



OPENING REMARKS – MIOSOTIS RIVAS PEÑA

Briefing of national focal points to present the Guide for the preparation of the voluntary national reports in the context of the fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Friday 10th April 2026, 10.00am ECT

Distinguished guests and esteemed colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this briefing of national focal points on the upcoming fifth review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) which gets underway this year. It is now nearly 25 years since the global community came together at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, in 2002, to address this profound, long-term demographic change which is affecting all regions of the world. Back in 2002, the Caribbean was still at a relatively early stage of the ageing process. However, the pace of demographic change has accelerated considerably since then and the subregion is now experiencing much more rapid ageing that will continue over the coming decades.

The increasing proportion of older persons in the population has profound economic and social implications. There are very specific implications for public policies on pensions, health and social services. More broadly, we must also reflect on the contribution that older persons make to society, so that we truly create the “enabling environment” envisioned in the Madrid Plan, in which older persons play a full and active part in our societies and their sustainable development. At ECLAC, we believe that this is best achieved through promoting and protecting the rights of older persons, their rights to social security, health, autonomy, protection against abuse, non-discrimination, and participation in economic, civic and community life more generally.

Within the Caribbean, ageing is more advanced in some countries and territories than others. For example, it is relatively advanced in Barbados, Bermuda, Aruba, Curaçao and Montserrat, while it is less advanced in Bahamas,

Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and the Cayman Islands. However, population ageing is a common process that all countries are passing through. It creates similar challenges and opportunities for all; it is just that some countries are at slightly different stages of the journey compared with others. Looking at how ageing has been addressed in countries and territories where it is more advanced, provides an opportunity to “look into the future” and learn from the experiences of others. Indeed, one of the main purposes of this review and appraisal process is to share experiences and best practices in areas such as pensions, livelihoods, age-friendly and universal healthcare, non-communicable diseases, regulation of residential care homes, addressing elder abuse and loneliness, among many other issues.

In those Caribbean countries where ageing is more advanced, such as Barbados and Bermuda, the economic and fiscal consequences of ageing become more pressing. This includes not only the greater fiscal challenges involved in funding pensions, health and social care services, but also addressing the consequences of declining workforces, which include skills shortages and an increased role for economic migration. Ageing, therefore, is increasingly coming to be seen as one element of a closely related set of policy concerns also encompassing labour market productivity and international migration.

As previously, this five-yearly review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action is a global exercise, being coordinated within our region by our colleagues from the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) based in Santiago, Chile, who we are very happy to be joined by today. Within this context, we at ECLAC’s subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, based in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, will be coordinating a subregional review to focus specifically on how ageing is being addressed in our Small Island Developing States. In all of this, we count heavily on the support of our colleagues at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), who we are equally happy to have with us.

These national, subregional, regional and global reviews will all take place over the next two years. They will take place in sequence, albeit with some overlap, so that national reviews can inform the subregional and regional reviews,

which in turn will inform the global review. For this reason, we are encouraging governments to undertake national reviews and to produce voluntary national reports on their progress in implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, during this year.

These reports, together with ECLAC's regional report, will be presented at the Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, to take place next year. In preparation for this Regional Conference, ECLAC's subregional headquarters for the Caribbean will also organize a subregional expert group meeting.

This virtual meeting, therefore, has been called to brief you on the review and appraisal process and, in particular, to present the guide for the voluntary national reports and to discuss requirements for technical support for the preparation of these reports.

I'd like to thank you for your participation today and we look forward to a fruitful discussion about the MIPAA reporting process. As coordinators of this regional process, we at ECLAC are keen to ensure that this exercise contributes substantively to furthering implementation of the Madrid Plan, so we look forward to a fruitful discussion and to your comments and questions to which we will do our best to respond.