more negative. Older persons continue to face discriminations and stereotypes. Belgium believes that we must better implement the existing human rights framework by identifying gaps in legislation and policies and by taking effective actions to implement the relevant UN human rights conventions.

We welcome the topics of discussions for this session, namely the right to health, access to healthcare and social inclusion of the elderly. The Covid crisis has indeed highlighted the particularly difficult balance between security, health and mental well-being of older people.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, Belgium is committed to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. Belgium strongly believes that everyone

- regardless of age, gender or race - should be able to benefit from good quality and affordable preventive and curative health care.

Improving the quality of health and access to health care is at the heart of Belgium's policies at home and abroad. For instance, investments have been made in Belgium in mental health care and, more specifically, in the quality of life and the life of the elderly in residential care centres. Mental health reform projects, including for the elderly, are also underway and optimized where possible.

In addition, Belgium places universal access to basic health care at the heart of its international cooperation with partner countries. The right to health and the strengthening of health systems is a priority for our non-governmental partners, civil society and academic actors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Belgium, the objectives of ageing-related policies focus on three areas. Firstly, ensuring that older people have access to social, economic and cultural rights. Secondly, preventing, reducing and excluding discrimination and social exclusion on the grounds of age. And thirdly, enabling older people to participate fully in society.

In this sense, Belgium will continue to defend the right to health and access to healthcare of good quality for everybody without any discrimination because we believe it contributes to a just and equitable society.

Thank you.