

Ambassador Martín García Moritán, Chair

Ms. Roseny B. Fangco, Vice-Chair

Ms. Špela Košir, Vice-Chair-Elect

Mr. Stefano Guerra, Vice-Chair-Elect

Ms. Renne Abbey, Rapporteur

UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing
UN Headquarters
New York, NY, 10017, USA

16th April 2020

Dear Ambassador Moritán and Members of the Bureau of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Steering Group of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) with the aim of supporting the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) to progress with its important task of strengthening the protection of the rights of older persons. We would like to thank you for your leadership as Chair of the OEWG and the other Members of the Bureau for your efforts to create this unique space within the UN in which Member States can come together with representatives of older persons, NGOs and NHRIs to discuss the rights of older persons.

While we recognise that the decisions to curtail and then postpone the 11th Session of the OEWG were necessary in the current context, we urge you to take every possible step to continue the OEWG's important work in the weeks and months ahead. The OEWG's work is too important to be delayed and has been made even more urgent with the emergence of multiple instances of human rights abuses and age discrimination against older persons across all regions in response to COVID-19.

The OEWG is a crucial opportunity for older persons to discuss *their* rights and the possible absence of even a curtailed 11th session in 2020 means that older persons will be unable to participate in discussions on their rights in the UN in New York. The possible absence of even a curtailed 11th session in 2020 means that older persons will be unable to participate in discussions on their rights in the UN in New York for two years and progress made in previous sessions will be lost.

We greatly appreciate your continued efforts as Chair as well as those of the Bureau and Secretariat to ensure the fullest participation of older persons and civil society in the work of the OEWG. We were pleased to see that the number of new applications from NGOs for

accreditation to the OEWG remained high this year and the number of written submissions from NGOs increased again.

We welcome the decision of the General Assembly in December 2019 to consider adopting inter-governmentally agreed recommendations. We hope that these negotiations will continue remotely and reach a successful conclusion, as they are an important demonstration of Member States' awareness and willingness to take action to protect the rights of their older citizens. We will continue to support GAROP members to contribute actively to this process through their governments, as appropriate.

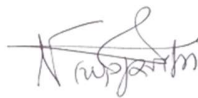
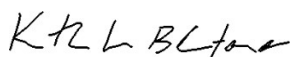
With these points in mind we would like to make the following requests of the Bureau:

1. We call for every effort to be made to reschedule the 11th OEWG Session as soon as it is safe to do so. GAROP members will be ready to attend and participate fully.
2. We ask that an opportunity be found to approve the 38 applications for NGO accreditations in advance of the next session so that these NGOs can fully participate in the session and any intermediate activities, including by making written submissions in advance.
3. We urge the Bureau and the Secretariat to use every avenue available to reconvene the OEWG by other means, until a meeting in NY is deemed possible.
4. As advocates for the rights of older persons, and regular participants in and contributors to the discussions of the OEWG, we would like to request an update on the current status of the inter-governmentally negotiated recommendations.

GAROP remains committed to working with you, the Bureau, and Member States to achieve the fullest expression of the protection of human rights for older persons and support the OEWG to fulfil its mandate.

We look forward to our continued constructive collaboration with you and your staff.

Yours sincerely



Ken Bluestone (Chair) and Nena Georgantzi (Deputy Chair)