ICC STATEMENT

The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) is the global network of over 100 national human rights institutions, 69 of which are accredited in full compliance with the Paris Principles.

The ICC welcomes this Social Forum's focus on the human rights of older persons and the opportunity to contribute to the discussions from the perspective of national human rights institutions (NHRIs).

Older persons represent a large and growing segment of the world's population and they face particular and serious human rights challenges. As starkly evidenced by the experience of NHRIs across all regions, these challenges are mounting in scale and degree and relate equally to all human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural, rights.

Yet despite considerable efforts at national, regional and international levels, responses to human rights concerns of older persons remain largely inadequate. There is an alarming deficit of the international community in unequivocally recognising the need for stronger protection mechanisms for older persons.

NHRIs, in line with their Paris Principles-based mandates can provide an important means to fill the existing promotion and protection gaps relevant to older persons.

Many NHRIs are engaged in monitoring the human rights of older persons. Monitoring helps to identify the diversity of issues older persons encounter and their particular vulnerabilities. Monitoring also helps to develop disaggregated data on the older persons population; data which is often sorely lacking.

Age discrimination continues to be a pressing matter of concern in all regions, both by law and policies, and by recurring stereotyping and negative attitudes. NHRIs have an important role in providing legislative advice to their governments and parliament, to ensure domestic legislation is in full compliance with international human rights norms and standards.

NHRIs have a strong mandate on human rights education and awareness raising and can thus help combat negative stereotyping and attitudes against older persons.
Some national human rights institutions have the power to adjudicate complaints, including on the basis of age discrimination, and to provide redress to victims.

Abuse and violence against older persons is another of the pressing human rights issues that requires urgent attention. While often this phenomenon is hidden, many national human rights institutions have a mandate to undertake visits to places such as care institutions and some NHRIs are designated as national preventive mechanisms under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OP CAT). NHRI investigative powers are critical to gather reliable statistics and information in order to assess the extent of the problem and to offer effective remedies.

Important NHRI initiatives are also developing at the regional level. In 2011 at their 8th regional Conference, members of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) explored the specific roles of NHRIs in advancing the rights of older person. In May, NHRIs in the Asia Pacific region will meet at a workshop in Sydney, to discuss the need for an international convention on older persons. NHRIs in the Americas are considering focusing their next regional meeting on the roles of NHRIs in the protection and promotion of human rights and older persons. The European Network of NHRIs (ENNHRI) was part of Council of Europe drafting group for recommendations on the promotion of the human rights of older persons which were adopted in February 2014. ENNHRI will continue its work in the field of human rights of older persons especially in the care system in Europe.

At the international level, the ICC supports the development of a comprehensive international legal instrument to promote and protect the human rights and dignity of older persons. A legally binding instrument would assist in providing the highest possible protection for older persons and its special focus would make existing rights more concrete and the group itself more visible. The ICC welcomes the recent resolution by the Human Rights Council to appoint an Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

Thus, the ICC calls on Member states to

- Collect meaningful data on the realisation of human rights by older persons;
- Review gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons;
- Seek to advance awareness and understanding of older persons' human rights;
- Fully implement the existing human rights standards as they relate to older persons;
- Launch consultations with civil society to increase states' understanding of the barriers to the full realisation of older persons' rights;
- Encourage the participation by all UN Member states in the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) and support the participation of NHRIs in the OEWG;
- Invite the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons to undertake country visits; and
- Disseminate information and create awareness at a domestic level about the ongoing UN processes.

Against this background, the ICC and its members welcome and look forward to the discussions over the next days.

Thank you.