

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**Guidelines on the Implementation of
the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing
for Asia and the Pacific**

UNITED NATIONS

Printed in Bangkok
October 2000 – 1,480

United Nations publication
Sales No. E.00.II.F.60
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ISBN: 92-1-120009-1
ST/ESCAP/2080

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PREFACE

The year 1999 was proclaimed as the International Year of Older Persons by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. The observance of the Year was in recognition of the unprecedented ageing of populations across the world and the increasing severity of the challenges posed by this process. The Year's observance has brought to fore the increasing, though often unrecognized, contributions of older persons to social, economic and cultural development of societies, and the need to integrate older persons into mainstream development.

The arrival of the new millennium not only marked the successful celebration of the International Year of Older Persons in many countries, but also brought hope and optimism that the coming decades will witness an increase in partnerships, practical initiatives and resources devoted to ageing issues. Central to this broad and concerted effort, the United Nations has worked tirelessly with governments, NGOs, community groups, families and individuals of all ages to advance "towards a society for all ages". Though much remains to be achieved, government policies and programmes, community efforts, NGO programmes and family participation have contributed to bringing about positive changes in the perception and treatment of older people and improvements in their quality of life.

Population ageing is not a new phenomenon in Asia and the Pacific. Although many countries in the region are still in the early stages of this process, the region is ageing more rapidly than did the developed countries of the other regions in their early stages. Declining fertility and increased life expectancy along with improvements in health care have helped raise the absolute numbers and proportions of older persons in populations in the region. Against this backdrop, rapid economic growth and urbanization are contributing to changes in family size and intra-family responsibilities, as well as to the weakening of the existing support system for the elderly, including the extended family system which has been the traditional source of elderly care and support in this region. The impacts of a shrinking labour force and high dependency ratio as a consequence of rapid population ageing are beginning to be felt in various countries. The economic and social challenges imposed by population ageing to the countries in Asia and the Pacific are in no way insignificant. They

are as serious as those faced by the rest of the world, though not in the same intensity and of the same scope.

As early as 1982, the first World Assembly on Ageing was convened in Vienna. The Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing marked the first time an international consensus agreement on ageing was reached by all the governments. It put forth ageing not just as a problem faced by people who are already old, but as a lifelong process that requires early attention and preparation in social, economic, health and other aspects. In addition to adopting, in 1992, the Proclamation on Ageing, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 50/141 of 1995 called on the United Nations regional commissions to formulate plans of action on ageing for the twenty-first century. In response to this call, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convened the Regional Meeting on a Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific in Macao, which adopted the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific on 1 October 1998.

With the aim of assisting members and associate members in their effective implementation of the Macao Plan of Action, a set of guidelines were prepared and endorsed by ESCAP at its 56th session held in June 2000. It is hoped that the guidelines will serve as a policy reference for governments, NGOs and other concerned entities in their effort to turn the words of the Macao Plan of Action into a vivid reality of life.

The present publication containing the guidelines on the implementation of the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific is divided into four sections. The first section addresses the macro and endemic general recommendations of the Plan of Action. The section further lists the tasks that are essential for the building up of an effective national capacity and infrastructure for dealing with the impact of population ageing. The second section supports the need for special attention in seven major areas essential to integrate older people as participants as well as beneficiaries of the development process. The section suggest tasks and mechanisms to cope with the conventional negative perception about older persons in the development process, the decreasing ability of families of today to take care of older persons, the health and nutrition concerns of older persons, their living conditions, transportation and mobility needs, the needs and rights of older persons as a special consumer group in the market, the income security, employment and maintenance of older persons and the need of social services for their well-being. The third section stresses the importance of close cooperation and collaboration between governments, NGOs and other social entities at the national level. The guidelines also emphasize here the necessity for governments to set very clear goals and targets in quantifiable outputs and timeframes for their implementation. The final section recognizes the absolute necessity of regional and international cooperation between governments as well as between governments and the United Nations system, particularly ESCAP, in the implementation of the recommendations. The section calls on ESCAP to continue to be the focal point for Asia and Pacific region on issues relating to ageing and older persons to provide necessary technical assistance and advisory services.

The full text of the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, as endorsed by ESCAP in its resolution 55/4 of 28 April 1999, has been incorporated as an annex to the Guidelines on the Implementation of the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

It is hoped that the Guidelines will help members and the associate members of ESCAP as well as members of civil society and other entities to successfully realize their respective targets, set in accordance with the Macao Plan of Action.

The special needs of older persons as well as the necessity for life long preparation for old age are now more than ever before a critical issue facing governments and the public at large. Yet the acceptance of respectable success in the countries of this region in dealing with

ageing should not distract from the reality that much more remains to be accomplished. The success of the implementation unequivocally lies in the protection of the rights of older persons as well as in the recognition of their role, by the society as a whole, as contributors rather than as ‘mere’ beneficiaries of the development process.

The generous financial support of the Government of Macao towards the formulation and dissemination of the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific and the Guidelines on its implementation as well as the issuance of this publication is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

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GUIDELINES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MACAO PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission, recognizing the importance of population ageing in Asia and the Pacific and acting in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/141 of 21 December 1995 on the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages, in its resolution 54/5 of 22 April 1998, requested the Executive Secretary to convene a regional meeting to formulate a regional plan of action on ageing to mark the International Year of Older Persons. The Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific was adopted by the Regional Meeting on a Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific on 1 October 1998.

2. The Macao Plan of Action identifies the immediate tasks for Asia and the Pacific focusing on four main areas: understanding of the issues and implications of population ageing for society; the preparation of the population for an ageing process that is productive and fulfilling; the development of a service infrastructure and environment based on traditional and modern institutions; and the delivery of essential services needed by the growing number of older persons. The Plan of Action addresses seven major areas of concern relating to ageing and older persons: (a) the social position of older persons; (b) older persons and the family; (c) health and nutrition; (d) housing, transportation and the built environment; (e) older persons and the market; (f) income security, maintenance and employment; and (g) social services and the community. Specific actions are recommended for each of the seven major areas of concern.

3. The Commission, at its fifty-fifth session held in April 1999, endorsed the Macao Plan of Action. It requested the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to provide full support and

assistance to members and associate members in the immediate implementation of the Plan, including the provision of technical assistance, in the establishment of specific time-bound national goals, targets and policies on ageing and the coordination of regional and subregional activities.

4. To assist the member countries in their implementation of the Plan, a set of guidelines on the implementation of the Plan has been prepared and further revised following the International Symposium on Planning Attainable Targets for Societies for All Ages, which was held in Macao from 26 to 29 October 1999. These guidelines detail the specific goals and targets that should be established at the country and regional levels and recommend dates or a time frame for initiation and review of action in achieving the targets.

5. The Plan of Action contains concise recommendations on addressing important issues relating to ageing and older persons, which represent the governments' desire to take concrete and appropriate action to mitigate the adverse impact of population ageing. The Plan takes note of the fact that issues related to population ageing may not be among the top priorities of governments. However, in view of the significance of the impact of population ageing, the Plan of Action and its recommendations underscore the governments' concern that it will place increasing pressure on the development process, especially on the social development of countries.

6. The Plan of Action indicates that individual countries will set their own goals and targets within the framework of the recommendations and implement them in accordance with their national circumstances. These recommendations need to be concretized and re-phrased as specific goals and targets for each country to adopt for implementation. A list of such goals and targets will help countries in their national planning and monitoring process.

7. At the regional level, the need to establish a mechanism to monitor progress made by countries in the implementation of the Plan of Action has been mandated by the Commission. The monitoring system requires specificity in the goals and targets, and a clear indication of the target date for the initiation of activities and achievement of such goals. The establishment of this set of goals and targets will assist the secretariat in reporting to the Commission periodically on the progress of implementation.

8. The proposed guidelines are in four sections. The first section deals with the general recommendations mentioned in the Plan of Action which are macro and systemic in nature. The second section examines the specific areas that affect ageing and older persons. The third section covers issues relating to coordination and resource mobilization. The fourth section deals with regional and international cooperation.

I. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The Plan of Action proposed four immediate tasks to be taken by the countries, in view of the importance of population ageing for national social and economic development. The four tasks are essential for the building up of effective national capacity and infrastructure for dealing with the impact of population ageing. These tasks require the establishment of a coherent national programme on ageing, and the national infrastructure should build upon an integrated network of service organizations with quality services and effective delivery.

General recommendations

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Understanding of the issues and implications of population ageing	• Set up a national coordinating body on ageing	Immediate	2005
	• Establish a national programme of study, research, and public education on population ageing: (i) Set up information and research apparatus on ageing (ii) Conduct baseline surveys and analysis (iii) Establish public education programmes (iv) Establish national databases on ageing	Immediate	2005
2. Preparation for an ageing process that is productive and fulfilling	• Establish a national programme to assist preparations for ageing and retirement involving public education and policy changes	Immediate	2005
3. Development of a national infrastructure for ageing and an enabling environment	• Establish a national infrastructure of services for older persons with three key components: (i) An integrated network of organizations (ii) Quality services with an effective delivery framework (iii) Adequate training, monitoring and research support	Immediate	2005
4. Delivery of essential services	• Establish an effective, accessible service delivery network to bring services to older persons	Immediate	2005

II. ACTION IN SPECIFIC AREAS

10. The Plan of Action recognized seven major areas relating to ageing and older persons that would require special attention. These are discussed in detail below.

A. Social position of older persons

11. The governments were mandated by the Plan of Action to make serious efforts to dispel the negative perception of older persons and to inculcate vigorously a new role for them based on their positive and continued contributions in the social, religious, political and economic

arenas. This was in response to the recognition that the conventional perception of older persons tends to be negative. The Plan of Action also stressed the importance of adequate lifelong preparation for successful ageing and that governments should make serious efforts to prepare the population for the ageing process.

Social position of older persons

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should prepare for the productive ageing of the population	• Establish a programme to promote lifelong education	2001	2006
	• Provide equal opportunities to allow older persons to remain engaged in as many social, economic and community activities as possible	Immediate	2005
	• Establish a programme to promote lifelong preparation for productive ageing with positive and continued contributions in the social, religious, political and economic arenas	2001	2006
2. Governments should dispel negative perceptions of older persons and inculcate a new, positive role	• Create a positive image of older persons through public education	Immediate	2005
	• Recognize the positive contributions of older persons in the family, economy and society	Immediate	2005
	• Give due publicity to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons within the national and cultural context	Immediate	2005
	• Involve older persons in national planning efforts	Immediate	2005

B. Older persons and the family

12. The Plan of Action recognized the distinctive role of the family in Asia and the Pacific and took note of the special position of older persons in the family, giving and receiving support from each other. The governments appreciated the forces that had adversely affected the capacity of the family to support and care for older persons and agreed to initiate comprehensive programmes that would strengthen the family. They also agreed to provide special assistance to vulnerable older persons, including the destitute, those with low income,

the minorities, the displaced, the disabled, and persons with long-term medical conditions. The special needs of widows and women without family support were also recognized.

Older persons and the family

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should take effective steps to enhance the care-giving capability of the family through appropriate programmes	• Promote co-residence through housing policies and financial incentives	Immediate	2005
	• Provide home nursing services for older persons	2001	2006
	• Provide facilities for respite care	2001	2006
	• Provide programmes on counselling, professional guidance and emotional support	Immediate	2005
	• Strengthen intergenerational relationships and the traditional support system	Immediate	2005
2. Governments should ensure that vulnerable older persons (destitute, low-income, minorities, displaced, disabled, persons with long-term medical conditions) receive special attention and are covered by the social safety nets	• Identify and assess the size of these groups	2001	2006
	• Determine the extent of assistance	2001	2006
3. Governments should monitor and meet the special needs of widows (who form the largest group of older persons) through special programmes	• Make adequate provision for older persons in emergency planning and relief efforts for widows and women without family support	Immediate	2005
4. Governments should dispel the notion that older persons only receive support and contributions from the family, intergenerational exchange is two-way	• Pay special tribute to the contribution of older persons to the family institution	Immediate	2005
	• Promote multigenerational relationships	Immediate	2005

C. Health and nutrition

13. The Plan of Action took note of the trend that cohorts of older persons were now reaching old age in better health than before. The maintenance of good health could be

achieved through proper nutrition, diagnosis, preventive care and healthy lifestyles. The governments were asked to develop and promote these low-cost, prevention-based initiatives and to put in place a system of coordinated care to evaluate the health needs of older persons in a holistic manner. The governments were also asked to examine policy options on health-care financing, as the rapidly increasing need for health care for older persons would result in significant budgetary commitments.

Health and nutrition

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should put a systematic programme of activities in place to educate the population on healthy ageing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the public on healthy ageing, especially the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Awareness of physiological changes (ii) Understanding symptoms of common ailments (iii) Understanding the risk factors of poor health (iv) Adoption of preventive care and a healthy lifestyle (v) Prevention and/or treatment of age-related diseases 	Immediate	2005
2. Governments should integrate low-cost, community-based activities into existing community health programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information about common ailments • Conduct mass screening programmes • Provide nutritional and dietary advice to the public • Provide security of minimum nutrition needs 	Immediate 2001 Immediate Immediate	2005 2006 2005 2005
3. Governments should explore innovative options of health-care financing for older persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and evaluate the co-payment of medical costs between employees and employers, and medical funds, and explore insurance-based schemes • Provide medical care at concessionary rates to older persons 	2001 2001	2006 2006

D. Housing, transportation and the built environment

14. The Plan of Action emphasized that the quality of life of older persons was intertwined with the adequacy of their living conditions. The governments were urged to make resources available to address the housing needs of older persons and to ensure that they had a

reasonable and adequate living environment. Special arrangements should also be made to meet the transportation and mobility needs of older persons.

Housing, transportation and the built environment

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should ensure that older persons have a reasonable and adequate living environment	• Adopt the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, which obliges the State to assume responsibility for protection and improvement of housing conditions	Immediate	2005
	• Make available resources to address the housing needs of older persons	2001	2006
	• Provide barrier-free access throughout the community	2005	2010
	• Give incentives to facilitate home upgrading and improvements to the surrounding environment	2001	2006
	• Ensure that nursing homes and shelters for the aged destitute are well-run and meet quality standards	2005	2010
2. Governments should make special arrangements to meet the transportation needs of older persons	• Give concessions in public transport travel fares	Immediate	2005
	• Modify the physical environment and transportation infrastructure to facilitate independent movement	2001	2006
	• Promote the road safety of older persons	Immediate	2005

E. Older persons and the market

15. The Plan of Action recognized that older persons were a special group of consumers, with many of the required goods and services provided by the private sector. The governments should protect their rights as consumers as provided for by the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection.¹ It was recognized that private sector initiatives were important market mechanisms responding to the needs of older consumers. The governments should facilitate the development of that market.

¹ See the annex to General Assembly resolution 39/248 of 9 April 1985.

Older persons and the market

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should ensure that the rights of older persons as consumers are safeguarded	• Encourage older persons to join or form consumer groups to protect their rights as consumers	Immediate	2005
	• Promote consumer education, including education on market practices	Immediate	2005
2. Governments should facilitate and regulate the development of service industries catering to older persons	• Provide appropriate incentives and guidance to private service providers	2001	2006
	• Provide safeguards to prevent abuse and ensure minimum standards	Immediate	2005

F. Income security, maintenance and employment

16. The Plan of Action observed that while saving for old age had a long tradition in the region and its practice was widespread, the governments needed to assess the extent to which the different sectors of the population were actually saving for old age. It was agreed that that was a key element in a person's lifelong preparation for old age. In addition, the governments recognized the particular importance of continued employment as a form of income security, and agreed that participation in the workforce should be encouraged as long as older persons were able to continue to work. As the providers of the final safety net, the governments would constantly review the adequacy of the social security schemes and provide additional resources to improve the coverage and the current level of benefits.

Income security, maintenance and employment

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should assess the extent to which the different sectors of the population are saving for old age	• Establish appropriate mechanisms to encourage savings during a person's economically active years, including people in the informal sector, women and long-term unemployed	2001	2006

	workers		
2. Governments should encourage older persons' participation in the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement flexible retirement scheme and legal protection • Establish job creation and retention programmes • Introduce programmes to upgrade worker knowledge and skills • Encourage self-employment through advisory services and other assistance 	2001	2006
3. Governments should constantly review the adequacy of benefits (social security or pension etc.) to ensure a reasonable standard of living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devote additional resources to such schemes to improve coverage and level of benefits • Make intensive studies to examine the implications and evolve new instruments of income security 	Immediate	2005
		2001	2006

G. Social services and the community

17. The governments recognized the occasional needs of older persons for social service assistance to regain their well-being. The Plan of Action specified that the governments should ensure that a reasonable level of services was available to older persons, through a coordinated network of government and non-governmental agencies. It also recognized that older persons themselves formed a pool of expertise that could be tapped for community projects and activities, and that should be facilitated.

Social services and the community

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should recognize the occasional need for social service assistance by older persons	• Commit adequate resources to ensure a reasonable level of services, especially home support services	2001	2006
	• Implement proper coordination and integration of government and non-government service agencies in the provision of support and alternative services to older persons	2001	2006
2. Governments should view older persons as a valuable resource in the community	• Open up avenues for their participation through membership in community clubs and resident associations	Immediate	2005
	• Encourage associations of older persons	Immediate	2005

- Empower older persons to undertake projects that would improve community well-being Immediate 2005

III. COORDINATION AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

18. The implementation of the Plan of Action is primarily a national responsibility, requiring the concerted efforts of the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other social entities. A central element in the implementation is national coordination. The Plan of Action requested the governments to designate a national coordinating body to provide overall policy direction and guidance in the planning and formulation of national programmes. It also requested the governments to spell out the goals and targets for their national plans and programmes in terms of quantifiable outputs and time frames for their implementation. In the implementation process, close cooperation and collaboration among government agencies, NGOs and the private sector were extremely important, and a multisectoral approach was emphasized. The Plan of Action further urged governments to devote additional resources to the establishment of a national infrastructure for ageing, and to harness the resources of NGOs and the private sector, and among older persons themselves.

Coordination and resource mobilization

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should coordinate implementation of the Plan of Action carefully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national coordinating agency should be established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To provide overall policy direction in the formulation of national programmes (ii) To review the implementation on a regular basis (iii) To provide feedback on the reviews to all parties (iv) To ensure that the needs of older persons are adequately met 	Immediate	2005
2. Governments should draw up plans to meet guidelines in the Plan of Action after a national infrastructure for ageing has been set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify attainable goals and targets within well-defined time frames in line with national conditions 	Immediate	2005
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather inputs from participating sectors • Bear in mind gender equality and minimize urban-rural imbalance 	Immediate	2005
3. Governments should	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the develop- 	Immediate	2005

work closely with NGOs as well as the private sector	ment of a strong non-governmental sector by formulating a legal framework for establishment and registration, provision of budgetary subvention and assistance		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote open competition by the private sector in service delivery 	Immediate	2005
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider privatization of services where the private sector is able to bring better standards 	Immediate	2005
4. Governments should show commitment to review national priorities and, where necessary, revise them to ensure the availability of sufficient resources for implementation of the Plan of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore new ways of financing, including establishing a dedicated fund to provide for additional resources 	Immediate	2005
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give assistance in NGO fund-raising activities 	Immediate	2005
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate community resource mobilization through capital grants, tax exemptions or other fiscal incentives 	Immediate	2005
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate training, guidance and recognition for volunteerism 	Immediate	2005

IV. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

19. The Plan of Action recognized the importance of international cooperation in the implementation of the recommendations. Specifically, it asked ESCAP to be the focal point for the region on issues related to ageing and older persons. In addition, the United Nations system was asked to increase its support of the development of the infrastructure for ageing at the country level. Finally, the Plan asked the ESCAP secretariat to undertake a periodic review of the progress in the implementation of the Plan.

Regional and international cooperation

<i>Plan of Action goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Initiation date</i>	<i>Review date</i>
1. Governments should continue to strengthen their commitment to current modes of cooperation, including exchange of information, joint research and training activities, awareness creation and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCAP could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Continue facilitating the exchange of national experiences (ii) Design programmes for regional cooperation (iii) Provide technical assistance and 	Immediate	2005

demonstration projects with the assistance of ESCAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advisory services (iv) Initiate resource mobilization from multilateral donor institutions (v) Coordinate international organizations in activities on ageing (vi) Monitor and review implementation of the Plan of Action 		
2. The United Nations system should increase its support for the development of infrastructure for ageing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations could increase support by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Providing technical assistance in policy and programme development (ii) Providing financial support for major initiatives (iii) Providing a mechanism for capacity-building (iv) Disseminating relevant materials (v) Conducting and providing advice on seminars, workshops and training courses 	Immediate	2005
3. International non-governmental organizations to intensify their efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International NGOs could provide technical assistance to enhance national information, training and research capabilities • Promote networking and cooperation among NGOs in the region and between those in the region and outside the region 	Immediate	2005
4. Progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action is to be reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments could review the Plan of Action at the subregional level first, where appropriate, given differing population conditions 	When appropriate	2005
5. Review of the Plan of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESCAP is to review and report its findings for further action at its annual session in 2001 and every five years thereafter 	When appropriate	2005

ANNEX

MACAO DECLARATION ON AGEING FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

We, the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific attending the Regional Meeting on a Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific convened at Macao from 28 September to 1 October 1998:

Appreciating the contribution that older persons are making and can continue to make to their societies,

Recognizing that, in the Charter of the United Nations, the peoples of the United Nations declare, inter alia, their determination to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 47/5 of 16 October 1992, in which the Assembly decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, and its resolution 50/141 of 21 December 1995, in which it invited the regional commissions to bear in mind the goals of the Year when convening regional meetings in 1998 and 1999 at which to mark the Year and formulate action plans on ageing for the twenty-first century,

Reaffirming the relevance and need for continued implementation of the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, which was the first comprehensive international instrument in the field of ageing that set out the principles and guidelines for the formulation and implementation of policies concerning ageing and older persons,

In pursuance of the Manila Declaration on the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region adopted at the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development in October 1994,

Noting that the ageing of societies in the twentieth century, unprecedented in the history of mankind, poses a serious and complex challenge to all nations and requires a basic change in social attitude towards ageing and older persons and in the way in which societies organize themselves,

Aware that the Asian and Pacific region is rooted in the dynamism of social, economic and cultural development, that, in the region, individuals are reaching an advanced age in greater numbers and are in better health, and that the tremendous diversity in the situation of older persons, not only between countries but also within countries, requires a variety of policy responses,

Mindful that, in many countries, the family, as the natural fundamental unit of society, needs to be strengthened as a system of support in the provision of care and protection for older persons,

Reaffirming our solidarity and collective support of the spirit of regional cooperation in addressing issues of common concern relating to ageing and older persons,

Expressing a firm commitment to accord priority to the development of older persons, to take immediate measures to bring active older persons into the economic and social mainstream and to meet the basic needs and social security of rural and urban elderly,

Urging the international community and development assistance bodies to provide full support and adequate resources for the region's pursuit of the goals and targets contained in the international and regional mandates related to ageing and older persons mentioned above,

Acknowledging the national experience and capacity of members and associate members to formulate, strengthen and implement their respective policies concerning ageing and older persons, mindful of their own social, economic and political conditions,

1. **Adopt** the Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific as annexed to the present Declaration;
2. **Urge** members and associate members:
 - (a) To set corresponding goals and targets in accordance with the Plan of Action;
 - (b) To establish and strengthen their respective national policies on ageing and national mechanisms for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Plan of Action;
3. **Call upon** the Commission to devote at least one plenary meeting at its fifty-fifth annual session, to be held in 1999, to the commemoration of the International Year of Older Persons and to generate greater awareness of issues related to ageing and older persons;
4. **Recommend** that the Commission endorse the Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific at that session and provide support for its successful implementation;
5. **Also call upon** the Commission and other concerned United Nations and international organizations to assist in the early and full implementation of the Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Introduction

1. The Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific addresses important issues relating to ageing and older persons by identifying specific courses of action to be taken by countries of the region, individually and collectively. It contains concise recommendations with specific guidelines. Individual countries will set their own goals and targets within the framework of the recommendations and implement them in accordance with their national circumstances.

2. The present Plan of Action draws on the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, the Proclamation on Ageing as annexed to General Assembly resolution 47/5 of 16 October 1992, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons and other relevant United Nations mandates relating to ageing and older persons. It is also supportive of the relevant goals and targets contained in the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, the Copenhagen Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 and of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region as revised by the Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development in 1997.

3. In formulating the present Plan of Action, the governments recognize that, for many developing countries in the region, the overall social and economic development of the nation, including the provision of basic social services for all the population, remains the priority national task. Hunger, poverty, ill health, social exclusion, unemployment, and limited access to education and basic amenities are critical national areas of concern requiring corrective action and competing for scarce resources. The governments appreciate the need to view the issues relating to ageing and older persons within this broader developmental context of priorities, needs and resource allocation.

I. Major areas of concern relating to ageing and older persons

4. The governments recognize that the twentieth century has heralded, in the Asian and Pacific region, the beginning of a demographic transformation that will have a profound impact on the countries in the region. At its core, the transformation dramatically alters the age structure of all societies, disproportionately increasing the number and percentage of older persons. The twin processes of mortality and fertility reduction contribute to this dramatic increase in the proportion of older persons which, in some countries, is expected to rise to as high as 25 per cent by the early twenty-first century. The combined effects of improved longevity and declining fertility lead to a maturing of the age structure, with a high concentration of the population in the middle or older ages. The increase in the presence of older persons will be felt in all aspects of social life.

5. The rise in the population of older persons, in absolute and relative terms, poses challenges in both developmental and humanitarian areas. At the societal, developmental level, the effects of structural changes in the age composition of the population on the social, economic and political life of a society will be profound. The sheer size of the older population will impact on existing societal arrangements, such as age at retirement and relative political influence. The differential size of the younger and older populations will further lead to a shift in the economic dynamics of production, consumption, savings and investment. The aggregate effects of these changes are multifaceted and are just beginning to be appreciated. Research on the development implications at country and regional levels is intensifying and will guide future policy responses.

6. At the community and individual levels, the humanitarian needs of older persons require special attention. Societies have to promote and safeguard the rights and well-being of older persons. This includes the prevention of age discrimination and the promotion of productive ageing. The aspirations, knowledge and energy of older persons need to be effectively channelled in the process of national economic and social development. The service infrastructure needs to be broadened and strengthened to meet the social, emotional, health, financial and developmental needs of this growing population.

7. This demographic phenomenon is occurring within a context of changes in national institutions and values because of rapid social and economic development. The traditional institutions for the care of older persons, such as the family and the community, are undergoing transformation in response to these changes. Traditional support may no longer be adequate or may have diminished. The support systems for older persons need to be re-examined with a view to improving their scope and effectiveness.

8. The present Plan of Action addresses seven areas of concern relating to ageing and older persons in the Asian and Pacific region: (a) the social position of older persons; (b) older persons and the family; (c) health and nutrition; (d) housing, transportation and the built environment; (e) older persons and the market; (f) income security, maintenance and employment; and (g) social services and the community.

II. Action on major areas of concern

9. Noting that the demographic transformation will manifest its full impact in the decades to come, the governments recognize that population ageing is imminent. It is an important phenomenon with long-term concerns, posing no immediate difficulties but increasing pressure on the socio-economic development of the nation. For most countries, the structural changes in the age composition of the population have thus far been slow and the number of older persons manageable. However, in many areas, immediate action must be taken.

10. The immediate tasks for the Asian and Pacific region focus on four major areas: the understanding of the issues and implications of population ageing on society; the preparation of the population for an ageing process that is productive and fulfilling; the development of a service infrastructure and environment based on traditional and modern institutions that will be able to meet present and future needs; and the delivery of essential services needed by the growing number of older persons.

11. There is a continuum among the countries in the Asian and Pacific region in respect of the level of governmental interest in issues relating to ageing and older persons, and the extensiveness of the policies and programmes initiated for older persons. Underlying these differences, however, is a universal awareness that the issues and challenges are similar across countries and much can be learnt from the experiences of each other. These issues and challenges emanate from the demographic and social realities that are faced by all countries in the region.

A. Social position of older persons

12. The conventional perception of older persons tends to be negative. Older persons are often depicted as frail, disabled and dependent. Economically and socially, they are perceived to be at risk of being marginalized as countries go through rapid economic and technological development. The reality, as documented in research findings, is very different. The older persons in the region engage in a variety of activities that have a significant bearing on the cultural, social and economic life of a country. They have a significant presence in both formal and informal sectors. Most of them are healthy and independent. In an era of rapid globalization and technological change, the older person is a cultural icon providing continuity and stability in the country's traditions. The contributions of older persons have proved to be valuable resources for the country's social and economic development.

13. Ageing is an extension of life that has been made possible by technological advances, especially those in medical and health services. As life expectancy continues to rise and more people are living to older ages, the role of older persons assumes special significance. The preparation for a productive and meaningful role at older ages should be undertaken at both the individual and the society level. At the individual level, the extension of life must be associated with personal satisfaction and fulfilment achieved through involvement in family, community and workplace activities. This involvement is a lifelong process that starts from an early age, a process that should be nurtured in preparing younger people for life at older ages. At the society level, preparation for productive ageing should include steps such as lifelong education and provision of equal opportunity, to allow older persons to remain engaged in as many social, economic and community activities as possible.

14. The governments recognize that, in preparation for an ageing society, serious efforts should be made to dispel the negative perception of older persons. A new, positive role for older persons will be vigorously inculcated, a role based on the positive contributions of older persons in the family and in society. In this regard, the governments will give due publicity to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons within the national and cultural context. The governments will harness the contributions of older persons as a national resource and ensure that future generations benefit from a programme of lifelong preparation for productive ageing.

B. Older persons and the family

15. The family has a distinctive place in the countries of the Asian and Pacific region. It is the most basic social unit, with much of the country's social and economic life revolving around it. In many rural communities, it is also the economic unit engaging in productive activities. Binding the families together are deeply rooted cultural mores and religious practices. Filial piety, which underpins the relationship between generations, is a key attribute that reinforces the family's cohesiveness. The older person is guaranteed a special position in the family, giving and receiving support from other family members.

16. The region has a high regard for the unique role that the family plays in supporting older persons. Most countries place special emphasis on the family as the frontline institution in their plans for population ageing. They realize that the emotional, social, physical and economic supports provided by the family are indispensable and cannot be replaced by any other institutions. It is also recognized that the family institution remains strong in spite of cultural changes and migratory movements. In many countries, it is an accepted planning norm that the family will continue to play this critical support role in the century to come.

17. The governments appreciate the forces that have adversely affected the capacity of the family to support and care for older persons. Declining family size, the increasing number of

women joining the workforce, the diminishing extended family arrangement and the geographic mobility of family members are contributing factors. They reduce the number of potential caregivers within the family and the options of burden-sharing. Given these changes, it becomes necessary for governments to take effective steps to enhance the care-giving capability of the family through appropriate programmes. This is a cost-effective approach and is compatible with the cultural mores of the region.

18. Recognizing the importance of the care-giving role of the family, governments agree to initiate comprehensive programmes that will strengthen the family in this aspect. The programmes should include the following elements:

- (a) Promotion of co-residence through housing policies and financial incentives;
- (b) Provision of home nursing services for the older persons;
- (c) Provision of facilities for respite care;
- (d) Provision of programmes on counselling, professional guidance and emotional support;
- (e) Strengthening of inter-generational relationships.

19. The governments are aware of the existence of vulnerable older persons whose families are no longer able to offer support or who have no family. These groups of older persons, which include the destitute, the low-income, the minorities, the displaced, the disabled and persons with long-term medical conditions, require direct humanitarian assistance. These groups should receive special attention and be adequately covered by the social safety net. The governments will identify and assess the size of these groups and the extent to which assistance is required. In this regard, the governments recognize that widows constitute the largest group among older persons. Their special needs will be monitored and met through special programmes. Older persons, especially those without children, are among the most vulnerable during natural disasters and emergencies. The governments will make adequate provision for older persons in emergency planning and relief efforts.

20. The governments will pay special tribute to the contributions of the older persons to the family institution. The notion that older persons only receive support and contributions from their family members should be dispelled. The inter-generational exchange is two-way, with all members benefiting from the process. The assistance rendered by older persons range from intangibles such as helping with child care to providing financial support for the family. These contributions, taken together, strengthen the family unit and bind the generations over the life course.

C. Health and nutrition

21. While older persons are prone to age-related illnesses, the ageing process is not necessarily associated with poor health. Cohorts of older persons are now reaching the same age in better health than before. Research has shown that maintenance of good health can be achieved through proper nutrition, early diagnosis, preventive care and healthy lifestyles, including harmonious family life, health and physical education and social participation. The promotion and implementation of these low-cost, prevention-based initiatives could significantly enhance the well-being of older persons.

22. Advances in medical technologies in the past decades have made possible the prolongation of life through better medical care and intensive interventions. These new technologies are, however, expensive and are not easily accessible to the average person. The majority of the population comes in contact with primary and secondary health care facilities.

Improvements in these facilities would have a more significant impact on the quality of life among the masses. For older persons, whose contacts with health facilities are more frequent, economical and preventive services are essential.

23. The health needs of the older persons are multidimensional. While physical health is often the focus of attention, the psychological and mental health of older persons is equally important in ensuring their sense of well-being. A system of coordinated care will be put in place to evaluate the health needs of older persons in a holistic manner and to implement appropriate person-oriented interventions. Within this system, suitable programmes will be instituted to detect the presence of psychological and mental problems and provide suitable solutions.

24. The governments agree with the need to put a systematic programme of activities in place to educate the population on healthy ageing. The components of healthy ageing include awareness of physiological changes, understanding of the symptoms of common ailments and the risk factors of poor health, and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Information about common ailments such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cataract, arthritis, osteoporosis and neuro-psychiatric diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's will be disseminated, accompanied by early diagnosis and mass screening programmes. Nutritional advice will be provided to minimize dietary deficiencies and imbalances. The governments reaffirm that these low-cost, community-based activities will be integrated into existing community health programmes.

25. The governments recognize that the health care of older persons will be a key issue in the future resulting in significant budgetary commitments. Regional variations in health care financing do exist, reflecting country preferences. However, more innovative options need to be evolved including co-payment of medical costs between employees and employers, the setting up of medical funds to cover medical expenses and the establishment of insurance-based schemes to provide financing for major illnesses and hospitalization needs.

D. Housing, transportation and the built environment

26. In the Asian and Pacific region, older persons tend to live with the family. For them, the family house is the centre of almost all activities. Their quality of life is thus unavoidably affected by the adequacy of living conditions. Ensuring a proper living environment has been a national concern for regional countries. The governments have associated themselves with the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, which obliges the State to assume responsibility for the protection and improvement of housing conditions. Resources should be made available to address the housing needs of the older persons.

27. To the extent possible, the governments will ensure that older persons have a reasonable and adequate living environment. Barrier-free access throughout the community will be made possible through appropriate means. Incentives will be given to facilitate home upgrading and improvements to the surrounding environment. Public housing programmes will include options for older persons who live alone either by choice or by circumstance. For older persons who need community residential care, it is important that nursing homes and shelters for the aged destitute are well run and deliver satisfactory levels of care and service.

28. Special arrangements will be made to meet the transportation needs of older persons. Concessions in travel fares will be considered for older persons commuting by public transport. Wherever feasible, adaptations will be made to the physical environment and transportation infrastructure to facilitate the independent, unrestricted mobility of older

persons. The governments will promote road safety as older persons are particularly at risk of traffic accidents.

E. Older persons and the market

29. Older persons are a special group of consumers, as many of them require specialized goods and services in their daily living. The provision of such goods and services is generally undertaken by the private sector. In some countries, this has grown to become a well-defined market with older persons becoming captive consumers. However, the range and the quality of goods and services, as well as their prices, may vary, depending on the size of the market and the number of firms. Older persons, particularly those consumers with limited purchasing power or knowledge of the products, may be susceptible to monopolistic pricing and unscrupulous or aggressive market practices. Governments will ensure that their rights as consumers, as provided for in the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, are recognized and safeguarded. Older persons should be encouraged to join or form consumer groups to safeguard their interest.

30. The governments recognize the potential of private sector initiatives in meeting the day-to-day needs of older persons through pay-for-service transactions. These initiatives are important market mechanisms responding to the needs and demands of the consumers. As the number of older persons increases, innovative private sector services are likely to emerge to cater to their special needs. The rise of a service industry catering to older persons is inevitable, and it has already happened in many countries in the region. The governments will facilitate and regulate the development of this market by providing appropriate incentives and guidance and by putting safeguards in place to prevent abuse and ensure minimum standards.

F. Income security, maintenance and employment

31. Income security at older ages is affected by a number of factors. The ability to accumulate wealth during the younger years determines the degree to which an older person is financially vulnerable. A reasonable stock of savings may see an older person through years with no income and ensure an acceptable standard of living. The maintenance of a steady income stream through gainful employment provides the best guarantee of financial security. In countries where social security or pension benefits are available, financial security is further assured by societal arrangements. The family will, in many cases, provide the ultimate safeguard for an older person's financial well-being.

32. Saving for old age is a tradition in the Asian and Pacific region. The practice is widespread, hence the region's reputation of having the highest savings rates in the world. In economies with a prominent formal sector, a steady wage income allows many families to save for old age and for other contingencies. In rural communities, and in the informal sector, savings for old age may be a lesser concern when the day-to-day livelihood is at constant risk. Nonetheless, saving for old age remains a valued behaviour and is carried out whenever possible.

33. The governments will assess the extent to which the different sectors of the population are saving for old age. Savings during the economically active life span of each person provide for the consumption needs in retirement years. This is a key element in a person's lifelong preparation for old age. Many countries already have a mechanism to encourage savings among the population. This mechanism will be expanded with adequate incentives to facilitate the saving habit. Appropriate mechanisms need to be established in countries where no such schemes exist.

34. The governments note that employment for older persons is critical for financial security as it generates an income flow. Participation in the workforce will be encouraged as long as older persons are able to continue to work. They should not be forced out of their jobs by a rigid retirement age or other discriminatory practices. A flexible retirement scheme and legal protection will enable capable older persons to remain economically active. Job creation and retention programmes should be established to bring back older workers. Such programmes will also enhance the employability of older workers through upgrading of knowledge and skills. Self-employment among older persons will be encouraged through advisory services and other assistance.

35. A variety of social security or pension schemes exist in the region. These are designed in line with national circumstances. In cases where only partial coverage is provided, there is a need to extend the coverage, especially to vulnerable groups such as the older destitute, widows, housewives and the disabled. The governments will constantly review the adequacy of the benefits to meet a reasonable standard of living. Where possible, additional resources will be devoted to social security schemes to improve the coverage and the current level of benefits. The governments realize that the sustainability and viability of social security schemes are an important policy issue, and urge that intensive studies be made to examine the implications and to evolve new instruments of income security.

G. Social services and the community

36. As a result of the physiological, social and financial changes that older persons experience, they may require assistance from time to time to regain a sense of well-being. Events such as the demise of a spouse, retirement from work and onset of age-related illnesses may put older persons through brief periods of distress. External help or support may be needed by some to bring relief and expedite adjustment. Such assistance may include temporary day-care rehabilitation, counselling or dietary advice. These services, taken together, help older persons to overcome their temporary difficulties and improve their well-being. The focus on age-related difficulties sets these services apart from traditional welfare programmes, though some overlap does exist.

37. There is much variability among countries in the coverage and accessibility of social services for older persons. The variability is dependent on the levels of financial and manpower resources available for allocation to social services. Within each country, variability also exists between urban and rural areas. The urban areas tend to have a higher concentration of service centres, leading to better coverage and accessibility.

38. The governments recognize the occasional need for social service assistance by older persons. Adequate resources will be committed to ensure that a reasonable level of services is available to older persons in each member country. Proper coordination of government and non-governmental service agencies will be implemented to establish an adequate network of services that reach out to older persons in both urban and rural areas.

39. With their experience, knowledge and mature outlook, older persons form a potential pool of expertise that can be tapped for community projects and activities. As residents of the community, they are familiar with local circumstances and their inputs could be a critical success factor. As key beneficiaries, they also have much to gain from sharing pertinent information and skills in community projects. There are ample opportunities available for community participation of older persons and extension of help to each other.

40. The governments agree that older persons constitute a valuable resource in the community. The governments will open up avenues for their participation through membership in community clubs and resident associations. Associations of older persons will

be encouraged, and older persons will be empowered to undertake projects that would improve community well-being.

III. Implementation: structures and processes

41. The governments recognize that the task of implementing the Plan of Action is a national responsibility, requiring the combined efforts of the government, non-governmental organizations and other social units. To this end, member countries will establish appropriate structures and processes in accordance with their differing national circumstances. These structures and processes are components of a national service infrastructure which enhances, safeguards and preserves the well-being of older persons and promotes their participation in society.

A. National infrastructure for ageing and older persons

42. Recognizing the importance of organizing and instituting a national infrastructure that will deal with issues relating to ageing and older persons in a holistic and integrated manner, the governments commit themselves to building this infrastructure as an integral part of the implementation of the Plan of Action. They will seek to balance the needs of the old against the demands of the young, and allocate adequate resources to meet the needs of older persons while satisfying the requirements of all social groups, with particular emphasis on women, the poor and people in rural areas.

43. A national infrastructure for ageing should consist of three principal components: (a) governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations; community-based organizations and organizations of older persons; and resources, including personnel concerned with ageing and older persons; (b) a service delivery network with acceptable standards of service quality; and (c) an information, training and research apparatus on ageing issues.

44. The governments will examine the present arrangement of institutions and agencies dealing with older persons and enhance their coordination as a total system. There are many elements in this system, from government agencies such as the pension office and old-age homes to non-governmental service centres. A central coordinating agency should be established to ensure the adequacy of the system to respond to the needs of older persons.

45. The governments, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, will assess the training needs of personnel in the institutions and agencies and initiate plans to upgrade the skills of personnel. Health personnel, community and social workers and researchers need to keep abreast of the latest developments in their specialized fields that impinge on the ageing. Formal learning, informal on-the-job training and exchange of information and - experiences will be encouraged among the front-line personnel to strengthen their professional capabilities and enhance their productivity.

46. Many countries already have a system of service delivery to older persons and their families. This includes medical, health, social and other related services. The governments will enhance service quality, improve coverage and reduce wastage. The governments will also promote the establishment of service standards that are important yardsticks by which the well-being of older persons can be judged. While the setting of standards may depend on the resources available, evolution to higher standards over time is important.

47. The governments will encourage the establishment of an information and research apparatus on ageing and issues relating to older persons. Many concerns of older persons are new and linked to the changes in societies at large. National planning and research efforts are essential to understand and assess these concerns, their societal impact and policy options. In support of the research activities and as inputs for planning and policy-making, the governments will undertake to establish national databanks on older persons. Where necessary, surveys on the ageing will be conducted to provide benchmark information and measure changes over time. The governments will support social policy analysis based on reliable empirical databases.

B. Planning and targeting

48. With a national infrastructure for the ageing in place, plans and programmes can be drawn up to meet the guidelines in the Plan of Action. The governments will specify attainable goals and targets for the national plans and programmes in terms of quantifiable outputs to be produced within well-defined time-frames. Such targeting of national plans and programmes is essential for assessment of the progress achieved. The governments will consider the planning and targeting of programmes in conjunction with resource availability and allocation. Inputs should be obtained from all participating sectors so that the plans made and targets set are within reasonable and realizable limits. While setting targets, the governments will give due consideration to promoting gender equality and minimizing rural-urban imbalance.

C. Intersectoral collaboration and support

49. In the multisectoral approach to the present Plan of Action, the governments appreciate the need to work in close cooperation and collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The wide-ranging nature of the issues concerning older persons requires a holistic and systemic response from society at all levels.

50. The governments are aware of the critical role that non-governmental organizations play. Many of these organizations are pioneers in organizing and delivering services to older persons. In many member countries, they are the core institutions in the national infrastructure for ageing. The governments will encourage the development of a strong non-governmental sector and enhance the participation of these organizations in planning and implementing policies and programmes concerning older persons. Facilitation of the development of this sector should include the formulation of a legal framework for the establishment and registration of such organizations, and the provision of budgetary subvention and assistance in other forms to them.

51. Open competition by the private sector in service delivery can improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The governments will provide all opportunities for the private sector to complement public programmes on health care, housing and other basic services for older persons. Where the private sector can bring about better standards in services, the governments should consider the privatization of such services.

D. Coordination and monitoring

52. The implementation of the present Plan of Action must be well coordinated at the national level. National coordination of all the sectors involved in the ageing issues minimizes duplication and facilitates the optimal allocation of resources. Piecemeal solutions to the issues may bring the desired outcome in one area, but may lead to adverse consequences in another. The solutions, like the issues themselves, are multifaceted. Their implementation requires careful coordination by all sectors.

53. Recognizing the need for sectoral coordination, the governments will designate a national coordinating body to provide the overall policy direction and guidance in planning and formulation of national programmes. The national coordinating agency on ageing will be represented by all sectors, with leadership being provided by the governments. It is essential to monitor and review the implementation of the present Plan of Action on a regular basis, at intervals to be determined by each country. There will be consultation of the players involved at every stage of the implementation. Such consultation during the monitoring and review process will provide insightful feedback to the national coordinating agency on changes in local conditions and the ensuing adjustments required to be made to the national plans and programmes.

E. Resource mobilization and allocation

54. The governments recognize that a national infrastructure for ageing can only function with adequate financial and manpower resources. Many countries in the region are, however, faced with multiple priorities in their budgetary provisions and manpower plans. The governments must show the commitment to review such national priorities and, where necessary, revise them to ensure the judicious mobilization and allocation of resources for the implementation of the present Plan of Action.

55. Funding support from the regular government budget is essential for a large number of programmes and services for older persons. The governments will increase, where possible, their financial contributions to the national infrastructure for ageing and older persons. The governments will explore new ways of financing, including the establishment of a dedicated fund to provide additional resources for implementing the present Plan of Action.

56. As well as the State, which provides direct financing, non-governmental organizations are important agents in mobilizing financial resources from the community. The governments will give them appropriate assistance in their fund-raising activities and guidance for sound financial administration. In some countries, matching or capital grants, tax exemptions and other fiscal incentives are instruments used by the government to facilitate community resource mobilization.

57. Volunteerism, which exists in all societies, provides a ready source of financial and manpower resources. The governments will encourage all expressions of volunteerism in services to older persons, by giving appropriate training, guidance and due recognition as far as possible. Many older persons themselves are volunteers. The governments will accord high priority to help older volunteers in organizing themselves and providing services for others.

F. Regional and international cooperation

58. Regional and international cooperation on issues related to ageing and older persons has made a significant contribution towards the implementation of the mandates of the Vienna Plan of Action and other global initiatives. Current modalities of cooperation at the country, regional or international level include the exchange of information, joint research and training activities, awareness creation and demonstration projects. The governments call upon all regional and international entities to strengthen their commitment to these current modalities and to establish new avenues of cooperation.

59. As the regional arm of the United Nations for Asia and the Pacific and the focal point for the region on issues related to ageing and older persons, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific should continue to carry out its unique role in facilitating the exchange of national experiences, carrying out joint training, research and

planning activities and providing technical assistance and information and advisory services to its members and associate members. The governments call on the Commission, in collaboration with concerned United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, to design programmes for regional cooperation in support of the present Plan of Action. The Commission should continue to give support to countries in establishing regional cooperation mechanisms, resource mobilization from multilateral donor institutions, coordination with international organizations in activities on ageing, and monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Plan of Action. The capabilities of the Commission to undertake the above and serve as the regional focal point for United Nations agencies on all activities and programmes on ageing and related issues should be strengthened.

60. The governments call upon the United Nations system to increase its support of the infrastructure for ageing and older persons at the country level. Such support will include the provision of technical assistance in policy and programme development, financial support for major initiatives and a mechanism for capacity-building. Specific measures can take the form of dissemination of relevant information and technical materials, the conducting of seminars, workshops and training courses on ageing and related social issues, advisory services on programme planning and evaluation, assessment of training needs and priorities, and the design of training materials.

61. The governments welcome the initiatives of international non-governmental organizations and their regional and in-country representatives. The positive outcomes of their activities for older persons should be placed on record and given due recognition. The governments encourage all international non-governmental organizations to intensify their efforts in the interests of the older persons of the world. An important area of contribution from these organizations will be the provision of technical assistance to enhance the national information, training and research capabilities of countries in the region.

62. Given the differing conditions in the population and development status of various subregions of the Asian and Pacific region, the governments agree that the present Plan of Action could be viewed at subregional levels. The governments urge the Commission and concerned international organizations to provide subregional organizations with appropriate technical assistance and other support in defining and implementing programmes in accordance with the Plan of Action.

63. The governments call upon the secretariat of the Commission to review progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action and report its findings and recommendations for further action by all concerned to the Commission at its annual session in 2001 and every five years thereafter.

