Statement by the Republic of Austria

to the 11th Session of the Open Ended Working Group on Aging

Delivered by

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Dear Mrs. Chair!

Distinguished delegates and colleagues!

Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU on behalf of its Member States.

We are very pleased that after the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic in 2020, the bureau of the OEWGA was able to organize this session and let us continue our efforts to improve the difficult situations for older persons worldwide and progress with our work on the human rights of older persons. In this respect, I want to thank the chair, the bureau and all involved parties of the preparation of this meeting for their efforts and hard work.

We also welcome Claudia Mahler in her “new” role as independent expert, wish her all the best for her upcoming work and want to congratulate her for her reports on “The Data Gap Conundrum” and “Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons”.

This year, despite the health-related challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to keep in mind that other areas still need our full attention. Therefore, I would like to cite a quote from the 2020 Policy Brief of Secretary-General António Guterres, in which he urges that

"Each of us – States, businesses, international organizations, companies, communities, friends and family – need to step up our effort to support older persons. We must do everything possible to preserve their rights and dignity at all times."

Having said this, we are looking forward to hear and learn from other member states and the civil society about their efforts concerning the “Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market” as well as their experiences on “Access to justice”.

Mrs. Chair,

Let me briefly reflect on Austria’s achievements in these matters.
Austria has passed numerous legal provisions and regulations that relate to the employment of older workers. This includes financial incentives, such as targeted subsidies for entrepreneurs, relief for social security contributions, or special protective mechanisms such as an increased protection against dismissal. In addition, Austria has explicit protection against discrimination of older workers as well as legal consequences if they are disregarded.

Access to justice for older persons has a strong tradition in Austria. With the senior citizen council, Austria has established a federal consultative body representing the interests of older persons and their non-governmental organizations towards the government. This institution is – by law – part in parliamentary discussions and offers advice and guidance for the decision finding procedures. Through its internal structure, the council provides a direct service for senior citizens to elaborate legal concerns and requests, or raising awareness on age-related problems.

Remaining in the realm of access to justice, we are looking forward to learn more about existing and evolving normative gaps in the current human rights legislation. As the world keeps moving, so do our challenges and responses to them. Ageism, digital exclusion or legal underrepresentation are vivid realities and we need to learn – from each other – how to minimize their negative effects. We are pleased to support a side-event, together with our German colleagues and experts from the OHCHR that looks exactly at these crossroads with an updated OHCHR-Analysis Paper on normative gaps. Of course, we invite all of you to join us at the side event and we hope for a rich discussion.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work that is done on the regional levels, especially the current efforts of the Standing Working Group on Ageing at the UNECE. Although their center of work does not circulate around a human rights instrument, their expertise and work is highly linked to many questions we pose in this working group. I am looking forward to learn more about their work and upcoming challenges.

In that sense, I wish us all a fruitful discussions and a successful conference.

Thank you, Mrs. Chair.