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Follow-up to the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific

Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and

Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Review of progress in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing population ageing at an unprecedented pace. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, which can be seen as complementary to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is the global guiding framework on population ageing. It contains the recommendation that Member States conduct regular systematic reviews and appraisals to advance its implementation. The most recent Asia-Pacific review was held from 29 June to 1 July 2022. Members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) participated in the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The present document provides an overview of trends and the situation of older persons in Asia and the Pacific. Also reviewed are emerging issues affecting older persons, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, environmental degradation, including climate change, and digital technologies. It also contains a summary of the findings and recommendations of national voluntary member State surveys and stakeholder consultations held in preparation for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The Committee on Social Development and other relevant stakeholders may wish to consider the conclusions and recommendations in the present document and provide further guidance on implementing the outcome document of Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing entitled “Accelerating Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, to Build a Sustainable Society for All Ages in Asia and the Pacific”.

* ESCAP/CSD/2022/L.1.

I. Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing population ageing at an unprecedented pace. While population ageing is a success story, shifts in population age structures towards older persons have significant social, economic and political implications for the region.

2. Other megatrends, such as urbanization, increased inequality, advances in communications and technology, climate change and disasters, all affect older persons and how societies respond to population ageing.¹

3. Forward-looking policies and government action to address the challenges and maximize the opportunities of ageing, and to promote the active participation and inclusion of older persons in all aspects of life, are critical to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – including eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and improving the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) make policy and action in this area even more urgent.

4. Policies on ageing are not limited to policies specifically on older persons. Addressing population ageing requires a life-cycle approach, including policies for older women. Thus, the topic of population ageing must be mainstreamed throughout different policies.

5. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, the global framework on population ageing, was adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002. It contains three priority directions, namely: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments.

6. Systematic reviews of its implementation are essential for its success in improving the quality of life of older persons. Reviews and appraisals are conducted regularly at the global, regional and national levels. These reviews and appraisals are important for implementation, monitoring and follow-up, and they provide the evidence base for developing and strengthening policymaking.

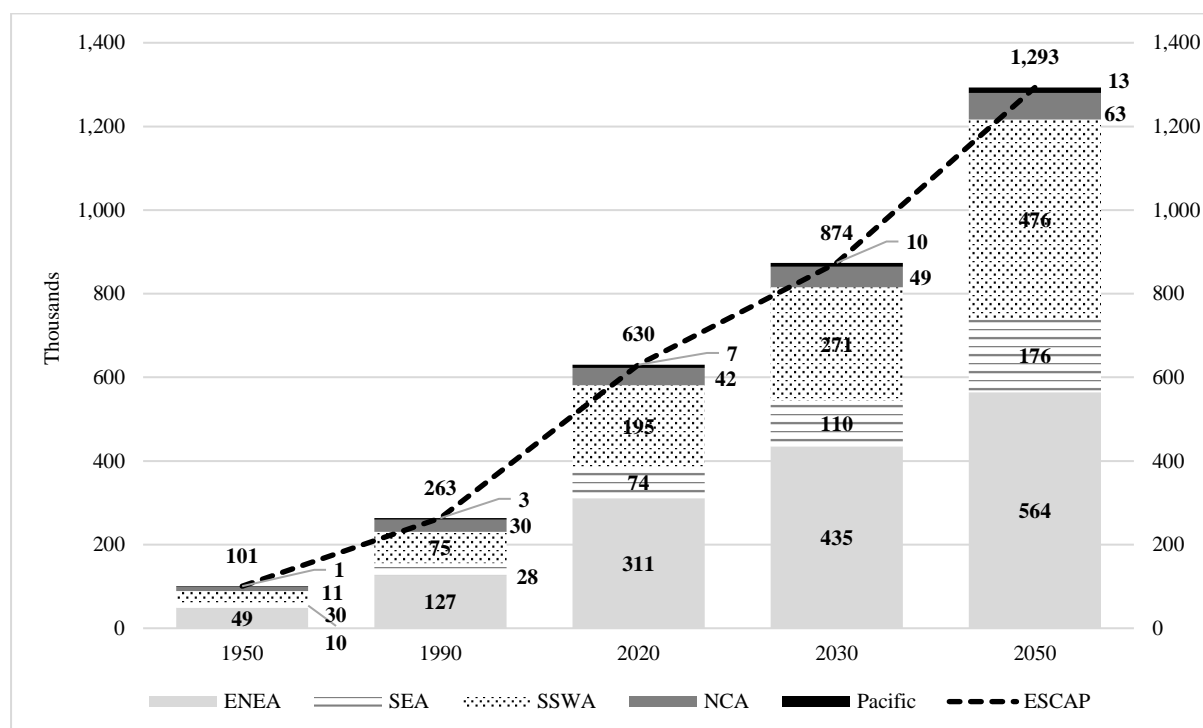
II. Ageing trends in the Asia-Pacific region

A. Demographic trends

7. The number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific has more than doubled, from 263 million in 1990 to 630 million in 2020, an increase of 6.7 to 13.6 per cent of the total population. By 2050, 1.3 billion older persons, or 24.9 per cent of the total population, are projected to reside in the region (figure I). At subregional levels, the proportion of older persons in 2020 ranged between 18.8 per cent in East and North-East Asia and 9.6 per cent in South-West Asia.

¹ *Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary: Sharing the Trends of Our Time* (United Nations publication, 2020).

Figure I
Number of older persons by ESCAP subregions, 1950, 1990, 2020, 2030 and 2050



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision*. Available at <https://population.un.org/wpp/> (accessed on 12 March 2022).

Abbreviations: ENEA, East and North-East Asia; NCA, North and Central Asia; SEA, South-East Asia; SSWA, South and South-West Asia.

8. The number of persons aged 80 years or over in the region is projected to increase at a faster rate than the total number of older persons. Between 1990 and 2050, the number of oldest old will grow more than 10 times, from 23 million to 255 million.

9. Given their longer life expectancy, older women generally outnumber older men. In 2020, older women accounted for 53.2 per cent of the total older population in the region and for 61.2 per cent of the oldest old.

10. Compared to men, women often enter old age with the accumulation of a lifetime of gender-based disadvantage. Over the life course, they typically have fewer opportunities for education and training, and they often lack social protection, including access to health services and land. In old age, they tend to continue to perform unpaid care work in homes, including caring for their typically older spouses as well as grandchildren.

11. Due to the significant decline in fertility over a relatively short period of time, countries in Asia and the Pacific are ageing very rapidly. Whereas countries in more developed regions took about a century to increase the share of their older population (65 years or older) from 7 to 14 per cent, it will take many countries in the region less than 20 years. Soon, the proportion of older persons is projected to be greater than that of children and youth.

12. Population ageing and its economic and social impacts has direct implications for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Population ageing has direct bearing on poverty eradication, health for all, gender equality, reducing inequalities, economic growth and decent work, and other areas.

13. Older persons in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly women, often depend on family members financially and economically. Because of limited pension coverage and low pension benefit levels, income from pensions and other social protection systems represents a relatively small proportion of the income of older persons. Many older persons work but primarily in the informal sector. With limited savings and lack of social protection, older persons are often at risk of falling into poverty.

14. Demographic and epidemiological transitions have resulted in a rise in noncommunicable diseases, with many low- and middle-income countries in the region facing the double burden of disease (i.e. infectious diseases and noncommunicable diseases).² Noncommunicable conditions account for the largest share of ill health and are the main reason why older persons seek health care. Thus, the rise in noncommunicable diseases can have major implications on health-care costs and health-care systems.³ Older persons must have access to age-sensitive health care, long-term care and mental care services, and health care staff need gerontological training.

15. Primary health care is of particular importance to older persons since it ensures the highest possible level of health and well-being by focusing on people's needs as early as possible. About 63.4 per cent of the population in Asia and the Pacific is protected by a health-care scheme, which leaves some 1.6 billion people unprotected.⁴ Such aggregated figures hide inequalities within and across countries. The whole continuum of health-care services – from health promotion and disease prevention to treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care – is important for older persons.

16. In many developing countries of the region, health-care costs are mostly borne by private households. With low public health spending, out-of-pocket expenditures to cover health-care costs are often extremely high. Older persons are not only at an increased risk of illness and death, they are also at risk of not being able to pay for health-care services due to low income and the lack of social protection, among other factors. On the positive side, leading healthy lifestyles and investing in health, including the provision of universal health care, reduces inequality and poverty and leads to more productive, active and fulfilled lives for all, including older persons.

17. Given the increase in the number and share of older persons, including the oldest old, and the diminished capacity of families to care for older family members, developing a comprehensive long-term care system is a particular challenge in the region.

² Vasoontara Yiengprugsawan, Judith Healy and Hal Kendig, eds., *Health System Responses to Population Ageing and Noncommunicable Diseases in Asia* (World Health Organization, New Delhi, 2016).

³ Ibid.

⁴ International Labour Organization, *Extending Social Health Protection: Accelerating Progress towards Universal Health Coverage in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2021).

B. Emerging trends: coronavirus disease (COVID-19), climate change and environmental degradation

1. Impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

18. As of 10 June 2022, 167 million people in Asia and the Pacific had been infected with the virus responsible for COVID-19 and there were 1.7 million deaths. Those figures represent approximately 31.4 per cent and 27.6 per cent of the officially recorded global totals, respectively.⁵

19. Largely because of the presence of underlying health conditions, the rate of COVID-19-related deaths was significantly higher among older persons than among the population as a whole. More recent global case data⁶ indicate that older persons comprised only 14 per cent of positive cases worldwide but 80 per cent of COVID-19-related deaths.

20. Older persons' use of health services during the pandemic also declined, as studies in the Republic of Korea and Türkiye have found. Older persons were more likely to postpone hospital treatment and avoid using health-care services, including as outpatients. These delays and postponements will affect the health and well-being of older persons in the future.⁷

21. Older persons who spent time in quarantine or were locked down with family members or caregivers also faced higher risks of violence, abuse and neglect.⁸

22. In addition to the direct effects, movement restrictions and lockdowns had significant social, physical and mental health impacts on older persons. Social isolation measures have resulted in loneliness, sometimes resulting in depression, anxiety and other distress.

23. Access to information and communications technology (ICT) was crucial for mitigating the negative social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, owing to the "grey" and gender digital divides, not all older persons had access to ICT. Existing digital inequalities were further exacerbated for some during the pandemic.

24. However, throughout the pandemic, older persons were caregivers and provided social and economic support to family and friends. Older persons' associations were often instrumental in promoting self-care.

25. Older persons, particularly those without access to pensions, were further affected by the financial aspects of the crisis. Older persons who gained income through work in the informal sector were directly affected by income loss during shutdowns. A survey carried out in Thailand, for example, showed that 55 per cent of women and 57 per cent of men aged 60 years or older reported having a lower income as a result of the COVID-19-shutdown. In their responses to voluntary national surveys, the Governments of Cambodia and

⁵ WHO COVID-19 Dashboard. Available at <https://covid19.who.int/> (accessed on 13 June 2022).

⁶ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* (United Nations publication, 2021).

⁷ ESCAP, *COVID-19 and Older Persons in the Asia and the Pacific Region*, Social Development Policy Paper (forthcoming).

⁸ United Nations, "Policy brief: the impact of COVID-19 on older persons", May 2020.

the Philippines reported that older persons in their countries were consuming less food during the pandemic.

2. Access to information and communications technology for older persons

26. ICT have proven to be useful in facilitating access to health care and other social services and in helping people to stay connected, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ Although the Asia-Pacific region has been a driving force of ICT development and adoption, there are disparities across age (the “grey digital divide”) and gender. In 2019, less than 10 per cent of older persons had access to the Internet in several countries in the region, including Cambodia, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Thailand and Uzbekistan.¹⁰ Older women often had the least access.

27. Where they exist and where they are accessible and affordable, ICT provide an opportunity to enhance cost-efficient service delivery for older persons and reduce inequalities in access to services, including health care. ICT include assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices, including smart home technologies, that can support older persons in different situations and circumstances. They also provide a lifeline for older persons and help them to stay connected with family and friends. Importantly, such devices need to follow a universal design principle that maximizes access.

28. Initiatives to bridge the digital divides and enhance access of older persons, particularly older women, will be crucial to ensure that ICT support access to services for older persons and their participation in economic and social life.

3. Climate change and environmental degradation

29. Environmental degradation, including that related to climate change, has serious direct and indirect consequences for older persons.¹¹ Older persons are at greater risk of suffering from climate-related impacts because of greater exposure, comorbidities, and overall social and economic vulnerabilities. Ageism and age-based discrimination, gender-based discrimination, social isolation, neglect, poverty, migration status and disability are among the many factors that interact with climate change and can increase the vulnerability of older persons.¹²

30. Older persons are not only at a higher risk of death and disability from the effects of climate change, but they are also disadvantaged in evacuation and recovery assistance. Reducing older persons’ vulnerability to extreme weather events requires ensuring that they have sufficient economic, social and health-related reserves in later life.

⁹ *Using Information and Communication Technologies to Address the Health-care Needs of Older Persons Managing Chronic Disease: A Guidebook and Good Practices from Asia and the Pacific* (ST/ESCAP/2972).

¹⁰ International Telecommunication Union, *World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database*, 23rd ed. (2019).

¹¹ *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021: Resilience in a Riskier World – Managing Systematic Risks from Biological and other Natural Hazards* (United Nations publication, 2021).

¹² See A/HRC/47/46.

31. Older individuals possess substantial knowledge, experience and skills, and can contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation. Throughout the Asia-Pacific region they are involved in climate activism. This potential needs to be harnessed by removing barriers (for example, perceived lack of awareness, interest, knowledge, ability and resources) and by ensuring that relevant programmes engage older and younger persons alike. When planning and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation plans, older persons must have a voice, so that such programmes are age- and gender-responsive, and disability inclusive.

III. Fourth Asia-Pacific review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

A. The Madrid Plan of Action and periodic reviews

32. In the Madrid Plan of Action, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid in 2002, a development approach to ageing and a call for building a society for all ages was emphasized.¹³ To this day, the Madrid Plan of Action remains the main international policy instrument on ageing. Governments, supported by relevant stakeholders, are primarily responsible for its implementation.

33. The Madrid Plan of Action includes recommendations for action under three priority directions (a) older persons and development, (b) advancing health and well-being into old age and (c) ensuring enabling and supporting environments. Under each priority direction, issues and objectives with specific actions are identified.

34. Regional reviews and appraisals were held in 2007, 2012 and 2017, pursuant to the mandates that the regional commissions conduct the reviews and appraisals at the regional level. Each Asia-Pacific review concluded with an outcome document highlighting regional priorities.

B. Mandate for the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action

35. In its resolution 2020/8, the Economic and Social Council invited Member States to review the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at the national level and to present results of these reviews to regional commissions in 2022. The Council also invited Member States to consider collecting and utilizing a combination of quantitative and participatory qualitative data gathering and analysis for the review and appraisal exercise.

36. To ensure coordination between organizations of the United Nations system that are working on population ageing at the regional level and other key partners working on the topic, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) initiated the Asia-Pacific informal regional network of focal points on ageing.¹⁴ The network held regular online meetings to coordinate actions for the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action.

¹³ *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8–12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

¹⁴ The Asia-Pacific informal regional network of focal points on ageing is a networking group of the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultative Platform and is led by ESCAP.

C. Engagement of member States and stakeholders in the fourth regional review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action

1. National focal points on ageing

37. In an invitation letter dated 28 December 2020, the Executive Secretary informed member States that the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action would be held in 2022. Member States were invited to nominate a focal point on ageing for the secretariat to liaise with in preparation for the forthcoming regional review and appraisal.

38. As of 13 June 2022, 37 members and associate members had nominated a focal point; 8 in North and Central Asia; 6 in North-East Asia; 8 in the Pacific; 7 in South-East Asia; and 8 in South and South-West Asia.

2. Member State consultations on the fourth regional review and appraisal

39. ESCAP conducted three online consultations with the focal points on ageing. The purpose of the consultations was to brief participants about the review and appraisal process, inform them about a forthcoming voluntary national survey on the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action and seek their input, and discuss the challenges and opportunities of population ageing at the national level.

40. The table below provides an overview of the consultations, their dates, topics and participants. A report for each consultation was prepared, which can be accessed on the website of the consultations.

Overview of member State consultations on the fourth Asia-Pacific review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action

<i>Title of the consultation</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Focus</i>
First informal consultation of member States on the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action: process, survey, data and policies ^a	6 and 7 May 2021	Information about the Madrid Plan of Action and the review process, including the survey tool
Second informal consultation of member States on the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing: survey check-in ^b	9 August 2021	Details about the survey for the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action
Informal subregional consultation with countries in North and Central Asia on the fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing ^c	29 October 2021	Information on the Madrid Plan of Action and the review process, including the survey tool, focusing on countries in North and Central Asia; coordination with the Economic Commission for Europe

^a See www.unescap.org/events/2021/first-informal-consultation-escap-member-states-asia-pacific-fourth-review-and-0.

^b See <https://unescap.org/events/2021/second-informal-consultation-escap-member-states-asia-pacific-fourth-review-and>.

^c See www.unescap.org/events/2021/informal-subregional-consultation-countries-north-and-central-asia-fourth-review-and.

41. For the consultations, ESCAP partnered with United Nations entities active at the regional level, such as the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization. The Asian Development Bank, HelpAge International and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the global level also supported the consultations. In the consultations, countries noted ongoing challenges in implementing policies and translating them into action.

42. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge to conducting national reviews of the Madrid Plan of Action, with shutdowns and social distancing measures making consultations difficult. In the future, population ageing should not be dealt with in isolation but should be mainstreamed into other policies, including policies on climate change, technology development and other topics.

43. The participants also stressed that any outcome document of the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing should address emerging issues, such as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts to build back better, as well as climate change and the use of ICT.

3. Survey to assess progress

44. In this context, ESCAP drafted a voluntary national survey on the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action to assist member States with their national assessments. The draft survey was first reviewed by members of the Asia-Pacific informal regional network of focal points on ageing and then presented to national focal points on ageing at an online consultation in May 2021.¹⁵

45. The survey was designed in line with the 2030 Agenda so members and associate members could harness synergies with reporting on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It featured a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions.

46. By May 2022, the following 20 ESCAP members and associate members had submitted their responses: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; India; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Macao, China; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Tajikistan; and Türkiye. Four of these twenty countries submitted survey responses to the Economic Commission for Europe, which ESCAP was able to use.¹⁶ Together, these 20 countries represent approximately 45 per cent of the population 60 years or over in the Asia-Pacific region.

¹⁵ For more information on the consultation, see www.unescap.org/events/2021/first-informal-consultation-escap-member-states-asia-pacific-fourth-review-and-0.

¹⁶ The following ministries took the lead in completing the survey (based on the information provided in the survey responses): Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bhutan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Türkiye and Vanuatu); Ministry of Justice (Republic of Korea); Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (Nepal); Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (Bangladesh); Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (Myanmar); Ministry of the Interior (Tajikistan); Office of the Prime Minister (Tonga); and Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (Armenia).

47. The survey responses were summarized in an information paper (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/INF/1) prepared for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

4. Preliminary survey findings

48. The survey analysis focused on the following topics: (a) definitions, mandates, institutional arrangements and data; (b) older persons and development; (c) advancing health and well-being into old age; (d) ensuring an enabling and supportive environment; and (e) COVID-19 and climate change. Given that some countries only recently submitted their surveys and other surveys were not yet submitted, the analysis was not exhaustive or fully representative of the region. However, it provided a snapshot of the situation of older persons in the region and the corresponding policies and programmes put in place by member States. The full list of voluntary surveys is available at www.population-trends-asiapacific.org/mipaa.

49. Countries reported that they had implemented policies and programmes with a focus on older persons, but very few had monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for these policies. Despite some progress in launching dedicated surveys on older persons, lack of age-disaggregated data continued to affect the work of policymakers at the national and subnational levels.

50. In the category on older persons and development, some countries had recognized the importance of retraining and upskilling activities for older persons. There were also examples of intergenerational learning and mentoring which had a positive effect on older and younger persons in the workforce. However, many older persons continued to work in the informal sector, with limited social protection, making them vulnerable to economic hardships.

51. Climate change and disasters had been recognized as affecting older persons in many countries throughout the region. Correspondingly, some progress in including older persons' concerns in national emergency plans and disaster relief programmes had been made. Older persons had also been recognized as contributing to the reconstruction of communities following emergencies in some countries. However, in many communities, older persons had no voice in designing emergency plans, and their voice in climate activism was not recognized.

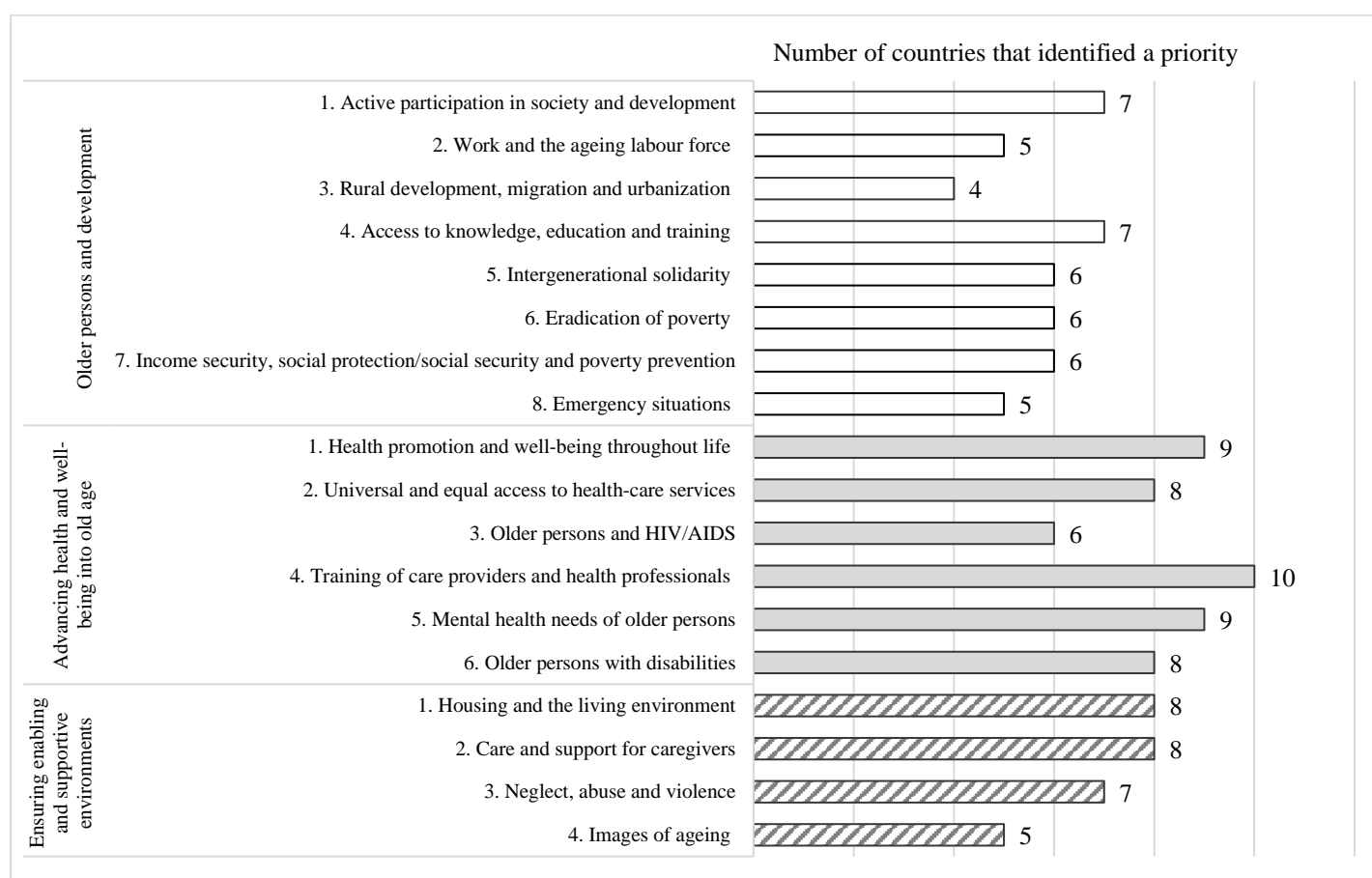
52. In the category on the health and well-being of older persons, countries in the region had made considerable progress in providing universal health coverage, but for some, coverage levels remained below the region's average. Long-term care was still an exception in the region, and many countries remained reliant on the family, in particular women, as the primary unpaid caregiver for older persons. However, there had been some progress among higher income countries of the region in strengthening long-term care services by integrating them with health and social care services. The same was true of mental health concerns, which had come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some countries had started to include mental health care in the health-care systems.

53. In the category on ensuring enabling and supportive environments for older persons, many countries had started to create more age-friendly environments in cities and at home. However, efforts and levels of success varied considerably between countries. In some, technology had been used to provide greater access to services and facilitate ageing in place. Neglect, abuse and violence directed at older persons were a major concern in countries

throughout the region. There had been growing recognition of this issue, but COVID-19 had exacerbated older person’s vulnerabilities in this regard.

54. Of the 20 countries that responded to the survey, 15 identified priority actions for implementing the Madrid Plan of Action. As indicated in figure II, countries appeared to prioritize health-related objectives, such as training of caregivers and health professionals and the promotion of health over the life course. Objectives related to older persons and development were also important, such as those on education and training and active participation in society. It is worth pointing out that issues related to older persons in rural areas, images of ageing and older persons in emergency situations appeared less important.

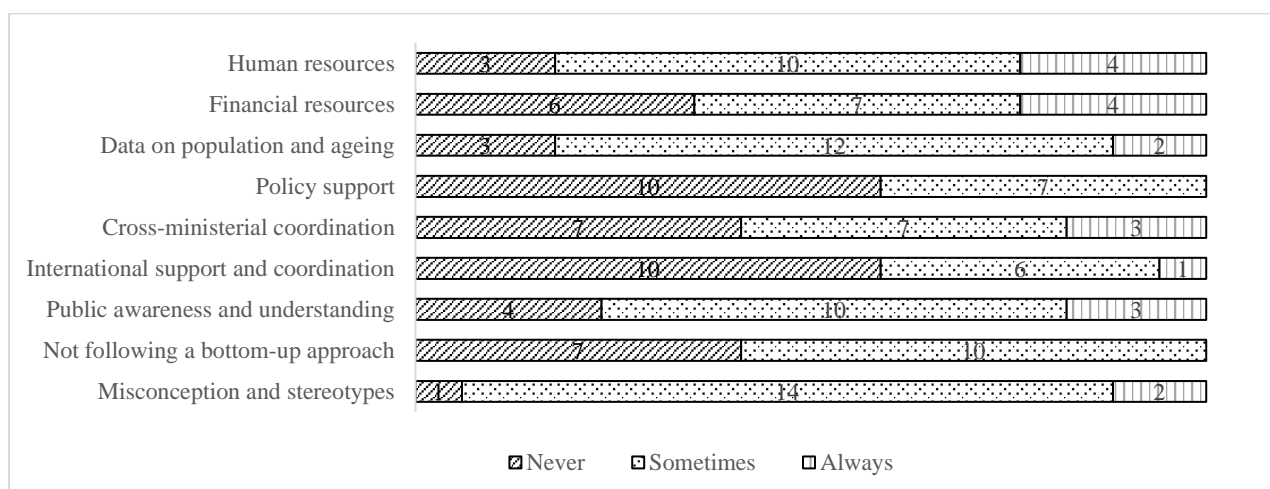
Figure II
Member State priorities for implementing the Madrid Plan of Action, by priority area and objective



Source: ESCAP, “Voluntary national survey response”. Available at www.population-trends-asiapacific.org/mipaa/voluntary-national-survey-response (accessed on 12 March 2022).

55. Countries also identified challenges to the development and implementation of legislation focusing on older persons (figure III). Misconceptions and stereotypes about population ageing and older persons, followed by lack of data at the national and subnational levels and lack of human resources dedicated to population ageing were highlighted as the main challenges.

Figure III
Challenges to the development and implementation of legislation with a focus on older persons and population ageing



Source: ESCAP, “Voluntary national survey response” (see figure II).

5. Technical cooperation provided to member States

56. Upon request, ESCAP provided capacity-building support to member States to review national implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. Through national consultants, ESCAP supported the Governments of Bhutan, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives and Mongolia with data collection, the analysis of the situation of older persons, and interministerial and stakeholder consultations. All five countries were able to support completed national voluntary surveys on time, which provided a baseline for assessing policies on ageing.

57. Several other Governments requested that ESCAP provide bilateral briefings on the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action and on the survey tool, which also provided an opportunity to clarify queries.

6. Stakeholder consultations on the fourth Asia-Pacific review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action

58. ESCAP, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific informal regional network of focal points on ageing compiled a list of stakeholders, based on prior collaboration with ESCAP and other partners as well as on registration with the Economic and Social Council. Stakeholders also recommended others to be included in the list. A briefing was held on 11 February 2022, at which participants were provided information about the review process and the planned process of stakeholder consultations. Stakeholders were invited to support the organizational efforts.

59. ESCAP then held four stakeholder consultations. The first three were structured in accordance with the three priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action: (a) older persons and development (7 April 2022); (b) advancing health and well-being into old age (28 April 2022); and (c) ensuring enabling and supportive environments (19 May 2022). Prevalent and emerging issues – such as the impact of COVID-19, intergenerational solidarity, climate change, digital transformation and the future of work – were discussed throughout the consultations. Gender considerations were mainstreamed. The fourth consultation focused on the Pacific, covering all three priority directions of the

Madrid Plan of Action and emerging areas, such as COVID-19 and climate change.

60. The objective of these consultations was to bring a bottom-up participatory approach to the fourth review and appraisal process and identify challenges and opportunities related to population ageing that transcend national boundaries.

61. Each of the stakeholder consultations was organized by a group of non-governmental stakeholders, supported by United Nations system organizations. To ensure the bottom-up approach and give ownership to stakeholders, co-organizers were invited to set the agenda, moderate and provide rapporteurs. The secretariat provided administrative support.

62. With inputs from stakeholder rapporteurs, the secretariat prepared a report for each of the consultations. Moreover, main findings and recommendations were summarized in an information document (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/INF/1).

7. Findings of the stakeholder consultations

Older persons and development

63. Participants identified challenges related to low pension benefits and limited access to pensions for workers in the informal sector, particularly women. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated these challenges, having pushed many people into poverty. The grey digital divide was impacting older persons' access to services as well as to family and friends. Overall, the individual and community-level resilience of older persons was insufficient to overcome the effects of climate change, emergency situations and humanitarian crises.

64. Stakeholders also noted good practices, such as increased respect for human rights and better social protection and regulations; increased retirement ages and remuneration from social pensions; and the creation of lifelong learning and retraining opportunities.

65. Stakeholders provided recommendations, which included, among others, creating greater opportunities for older persons to actively participate in society, including more women in leadership roles; resolving systematic and other barriers, such as ageism, sexism, limited access to transportation, and digital and financial illiteracy, including through greater intergenerational solidarity; enhancing lifelong and training opportunities, particularly for older women in rural areas; and enhancing access to pensions with better benefit levels and better coordination in emergency situations to address specific needs of older persons in emergency situations.

Advancing health and well-being into old age

66. Participants identified challenges, such as deteriorating health of older persons, particularly older women, sometimes related to multiple layers of discrimination; exacerbated negative life-course issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including inequity, poverty, digital divides, ageism, sexism and other discrimination, with increased isolation and mental health issues. There were numerous challenges with regards to access to quality long-term care for older persons, with the specific needs of older persons, especially those with disabilities and women, often being neglected.

67. Good practices were highlighted such as government hotlines for older persons during the COVID-19 pandemic, support from older persons' associations, including with regard to access to health-care services and delivery of medicines, as well as efforts to address discrimination and to promote universal design and disability-inclusive infrastructure.

68. Recommendations were made such as enhancing universal access to health care to ensure healthy ageing; providing adequate training of caregivers and paying attention to the health-care needs of vulnerable groups of older persons, including older women; providing support to older persons' associations and community-based approaches and promoting health, particularly through education and empowerment; and encouraging collection and analysis of data to design evidence-based policies, including those related to mental health and disability.

Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

69. Participants identified challenges such as inadequate living conditions, with many older persons often still living in crowded, unhygienic conditions that lack basic infrastructure and services; increase of various forms of neglect, abuse, violence, discrimination and ageism during the COVID-19 pandemic, with elder abuse having serious psychological, financial, social and physical consequences; and climate change and related natural disasters disproportionately affecting older persons, who were also more vulnerable to extreme weather and air pollution.

70. Stakeholders shared good practices, such as policies that promoted universal, age-friendly design and made transport more affordable and accessible and enhanced caregiving during the COVID-19 pandemic, using ICT and active involvement of older persons in community-based resilience, disaster risk reduction and agricultural solutions.

71. Recommendations included providing affordable housing options and applying environmentally and age-friendly approaches to housing and living environments; ensuring quality care for older persons, including training programmes, accreditation systems and monitoring mechanisms as well as policies to support self-care for older persons; raising awareness about the link between older persons and human rights and gender issues and addressing neglect, abuse, violence, discrimination and ageism; and a stronger mechanism to ensure the human rights of older persons were respected, such as a United Nations convention on the rights of older persons.

Addressing the Madrid Plan of Action priority directions in the Pacific

72. Pacific stakeholders identified the following challenges: lack of coordination of services for older persons with limited overall strategies on care or age-friendly health services; inadequate pension systems; and lack of support programmes for older persons with disabilities. They also highlighted that traditional village systems and family-based care were diminishing, as youth moved away for better jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated vulnerabilities, including homelessness and elder abuse.

73. Stakeholders also noted good practices in educating and awareness-raising about the rights of older persons and using traditional knowledge of older persons in the context of natural disasters and climate change.

74. Participants recommended actions such as designing policies to promote older persons' rights, moving away from welfare models and towards the active participation of civil society, and raising awareness about abuse, with adequate policy and legal responses and support by health professionals and social workers cognizant of complicated family dynamics.

D. Voluntary indicators for the follow-up to and review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

75. The Madrid Plan of Action does not contain indicators to monitor its implementation, but it mentions data and statistics that should be used to guide work on selecting indicators and developing capacity for ageing and age-disaggregated data and analysis.

76. At the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, held in 2017, ESCAP members and associate members recognized the synergies between the Madrid Plan of Action and the 2030 Agenda. They encouraged the Commission to support them, as appropriate, in creating forward-looking policies and monitoring frameworks to prepare for and adjust to the social and economic implications of ageing. They also called on each other to collect data disaggregated by age, sex and disability and analyse the data to inform policy creation and to monitor and evaluate policies and programmes related to older persons.

77. The need to collect reliable data on ageing and older persons, disaggregated by sex, age groups and other characteristics, was further emphasized in the consultations with ESCAP member States and stakeholder consultations in preparation for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

78. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets have statistical indicators that all countries, regardless of their level of development, should be monitoring. Member States are encouraged to adapt the monitoring to their national circumstances and identify other relevant indicators. The inclusion of older persons is inherent in the universal character of the 2030 Agenda and its overarching aim to leave no one behind.

79. Although the 2030 Agenda contains a call for data disaggregation by age and other criteria, the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database¹⁷ shows that data with such disaggregation are often not available or in some cases, data collection is age capped (e.g. data are not collected from people age 65 and older).

80. In response to requests for a monitoring framework and in recognition of the need to not duplicate efforts and create additional reporting for member States, a set of indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals were developed to cover the priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action and most of its issues and objectives. The indicators were developed by the

¹⁷ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>.

secretariat based on expert consultations.¹⁸ Since many of the Goal indicators do not call for the data to be disaggregated by age, the list contains suggestions on where further age disaggregation without an age cap would contribute to the analysis of the situation of older persons. In the areas where no Goal indicator is available, other relevant indicators for which data are available through internationally recognized databases were listed to help to address all objectives and issue areas of the Madrid Plan of Action.

81. The proposed list of indicators was contained in one of the background documents to the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/2).

IV. Conclusions

82. Population ageing is an irreversible trend, the scope and pace of which is unprecedented in Asia and the Pacific. It is an essential part of life in the region, one that is already leading to profound economic and social changes.

83. Twenty years after the adoption of the Madrid Plan of Action, participants at the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted the outcome document entitled “Accelerating Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, to Build a Sustainable Society for All Ages in Asia and the Pacific”, in which they call for accelerating the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action to build a sustainable society for all ages in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/3/Add.1). The outcome document was informed by the responses to the national voluntary survey and the conclusions from stakeholder consultations, as summarized in the present document.

84. In line with the call contained in the Madrid Plan of Action for international action, the outcome document will help Governments to translate the priorities contained in the Madrid Plan of Action into action to address the particular challenges and opportunities of population ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

85. According to the call for national action in the Madrid Plan of Action, it is important for member States to mainstream ageing and the concerns of older persons into national development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies; one way is for Governments to follow the recommendations set out in the outcome document of the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Progress in national-level implementation will require effective partnership between Governments, all parts of civil society and the private sector as well as an enabling environment.

¹⁸ ESCAP, *Statistical Indicators Relevant to Population Ageing and Age-Disaggregated Data in Asia and the Pacific* (November 2021); and ESCAP, “Report on the workshop on developing tools to measure inclusive and active population ageing” (2019), available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Report_Developing_Tools_Measure_Inclusive_Ageing_Workshop.pdf.

V. Issues for consideration by the Committee

86. In the Madrid Plan of Action, Member States called for systematic reviews of implementation. ESCAP member States have requested that the Commission support them in creating monitoring frameworks to prepare for and adjust to the social and economic implications of ageing and in collecting data and information to inform policymaking. Member States may wish to consider forming a working group, consisting of member States and stakeholders, to support one another in implementing the outcome document of the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing at the regional level. The voluntary monitoring framework, as set out in document ESCAP/MIPAA/IGM.3/2022/2 could help to guide the working group in prioritizing topics and identifying relevant data and information.

87. The Committee on Social Development and other relevant stakeholders may wish to consider these conclusions and recommendations and provide further guidance on implementing the outcome document of the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
