

UNITED
NATIONS



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/AC.30/2007/2
14 December 2007

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

2007 UNECE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING

León, Spain, 6–8 November 2007

**REPORT OF THE UNECE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING
“A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES”**

Summary

In the first five-year cycle of the global review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), the United Nations Commission for Social Development agreed on the modalities for the review and appraisal of the MIPAA (E/CN.5/2006/2), which invited the United Nations regional commissions to organize regional conferences of review and appraisal. The 2007 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing took place from 6 to 8 November in León, Spain. Ministers and high-level officials from 45 UNECE member States and the European Commission, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders discussed progress achieved in the implementation of the Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPAA adopted at the 2002 Ministerial Conference in Berlin, future cooperation among member States, and capacity development. The 2007 Ministerial Conference in León adopted the Ministerial Declaration “A Society for All Ages: Challenges and Opportunities”.

The proceedings of the conference are reflected in this report, which has two annexes. Annex 1 includes the Ministerial Declaration, and annex 2 the Chairperson’s summary of the Conference.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 2007 Ministerial Conference on Ageing took place at the Parador de San Marcos, León, Spain, from 6 to 8 November 2007, with the Ministerial Segment being held on 8 November.
2. Ministers and representatives from 45 UNECE member States participated in the Conference. The following member States were represented : Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States of America and Uzbekistan.
3. The European Commission was also represented.
4. Holy See participated as an observer State.
5. Representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations International Institute on Ageing, the Council of Europe, the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, the European Economic and Social Committee, the International Social Security Association and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) participated. In total, 11 intergovernmental organizations participated in the conference.
6. Representatives of 39 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in the Conference. The total number of participants was 285. The full list is available at the Conference website: http://www.unece.org/pau/age/ConferenceonAgeing_2007.

II. OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. Ms. Amparo Valcarce García (State Secretary for Social Services, Family and Disability, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Spain), Mr. Kaj Bärlund (Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, UNECE) and Mr. Francisco Fernández (Mayor of León) opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The Conference elected Ms. Valcarce García as Chairperson for the first two days of the Conference (the Chairperson for the Ministerial Segment was elected on the third day; see para. 11).

III. OVERVIEW OF THE AGEING SITUATION IN THE UNECE REGION

8. In the framework of preparations to the Conference, 31 member States submitted their country reports on the implementation of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy for the

Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), based on the guidelines provided by the UNECE secretariat. The secretariat presented a summary of these country reports (ECE/AC.30/2007/4).

IV. PANEL DISCUSSIONS

9. Six panel discussions were held on a broad range of issues related to the topic of the Conference, “A Society for all Ages: Challenges and Opportunities”:

- (a) Creating integrated approaches to mainstream ageing;
- (b) Participation and social inclusion;
- (c) Towards a balanced care strategy;
- (d) Living longer – working longer: Challenges for education, labour market and social protection;
- (e) Intergenerational collaboration;
- (f) Focusing on opportunities: Active ageing.

10. The composition of panels was as follows:

Panel (a): Creating integrated approaches to mainstream ageing

Chair and Moderator: Mr. Aurelio Fernández López, Spain

Rapporteur: Mr. Alexandre Sidorenko, United Nations Department of Economic Social Affairs

Keynote speaker: Mr. Johan Schölvinck, United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development

Panellists: Ms. Erika Winkler, Austria
 Ms. Kristina Täht, Estonia
 Ms. Lidija Kozarčanin, Serbia
 Mr. Yusuf Yüksel, Turkey
 Mr. Detlef Gerhardt, European Commission
 Ms. Sanja Miloradovic, Lastavica (Serbia)

Panel (b): Participation and social inclusion

Chair and Moderator: Mr. Dirk Jarré, Expert on NGO issues

Rapporteur: Ms. Anneke Augustinus, the Netherlands

Keynote speaker: Ms. Ursula Lehr, University of Heidelberg (Germany)

Panellists: Ms. Azemina Vukovic, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Ms. Kallirroï Nicolis, Greece
 Ms. Gabrielle Jacob, Ireland
 Ms. Odete Severino Soares, Portugal
 Ms. Ileana Carmen Manu, Romania
 Mr. Zoran Vucev, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
 Ms. Siri Tellier, United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Bruno Costantini, Fédération Européenne des retraités et personnes âgées (Belgium)

Ms. Svetlana Bashtovenko, Resource Center for Elderly, affiliate of HelpAge International (Kyrgyzstan)

Panel (c): Towards a balanced care strategy

Chair and Moderator: Ms. Vappu Taipale, STAKES, Finnish National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Finland)

Rapporteur: Mr. George Pavia, Malta

Keynote speaker: Mr. Joseph Troisi, United Nations International Institute on Ageing

Panellists: Mr. Petr Wija, Czech Republic

Ms. Galina Balmos, Moldova

Ms. Miriam Bar-Giora, Israel

Ms. Ignacio Robles, Spain

Mr. Niclas Jacobson, Sweden

Ms. Josefina G. Carbonell, United States of America

Mr. Oldřich Stanek, ZIVOT 90 (Czech Republic)

Panel (d): Living longer– working longer: Challenges for education, labour market and social protection

Chair and Moderator: Ms. Anahit Martirosyan, Armenia

Rapporteur: Ms. Kristina Täht, Estonia

Keynote speaker: Mr. Bernd Marin, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

Panellists: Ms. Toula Kouloumou, Cyprus

Mr. Teodoras Medaiskis, Lithuania

Ms. Irina Bondarenko, Russian Federation

Mr. Octavio Granada, Spain

Mr. Roland Sigg, International Social Security Association

Mr. Asghar Zaidi, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Ms. Line Vreven, AARP International (United States)

Panel (e): Intergenerational collaboration

Chair and Moderator: Mr. Niclas Jacobson, Sweden

Rapporteur: Ms. Marie Keirle, France

Keynote speaker: Ms. Charlotte Höhn, Federal Institute for Population Research (Germany)

Panellists: Ms. Lieve Vanderleyden, Study Center of the Flemish Government (Belgium)

Ms. Judit Ágnes Szabó, Hungary

Mr. George Pavia, Malta

Ms. Anneke Augustinus, the Netherlands

Mr. Vladimir Tchernega, Council of Europe
 Ms. Marylen Mann, OASIS Institute (United States)

Panel (f): Focusing on opportunities: Active ageing

Chair and Moderator: Ms. Astrid Stuckelberger, University of Geneva (Switzerland)
 Rapporteur: Mr. Edwin Walker, United States of America
 Keynote speaker: Ms. Irene Hoskins, International Federation on Ageing (United States)
 Panellists: Mr. Anders Lynge Madsen, Denmark
 Ms. Marja-Liisa Parjanne, Finland
 Ms. Anne-Marie Tahrat, France
 Ms. Franca Donaggio, Italy
 Dr. Louise Plouffe, World Health Organization
 Ms. Ruth Brand, BAGSO – German National Association of Senior
 Citizens Organizations (Germany)
 Ms. Irina Baicalov, Second Breath for the Elderly from Balti (Moldova)

**V. OPENING OF THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT AND ELECTION OF ITS
 CHAIRPERSON**

11. Ms. Valcarce García and Mr. Fernández opened the Ministerial Segment on 8 November. An introductory speech was given by the Executive Secretary of the UNECE, Mr. Marek Belka. The Conference elected Ms. Valcarce García as Chairperson of the Ministerial Segment, and Mr. Erwin Buchinger (Federal Minister of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria) and Ms. Lyubov Glebova (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Russian Federation) as Vice-Chairpersons.

**VI. PRESENTATION OF THE NGO DECLARATION AND OF THE RESEARCH
 COMMUNITY DECLARATION**

12. The NGO declaration was presented by Ms. Gulnara Abdykalykova (HelpAge International, Kyrgyzstan) and Ms. Astrid Stuckelberger (University of Geneva, Switzerland).

**VII. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT MINISTERIAL
 DECLARATION**

13. The Chairperson summarized the main points of the declaration and the panel discussions of the first two days.

VIII. MINISTERIAL PANELS

14. The composition of ministerial panels was as follows:

Ministerial Panel 1: A society for all ages: challenges and opportunities

- Chairperson: Mr. Erwin Buchinger, Federal Minister of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria
- Rapporteur: Ms. Vappu Taipale, Director General, STAKES, National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (Finland)
- Panellists: Mr. Emir Kir, Minister for Social Policy and Family Affairs, Cabinet Commission Française, Belgium
- Ms. Franca Donaggio, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Italy
- Ms. Vilija Blinkevičiute, Minister, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania
- Mr. Zoran Martinovič, State Secretary of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Serbia
- Ms. Maria Larsson, Minister for Elderly Care and Public Health, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Sweden
- Ms. Manuela Weichelt-Picard, Minister of Home Affairs of the Canton of Zug, Switzerland
- Ms. Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Ageing, United States Department of Health and Human Services, United States of America
- Mr. Eduard Kariukhin, Director, Dobroe Delo (Russian Federation)

Ministerial Panel 2: Adjusting social protection systems, work and education to population ageing

Session A

- Chairperson: Ms. Lyubov Glebova, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Russian Federation
- Rapporteur: Mr. Bernd Marin, Executive Director, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research
- Panellists: Mr. Aghvan Vardanyan, Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, Armenia
- Mr. Erwin Buchinger, Minister, Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria
- Ms. Abdullaeva Uktomhan, Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Department, Kyrgyzstan
- Mr. Hugo Quaderer, Minister, Ministry of Environment, Social Affairs and Education, Liechtenstein
- Ms. Galinas Balmos, Minister, Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, Moldova
- Mr. Hans Horst Konkolewsky, Secretary General, International Social Security Association
- Mr. Richard Blewitt, Chief Executive, HelpAge International (United Kingdom)

Session B

- Chairperson: Ms. Amparo Valcarce García, Secretary of State of Social Services, Families and Disability, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Spain
- Rapporteur: Mr. Asghar Zaidi, Principal Administrator (Pensions), Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Panellists: Ms. Montserrat Gil Torné, Minister, Ministry of Health, Family Welfare and Housing, Andorra
- Ms. Valérie Letard, Secrétaire d'Etat chargée de la solidarité, Ministère du travail, des relations sociales et de la solidarité, France
- Ms. Helen D'Amato, Junior Minister, Ministry of Health, Elderly and Community Care, Malta
- Mr. Kazimierz Kuberski, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Poland
- Ms. Lyubov Glebova, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Department, Russian Federation
- Mr. Batirzhan Bakiyevich Alimukhamedov, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Uzbekistan

IX. ADOPTION OF THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

15. The Conference adopted the Ministerial Declaration.

X. CLOSING SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE

16. Following the statements made Mr. Bärlund and Mr. Fernández, the closing session included interventions about the follow-up process to the Conference by Switzerland, Finland and Spain. After this, the Chairperson thanked the participants and closed the Conference.

Annex 1

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION “A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES”

as adopted by Ministers and Heads of Delegation at the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, León, Spain, 6-8 November 2007

1. We, the representatives of member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), gathered at the Ministerial Conference on Ageing from 6 to 8 November 2007 in León, Spain, reaffirm our commitment made in the Berlin Ministerial Declaration¹ in 2002 to implement the Regional Implementation Strategy² of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
2. We welcome the continuing gains in longevity as an important achievement of our societies and appreciate the changes and adaptations made in response to population ageing. At the same time, we are also aware that in most countries of the UNECE region, the rapid process of ageing and the onset of decline in the working-age population are bringing the period of the so-called demographic bonus to an end. This has important and far-reaching implications across all spheres of society.
3. We are aware of the considerable differences in the pace of the ageing process among countries of the UNECE region. In most countries, rapid ageing of the population calls for immediate action. In some, a relatively young age structure of the population is projected to prevail for many years, which may allow more time for adjustment.
4. UNECE member States have undertaken significant policy actions to fulfil the 10 commitments of the Regional Implementation Strategy, although much more remains to be done. Many countries in the region are seeing an improvement in care for older persons, including both institutionally and provided for at home, based on free choice, an increase in retirement age and an alleviation of poverty in old age as the achievements resulting from their targeted policies. Achievements in implementing the Regional Strategy also include better national and local-level coordination in different policy areas and closer involvement of citizens in ageing-related policymaking, including involvement through an organized civil society and scientific community.
5. We remain committed to the ultimate goal of a society for all ages that relies on respect for human rights, on protection against age discrimination, on social cohesion, and on equal opportunities for men and women of all ages. In pursuing this goal, we reaffirm the principles of independent living, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity, as laid out in the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.

¹ ECE/AC.23/2002/3/Rev.2.

² ECE/AC.23/2002/2/Rev.6.

6. We are committed to further promote the mainstreaming of ageing across all policy areas at the local, national and international levels. These policies should be based on principles of intergenerational reciprocity, equity and interdependence; they must be comprehensive, properly coordinated, and gender-sensitive, as is the case with the all-inclusive approach of the Regional Implementation Strategy. We commit ourselves to protecting the rights of persons of all ages and to preventing age discrimination and social exclusion.

7. Promotion of a positive image of older persons, including through the education system and media campaigns, can greatly enhance a wider appreciation of the contributions older persons can make to society. We encourage initiatives that raise public awareness about the various and important contributions of older persons to their families and society.

8. Active citizenship, a dynamic civil society and interaction between citizens and government are vital for achieving a society for all ages. These promote social cohesion, help overcome age discrimination, and empower older and younger persons to act for themselves and to work together. We confirm that a favourable environment for active ageing, promotion of lifelong learning, access to modern information and communication technologies, and volunteerism and civic engagement are crucial means to promote participation. We recognize the importance of promoting the participation of persons, as they age, in the economic, social, cultural and political life of their societies. The empowerment of older persons and the promotion of their full participation are essential for active ageing, and must be enhanced through appropriate measures.

9. We are committed to continuing our efforts to adjust social protection systems to prevent and reduce poverty and social exclusion and to improve the quality of life at all ages. We strive for timely reforms and policies, with a view to the sustainability of social protection systems. At all stages of reform, adequate standards of pensions, health, personal and family care provisions, and housing must be our goal. We stress the importance of devising policies that enable the pursuit of both economic efficiency and social security and of developing systems of social protection with broader and effective coverage, which should be guided by each country's needs and circumstances.

10. We are committed to further promoting policies that enable people to reach old age in better health and security and to live independently and with dignity. We emphasize that to extend life free from disability and to improve the quality of life in old age, these policies must address the promotion of health and healthy lifestyles and the rehabilitation and empowerment at all stages of the life course, and must improve the prevention, treatment and care of old age-related diseases, frailty and disability.

11. We call for supporting older persons in need of care. We recognize that a successful strategy for care should strive for a balance between paid work and family life as well as between care provided by different care providers. Coordination between care providers such as the public sector, the private sector, the family and civil society must be improved. Specific policies need to be developed to address the growing number of people with health-related problems. We are committed to developing better, sustainable social services as well as health and long-term care for older persons in need, especially for those who choose to stay at home.

12. We recognize that accessibility, dignity, quality standards and most particularly the protection from elder abuse and neglect present important challenges in care provision. We also recognize and support the contributions caregivers, both men and women, make to society. Men and women of all ages should have equitable and universal access to health care and social services and assistance in accordance with their needs as well as to facilities and services that meet approved standards. These standards must take into account the fundamental principle of treating everyone with dignity. Adequate public resources, strong formal and informal long-term care systems, specialized and sensitized care professionals, and quality assurance mechanisms remain vital prerequisites to providing quality care for all.

13. We are aware that in the context of increasing longevity, life-course transitions among education, work and retirement must be more flexible, leaving room for individual choice with respect to family situation and social security. Such an approach contributes favourably towards releasing the potential of men and women of all ages for the benefit of society, while recognizing their self-fulfilment as individuals, and counteracts age discrimination.

14. We see economic growth as a very important factor in achieving a society for all ages. To promote economic growth in an ageing society, we should make full use of the experience and abilities that older persons have acquired throughout their lives. An older workforce may contribute to greater productivity. Obstacles and disincentives to extend active working life should be removed and work environments adapted to the ageing workforce so that those who wish to can continue to work. These measures would also contribute to tackling poverty among older persons. Health and social protection are important factors for economic growth, and provide the foundation for a longer working life and a higher employment rate.

15. Products and services that take into account the preferences and needs of older persons can improve quality of life and support independent living. We encourage governments and enterprises to pay attention to such products and services and to take advantage of the opportunities they provide for economic growth and social inclusion. Broader access to technological aid and devices should be made available to older people.

16. We are aware that lifelong learning and training can contribute to economic growth, as it increases the potential of men and women to contribute in the labour market. At the same time, the learning process itself promotes participation in society and self-realization. We strive to take a life-course perspective to learning and to create environments and incentives that promote lifelong learning and training, for the enhancement and retention of jobs for citizens of all ages and all social groups.

17. We are committed to promoting intergenerational solidarity as one of the important pillars of social cohesion and of civil society. We encourage initiatives that raise public awareness of the potential of young people and of older persons and that promote the understanding of ageing and intergenerational solidarity.

18. We are aware that very low birth rates, if they prevail over a long period, can greatly magnify the challenges posed by population ageing in the future. We commit ourselves to family-friendly policies aiming at the reconciliation of work with family life and with

responsibilities for dependent relatives in particular. Such policies can counteract a decrease of the birth rate to very low levels and can augment the employment rate. Those with caring responsibilities, a majority of whom today are women, must be supported in their caring activities, must be protected from marginalization in their professional activities and in social protection systems, and must be offered information, training and respite care

19. We call for strengthening international cooperation in implementing the Regional Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the León Ministerial Declaration, taking into account the situation and different needs of individual countries. We appreciate the exchange of experience and good practices provided in the framework of the UNECE in collaboration with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, affiliated with the United Nations, and the International Institute on Ageing, United Nations-Malta, and note with gratitude the financial support from Austria, Spain and the United Nations Population Fund. We recommend that monitoring and implementation activities be continued and further developed.

20. We are aware that research is vital to the development of effective policies and programmes. Sustainable research infrastructures and cross-sectoral cooperation should be further strengthened and developed.

21. We recognize that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in representing people and their needs in society and thus can contribute to policymaking. We encourage cooperation with NGOs.

22. We welcome voluntary contributions from UNECE member States and from the international community in support of international cooperation for promoting the implementation of the Regional Strategy, exchanging experiences in its implementation and monitoring.

23. We reaffirm the role of UNECE, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to assist member States in implementing the Regional Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the León Ministerial Declaration.

24. We express our sincere gratitude to the Kingdom of Spain for hosting the 2007 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing and for its hospitality.

Annex 2

CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY

**By Ms. Amparo Valcarce García,
State Secretary of Social Services, Families and Disability,
Chairperson of the 2007 UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing**

1. At the 2007 UNECE Conference Ageing in León, ministers and delegates from 46 countries discussed the challenges and opportunities related to population ageing over three days, with the Ministerial Segment being held on the third day.
2. After the opening of the Conference, the first plenary session featured the presentation of the summary report on the implementation of the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) based on country reports from 31 member States (ECE/AC.30/2007/4). UNECE member States reported significant progress reported in all the 10 commitment areas of the Berlin Strategy. Priorities and actions were concentrated in the area of adjusting social protection systems, including health-care systems and labour markets; here, financial sustainability was very frequently emphasized as an important aim. A great majority of reporting countries had comprehensive national programme documents related to ageing or are drafting them. Member States also emphasized collaboration with civil society and NGOs, and had promoted participatory approaches, although not specifically for the purpose of review and appraisal of the Berlin Strategy and the Madrid Plan. International cooperation in the framework of the UNECE in implementing the RIS had increased.
3. The plenary session was followed by six panel discussions covering all the key policy areas of the León Ministerial Declaration.

Panel (a): Creating integrated approaches to mainstream ageing

4. Discussions in this panel recognized that mainstreaming could be defined as a strategy and a process leading to a greater social integration of older persons and to the inclusion of ageing into all aspects of social, political, economic and cultural life.
5. To succeed in mainstreaming, simultaneous actions have to be pursued by policymakers and social partners, by Governments and civil society, by organizations and enterprises and by individuals progressing through the life course. International organizations have an important role to play in integrating ageing issues into their programmes and projects and to contribute to monitoring of the implementation of the RIS.

Panel (b): Participation and Social Inclusion

6. Active citizenship, a dynamic civil society, and interaction between citizens and government are vital for achieving a society for all ages. In this panel session, the panellists tried

to answer the question: “Which kind of enabling environment should Governments create to guarantee independent living and full participation in society?”

7. The key policy areas that lead to such enabling environments are the development of services for long-term care. It was emphasized that focusing on the older persons of today would be too narrow an approach. A life-course view should be adopted instead. Active and healthy ageing starts with the youth of today.

8. Panellists concluded that participatory approaches could only be realized if Governments recognized it as a priority.

Panel (c): Towards a balanced care strategy

9. Panellists at this session recognized that a successful strategy for care should strive for a balance between paid work and family life as well as between care from different providers. With respect to the achievement of this goal, the panellists discussed how to improve collaboration between government, different care providers, civil society and other stakeholders, as well as collaboration between different governmental departments.

10. Systematic support to non-professional care providers, compulsory social insurance for long-term care and better involvement of modern technology, including information technology, were emphasized in many presentations as suitable avenues for improving systems of care. Another common theme was turning away from institutional care as the primary care mode, and recommending it only where other options could not be applied in practice.

Panel (d): Living longer – working longer: Challenges for education, the labour market and social protection

11. This session largely focused on the labour market. Panellists emphasized, however, that response to population ageing could not be limited to pension reforms. A move from economic discourse to a more holistic approach was needed.

12. In the context of the labour market, the panellists stressed the importance of combating age discrimination and eradicating forced retirement, as well as of helping to break age-related images or prejudices in the workplace and also in society. Life-course transitions between education, work and retirement must be more flexible, leaving room for individual choice with respect to family situation and social security.

13. As health is an important factor for economic growth and provides the foundation for a longer working life and a higher employment rate, promoting healthy living has major economic importance.

14. Panellists noted that an important objective of the RIS, namely prolonging the working life in the light of longer lives, had not yet been achieved.

Panel (e): Intergenerational collaboration

15. This panel emphasized the fact that issues related to intergenerational collaboration cut across many policy areas and have many dimensions. Intergenerational solidarity is one of the important pillars of social cohesion and of civil society and must be promoted. Panellists noted that in moving ahead in this, policies focusing on one generation only should be avoided, as they could be detrimental to the others.

16. As specific important policy objectives, participants noted in this context the need for: (a) better access to the labour market for all generations; (b) family-friendly policies to better reconcile work and family life; (c) education; and (d) shaping the attitudes of the media to change the many existing age-related stereotypes.

Panel f: Focusing on opportunities: Active ageing

17. Here, panellists discussed active ageing, which is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security to enhance quality of life as we age.

18. Promotion of active ageing is an important component in all areas of age-related policies. As in some other sessions, the shift towards the life-course approach could be noted as a key trend in this area. Continued participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs was emphasized, not just the ability to remain physically active. Ultimately, the demand for health care in an aging population depends on the health status of the older citizens and not simply on age.

MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

19. The third day of the conference was devoted to the ministerial panels and the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration. The two ministerial panels gave member States an opportunity to present the progress made in their countries within the framework of the commitments of the RIS.

Ministerial Panel 1: A society for all ages: Challenges and opportunities

20. There was a consensus among panellists on the need for comprehensive, horizontal policies in the region, in particular with respect to intergenerational solidarity and approaching the subject from a life-course perspective. The roles of economic growth and poverty were highlighted, emphasizing the importance of adequate social protection for the achievement of social justice and dignity. This discussion involved ideas of universal access and the continuation of care into old age. Furthermore, innovative suggestions from some civil society groups were reflected in some speeches. For policies to be effective, action must be taken now, not in the future.

Ministerial Panel 2: Adjusting social protection systems, work and education to population ageing

21. Speakers discussed the role of social security and ageing. Overarching issues were poverty reduction, securing and extending universal social pensions coverage, health access, and support for education in older age. The varying nature of the definition of social security was debated. Many pointed out that the rights of older persons must be a critical objective for all policymakers. It was also shown that in several countries, older persons form a disproportionate number of the poor. Finally, the sustainability of such social policy was shown to be important, illustrated by case studies and datasets from some panellists.

22. Panellists also pointed out that while employment and education help to alleviate social problems, they are not sufficient to combat the challenges of ageing. Educating the public about the positive contributions of older persons is important, but older people must also improve the image that they portray of their expectations and capabilities. To achieve this, structural changes must be made through public policy.

Concluding plenary session

23. After the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, the Chairperson of the Conference called for cooperation between the different actors, e.g. government institutions, research institutes and civil society, to implement the principles of the León Declaration, emphasizing that ageing should be considered an asset for society rather than a burden.

24. In his statement, Mr. Bärlund (Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, UNECE) emphasized that it is the actions that member States take in between such conferences that determine the success of such conferences and their adopted programme documents, and that population ageing will continue long into the future, requiring sustainable responses. He also expressed that the UNECE secretariat is prepared to continue assisting member States in fulfilling their commitments.

25. Following suggestions from Finland and Switzerland with respect to the monitoring of the implementation of the León Ministerial Declaration, Spain proposed to create a working group in the UNECE, open to all the member countries. This working group should have the possibility to meet periodically in Geneva, with the purpose of reinforcing and continuing the implementation of the Berlin Strategy and the León Ministerial Declaration.

26. Summarizing its achievements, the Chairperson concluded that the Conference had successfully reviewed the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy five years after the celebration of the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid and the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin. This task of revision and completion should not stop here, however, but must remain on the agenda to advance the well-being of the population of the UNECE countries. Arising from demographic development, the consequences of ageing encompass a variety of economic and social issues, affecting the whole society and presenting new challenges and opportunities. The adjustment of societies to population ageing should therefore retain a long-term view.