Honourable Chair, colleagues, older persons,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Maltese Government as Minister for Senior Citizens and Active Ageing.

The strengthening of the protection of human rights for older persons has never been so necessary as it is today. Older persons are undoubtedly one category of citizens who are suffering the most during the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking back at the past 13 months, one can never overemphasise the crucial role of Malta’s national strategies on active ageing, dementia care, and long-term care in Malta’s success in safeguarding the wellbeing of older persons despite social distance or lockdown measures.

Such proactive initiatives led to an increase in public pensions for six years in a row. The strengthening of domiciliary care services, and the setting up of unique services such as the ‘Live-in Carer’ scheme which provides financial support to older persons, who opt to employ a full-time carer of their choice to enable them to age-in-place.

However, the Ministry for Senior Citizens and Active Ageing is not one to rest on past laurels but is constantly looking forward. As I speak, plans are underway to offer the World Health Organisation’s skills and training programme - iSupport - for carers of people with dementia, launching the second national policy on active ageing, opening a new dementia care centre, providing older persons with free instruction in ICT, a new Outreach Programm, and re-initiating the University of the Fourth Age which provides lifelong learning opportunities for older persons with mobility difficulties or dementia.

The Maltese government advocates that the human rights of older persons are to be firmly entrenched at the centre of social policy. The government is indeed leaving no stone unturned and upcoming policy strategies will target the quality of life of older persons in correctional facilities, those with lifelong disabilities, and LGBTIQ older persons.

The Ministry is also aware that many older persons experience a range of obstacles to access justice due to financial, geographical, cultural, and health. In mitigation, both community care and legal services are being strengthened, so that elder abuse and age discrimination will not continue taking place without the possibility of redress. At the same time, the realities of COVID-19 has not been lost on us and there are rigorous recovery plans for an older population to make up for the lost time due to the pandemic.

I conclude by conveying my government’s thanks to the United Nations for the preparation of this 11th session. I am certain that this session will lead us closer to address the needs and rights of older persons, and foster a fairer and more age-friendly world.

Thank you.