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**Note by the Secretariat to the Commission for
Social Development on Modalities for
Review and Appraisal of the
Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing**

Summary

This note addresses the role of the Commission for Social Development in integrating the different dimensions of population ageing in its work and modalities for review and appraisal of follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing 2002. The subject of ageing as a cross-cutting theme is underscored, paying particular attention to the need to integrate ageing into the Commission's work and into the broader agendas of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and other relevant functional commissions. A system-wide and coordinated follow-up to the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is proposed in the form of a bottom-up and flexible approach in order to better assess the Madrid objectives. The Commission for Social Development as the intergovernmental platform for global review and appraisal is called on to play a crucial role, as population ageing becomes a pressing issue in the decades ahead. In this regard, a number of recommendations in bold are presented to the Commission throughout this note

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I. Introduction

1. This note is prepared in order to facilitate discussions at the Commission for Social Development as the intergovernmental body responsible for follow-up and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Specifically it addresses paragraph 132 of the Madrid Plan in which States requested the Commission for Social Development to integrate the different dimensions of population ageing in its work and to consider the modalities for review and appraisal of follow up to the Assembly as soon as possible. General Assembly Resolution A/C.3/57/L.15 Rev. 1 further requested that the Commission consider these modalities at its forty-first session in 2003.

II. Role of the Commission for Social Development in review and appraisal of the Second World Assembly on Ageing

A. Integration of population ageing

2. In response to the request by Member States to integrate the different dimensions of population ageing in its work, **the Commission for Social Development is invited to apply an ageing perspective in the consideration of the priority themes pertaining to follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, and in its regular review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, including youth in the context of intergenerational solidarity; persons with disabilities; and families.** However, the requirement of integration involves more than the remit of the Commission, whose work in social development is also addressed by the Economic and Social

Council and the General Assembly, which in turn influence, and are influenced by, other processes. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Economic and Social Council, in its agreed Conclusions 2002/1, “should seek to identify themes including on new and evolving issues”. **The Commission for Social Development may wish to propose to the Economic and Social Council the theme of ageing as one of these new and emerging issues for consideration at the Council’s coordination segment.**¹

3. The report of the Secretary-General on Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the major United Nations conferences (A/57/75-E/2002/57), calls attention to the three-tiered system for reviewing conferences – the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and relevant functional commissions – and underscores this system’s role and overall responsibility in follow-up, coordinating and implementing the outcomes of the United Nations conferences. It follows that integration of population ageing should go beyond the work of the Commission. **The Commission should play an active role in promoting such integration in the work of the other functional commissions, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.** This effort could be akin to such endeavours as mainstreaming gender and human rights, as have been pursued by the Commissions on the Status of Women and for Human Rights.

4. In the Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387), ageing is highlighted in the section on “Aligning activities with priorities”. In the words of the Report: “We must prepare for the shift that has already started in the relative proportions of young people and the aged in most parts of the world and its

¹ In its Agreed Conclusions 1995/1 the Economic and Social Council identified cross-cutting themes and adopted a thematic approach to the follow-up to the major conferences of the 1990s. At that time the issue of ageing was not included among those themes (see also E/2002/62, para 21).

implications for the labour force, social services and political processes”(para 39). In view of this, the subject of ageing was recently addressed at the meeting of the High Level Committee on Programmes of the Chief Executives Board on Coordination, which called for a strengthening of focal points on ageing within the United Nations system and for closer coordination of relevant activities in the context of implementation of the Madrid Plan.

5. Issues related to ageing and older persons are progressively being pursued in the context of other global processes, but they are still far from attaining the profile called for in the Madrid Plan. They were taken up by some extent at both the Financing for Development Conference at Monterrey and the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg. The Monterrey Consensus addresses the role of pension schemes as a source of social protection as well as savings and resources for development. And the Johannesburg outcome recognized holders of traditional knowledge and practices - a characteristic typical to community elders - and called for their effective participation in decision and policy-making.

6. The inclusion of all population groups in the evolving global development framework is one of the keys to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which affirm the long-term imperative of eradicating poverty and fulfilling the social and humanitarian goals set up by the global conferences of the 1990s. Thus, the role of older persons needs to be addressed in the follow-up processes to the Millennium Declaration and, particularly, in the context of the eradication of poverty through, for example, continuing productive activities in their communities and society at large, caring for grandchildren in the household while the parents are working, or caring for orphaned grandchildren whose parents died of AIDS.

B. Follow-up Aspects

7. The Madrid Plan of Action has placed a new issue of global significance on the international policy agenda. In the words of the Secretary General: “Ageing is a silent revolution that extends well beyond demographics, with major economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications”. The Commission for Social Development therefore has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the implications of this silent revolution are widely known and effectively addressed. Population ageing is a most pressing issue in the decades ahead for all countries, be they developed, developing or in transition. Its ramifications are manifold, as noted by the Secretary-General at Madrid: “Ageing is definitely no longer just a ‘first world issue’. What was a footnote in the twentieth century is on its way to becoming a dominant theme in the twenty-first century”. Follow-up to Madrid is therefore a major challenge.

8. In its resolution on Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields (A/C.2/57/L.28), the General Assembly reaffirmed the need to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and to promote coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields.

9. Additionally, in its agreed conclusions on “Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements...” (2002/1), the Economic and Social Council called for a coordinated and integrated follow up to commitments agreed at major United Nations conferences, and decided, inter alia, that its functional commissions should enhance their role as the main fora for expert follow-up and review of United Nations

conferences and summits, and identify cross-cutting policy issues, gaps/overlaps, areas of complementarity and cooperation, and focus on substantive issues.

10. In view of the above, the Commission should be seen as the key intergovernmental platform to enhance policy coherence in the area of ageing and to elevate ageing-related issues among stakeholders and global partners. Issues related to ageing cut across all policies. This was reinforced at the Second World Assembly, which affirmed the necessary first step in implementation of the Madrid Plan: to mainstream ageing and the concerns of older persons into national development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies (MIPAA, para 116).

11. The Commission's role in the follow-up, as set out by the Economic and Social Council, has become even more important for the Commission in light of the Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Berlin, whose follow-up process was made contingent on what would be decided at the Commission. Regional involvement and engagement in the follow-up to Madrid are essential if we are to be successful in making Madrid operational. The Commission's ability to define a follow-up process becomes therefore even more imperative.

III. Modalities for Follow-up and Review of Implementation of the Madrid Plan

12. As stated in the Madrid Plan, successful implementation requires sustained action at all levels involving Governments – who have the primary responsibility – and other stakeholders in order to respond to the demographic changes ahead and to mobilize the skills and energies of older persons. (MIPAA, para 114). Review of the implementation of the Plan will require

efficient use of networks, partnerships, and other consultation machineries to unveil critical, timely, and relevant information from the ground up.

A. Review and Appraisal from the bottom up

13. The central idea behind the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action is to move away from a ‘top-down’ approach. This review and appraisal proposal calls for a ‘bottom-up’ approach that would allow the intergovernmental deliberative process to benefit from carefully considered assessments of whether or not the Madrid objectives are being achieved at local, national, subregional and regional levels. This approach entails the gathering of information through sharing of ideas, data collection, and best practices, and is designed to ensure that the review and appraisal is carried out as close as possible to the level where the issues arise. A review of this kind would produce a more pertinent outcome, both in the narrower sense of bringing local concerns to the global level, thereby supplementing policy needs, and in the broader sense of keeping stakeholders socially and politically engaged.

14. **The all-encompassing nature of population ageing demands that the review and appraisal of implementation should engage Governments, the United Nations system as well as civil society. The process proposed here would involve open-ended dialogues, meetings and fora with various stakeholders at local levels in as well as outside of government, and in partnership and coordination with national actors. The findings of these local gatherings would be consolidated at the subregional and regional level.**

15. A regional approach to the review and appraisal is therefore critical, in that it

serves as a bridge between national and global considerations. **Regional entities, most notably the United Nations regional commissions and their intergovernmental bodies, should play an active role in assessing the implementation of the Plan by networking with their member countries, the national committees and other stakeholders in information exchange and the gathering and compiling of data and research.**

16. Inter-linkage among the issues should be taken into account. For their part, United Nations agencies, including through the use of local field offices, can contribute through their particular areas of expertise. For example, the ILO can make specialized contributions with regard to employment and social protection affecting older persons; the WHO concerning healthy ageing and lifelong development; and the FAO on rural ageing and development. Civil society organizations, many of whom have substantial experience in ageing and development, should also be actively engaged. Stakeholders from the non-governmental, academic and scientific community bring experience and insight, integral features of any successful outcome. Their constituents are often spread over urban and rural districts, local, national and regional borders, and their mandates are multifaceted, which make them a valuable resource for information gathering.

17. Overall, the cumulative impact of partnerships with civil society in this proposed review and appraisal process would be considerable, with the potential to provide a richer context and deeper understanding of the issues. As pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening of the United Nations, “to bring about change today, it is necessary to mobilize the support, and cultivate the ideas, of a diverse network of non-State actors. Today a major United Nations gathering without the involvement of civil society in all its various forms is scarcely imaginable” (A/57/387, paras 11 and 12).

B. Global Outcome

18. As the bottom-up approach to the review and appraisal winds its way up from the local, via the national, through the subregional to the regional level, its culmination will take place at the global level: the Commission for Social Development. Rather than a solely prescriptive role in the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, the Commission could be the recipient of ideas, lessons of experience and policy advice from those directly involved in implementing the Plan. It is foreseen that the content of such a review would be far richer and more useful than what could be obtained through survey reviews.

19. It is envisaged that the Commission for Social Development will provide the forum in which stakeholder representatives would present and elaborate their findings. This could be conducted in a symposium, for example, the results to be presented as a resolution or a Chairman's summary. **The Commission is invited to consider this flexible approach to the review and appraisal and reach an understanding on the format of the substantive outcome.**

20. In this regard, **the Commission may wish to consider a review and appraisal of the Plan every four or five years. In identifying the themes or issues for review, it may adhere to the priority directions and recommendations in the Madrid Plan. The three priority directions – ageing and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments – produced 18 issues and 239 recommendations. In order to accommodate the complexity and diversity of the issues and**

recommendations, the Commission may wish to adopt the above described approach to the review and appraisal of the Plan.

C. Role of DESA

21. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) will serve as facilitator in this review process. This would include preparation of materials for a review strategy, advocacy and information dissemination and exchange. DESA could develop, under guidance of the Commission, guidelines for the review of the Madrid Plan - the principal instrument against which progress will be appraised. It would also work closely with the Bureau of the Commission in planning, organizing and implementing the symposium envisaged for the outcome proceedings.