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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing
Berlin (Germany), 11-13 September 2002

**BERLIN MINISTERIAL DECLARATION
A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES IN THE UNECE REGION**

1. We, the representatives of the member states of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, gathered at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin from 11 to 13 September 2002, adopt the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UNECE region and commit our governments to implement this comprehensive strategy.

2. We recognise that the UNECE region is experiencing unprecedented demographic changes and has the highest proportion of older persons. These changes are the result of a profound socio-economic transformation. They pose multiple challenges and provide numerous opportunities for our societies. We have a responsibility, in collaboration with all relevant actors of civil society and the private sector, to seize these opportunities and fully respond to these challenges.

3. We welcome the continual growth in longevity as an important achievement of our societies. Older persons are a valuable resource and make an essential contribution to society. We emphasise the importance of enabling older persons to continue to participate fully in all aspects of life. Our approach to ageing is all-inclusive, promoting the development of a society for all ages through the strengthening of intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity. Young generations have responsibilities and a special role in building a society for all ages.

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4. We are aware that promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential for the active participation of older persons in all aspects in life and for the creation of a

society for all ages. We commit ourselves to ensure the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights of persons and the elimination of all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, and of discrimination against older persons. In this connection, groups with special needs, irrespective of the age of their members, including the poor, socially excluded and those with disabilities, are of particular concern to us. We are determined to enable all persons to reach old age in better health and well-being, with particular attention to the situation of older women, and to enhance the recognition of the dignity and independence of older persons.

5. We are cognisant of the economic and social consequences of the long-term nature of demographic changes. To be successful, responses to these changes should be sustainable. Moreover, the responses should be based on a holistic approach, so that ageing is mainstreamed in all policy fields. Policies for different sectors, systems and groups should be comprehensive, properly co-ordinated, mutually supportive and gender sensitive. The challenge is for society as a whole to adapt to demographic changes, in particular ageing.

6. We are aware that our increasingly integrated region consists of societies at vastly different levels of economic and social development and that a number of countries with economies in transition are less equipped to face the challenges of population ageing. Thus assistance to these countries should be enhanced.

7. We affirm that our societies share common values, including those pertaining to human rights, fundamental freedoms and elimination of all forms of discrimination. We also recognise the existence of substantial variations among UNECE member states in economic, social, political, and cultural fields. The Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 is sensitive to these differences.

8. In adopting the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, and in pursuance of mainstreaming ageing into all policy fields, we give particular priority to: expanding participation of older persons in society and fostering social inclusion and independent living; promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth in addressing the implications of population ageing; strengthening adequate and sustainable social protection for present and future generations; encouraging labour markets to respond to ageing and take advantage of the potential of older persons; promoting life-long learning; enhancing life-long physical and mental health and well-being; ensuring equal access to high quality health and social care; mainstreaming a gender perspective in all ageing policies; supporting older persons, their families, and communities in their care-giving roles; and promoting intergenerational solidarity.

9. We commit ourselves to implement the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 at all levels, from local to national. We reiterate that we have the primary responsibility to pursue this objective, working in close co-operation with

civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, particularly older persons themselves. Their contribution to the development of effective policy responses is vital.

10. We resolve to promote and take part in co-operation among the UNECE member states in implementing the Regional Implementation Strategy. Such co-operation could be further enhanced by active collaboration among relevant United Nations departments and agencies and other intergovernmental organisations and institutions active in the field of ageing in the UNECE region as well as NGO networks. We consider that co-operation within the region should be fully in line with commitments made at the Second World Assembly on Ageing regarding all dimensions of international co-operation.

11. We stress the importance of an effective follow-up to the implementation of the Regional Implementation Strategy that should allow for a productive exchange of information, experience and best practices. This process would benefit as much as possible from adequate collaboration and active participation of relevant organisations of the region.

12. We are convinced that putting into effect the Regional Implementation Strategy is the best way of implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 in the UNECE region and, therefore, we will spare no effort at achieving this objective.

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