

PANEL DISCUSSION OF THE FIRST REVIEW AND APPRAISAL PROCESS OF  
THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING:  
*“Towards a Society of All Ages”*

**Date:** 14 February 2007

**Organizers:** UN-NGLS, Permanent Mission of Spain to the UN and the UN Programme on Ageing (DESA)

**Participants:**

- **Mr. Ignacio Robles**, Secretary General of IMSERSO (Institute of Older Persons and Social Services; Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales - Spain)
- **Mr. Alexandre Sidorenko**, U.N. Programme on Ageing, Division for Social Policy and Development, DESA
- **Ms. Ann Pawliczko**, Population and Development Branch, Technical Support Division, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- **Ms. Helen R. Hamlin**, International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

**Main issues:**

**Mr. Robles**, Secretary General of IMSERSO, started his presentation by highlighting the priorities of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), which includes provisions for the mainstreaming of ageing in national development plans, older people's participation, the concept of active ageing and the creation of an older people-friendly environment. He then presented the progress made by the Spanish jurisdiction with the “dependency Act”, which ensures protection, autonomy and dignity of elderly and disabled people, who are entitled to specific services and economic benefits. The dependency act marks a step forward in building citizenship laws and stands for a model for the international community. It guarantees the bottom-up participatory approach with the creation of a Council for older persons, and allocates resources to reinforce a whole range of programs targeted to older persons. Mr. Robles also gave an overview of Spain's contribution to the revision and follow-up of MIPAA, pointing out the crucial role of civil society in the whole preparatory process of the UNECE regional conference on ageing to be held in 2007. Spain supports the bottom-up participatory approach of evaluations, focuses on implemented regulations, programs and budgetary allocations in order to generate good practices and priorities for future cooperation. By facilitating the creation of regional programmes, inter-state councils and international meetings, from the local to the international level, Spain has succeeded in involving every relevant stakeholder.

**Mr. Sidorenko**, head of the U.N. Programme on Ageing of DESA started his remarks by presenting the bottom-up participatory approach of the MIPAA review and appraisal process. Part of the efforts to improve the understanding of the impact of policies on the life of elderly people, as recommended by the Secretary General in 2003, consists in including new features in review processes. A participatory bottom up approach calls for the participation of all stakeholders in the entire process from design to monitoring through evaluation. However, as Mr. Sidorenko pointed out, while a few countries such as Spain have made noteworthy efforts to foster an enabling environment through the support of research centers, participatory projects and expertise building, a majority of countries do not have the means to involve all relevant actors. As part of the effort to bridge this gap, Mr. Sidorenko presented the “Guidelines for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing” produced by the U.N. Programme on Ageing. The Guidelines aim at assisting national Governmental in carrying out the bottom-up review and appraisal process by offering practical examples and ideas. Finally Mr. Sidorenko addressed the question of what had been done at the country level to implement the MIPAA (such as priorities lists to assess progress, etc) and what had been the impact of these policies.

**Ms. Pawliczko**, on behalf of the Population and Development Branch of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) presented the role of each stakeholder in the MIPAA review and appraisal process. She emphasized the role of UNFPA at the country level by providing guidance and support to government in policy formulation, data collection, research, trainings, progress review, capacity building and awareness raising on ageing-related issues. She also underlined the responsibilities of governments to implement policies and programmes supportive of MIPAA, and to mainstream ageing-related issues into development frameworks and poverty reduction strategies. The role of the UN is to promote MIPAA by influencing governments, collaborating with all UN agencies, facilitating the dialogue among stakeholders, encouraging research and exchange of best practices. As for NGOs, Ms. Pawliczko said they had a crucial role in the MIPAA review and appraisal process, by acting as watch-dogs, reaching out to older people and supporting their initiatives by lobbying and advocating for their needs, as well as by identifying and mobilizing resources for MIPAA implementation.

The last panelist, **Ms. Hamlin**, spoke on behalf of the International Federation on Ageing (IFA). She praised the efforts made by the government of Spain hoping that it will help keep the issue of ageing on the international agenda. She expressed satisfaction that the General Assembly Resolution entitled “United Nations Principles for Older Persons” of 1991 which came into being following the First World Assembly on Ageing 1982 at the initiative of the IFA, is receiving more attention as older persons come into greater focus. She stressed the need to translate this document as well as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing into more than the six official languages of the UN, thus enabling more people to understand these important documents. Such an initiative has already been taken up by NGOs in Singapore, Japan, India. Recalling that ageing is not only a humanitarian issue but a development issue (older and dependent people are not necessarily burdens but are assets in society), Mrs. Hamlin concluded her intervention by highlighting the need for taking further actions that can create partnerships to struggle against elder abuse as well as the stereotyping of older persons.

#### **Comments from the audience and responses from the panelists:**

The audience praised the progress made by Spain in their legislation (to move from a landmark law to a real law) and with the resources devoted to related programmes.

It was acknowledged that a strong global movement was needed to tackle cross-cutting issues and that establishing multistakholder partnerships was important.

Mr. Robles explained that Spain was facing a critical demographic revolution, in which the number of people over 80 had doubled and the number of people over 60 had tripled within the past 30 years. Therefore Spain had to take action. Today’s huge advance in terms of human rights is the resulting success of the whole society. People have understood the importance of not only giving rights to elderly people but to learning from them as well. Finally, Ms. Pawliczko addressed her comments to NGOs advising them to link ageing to cross-cutting issues when doing fund raising.