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**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY
IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

(Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda)

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

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The General Assembly, in its resolution 47/5 of 16 October 1992, the annex to which contained the Proclamation on Ageing, decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. In its resolution 50/141 of 21 December 1995 on the International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages, it invited 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.

In response to the above mandate, ESCAP convened the Regional Meeting on a Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific in Macao in October 1998, which adopted the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific. At its fifty-fifth session held in April 1999, the Commission endorsed the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action in its resolution 55/4 of 28 April 1999 - Towards a society for all ages: Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific.

The Commission urged all members and associate members to take early and effective action to implement the Plan of Action, and at the same time requested the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to provide full support and assistance to them in the establishment of specific time-bound national goals and targets and policies on ageing and the coordination of regional and subregional activities.

In implementation of Commission resolution 55/4, a set of guidelines on the implementation of the Macao Plan of Action has been prepared with the aim of assisting members and associate members in their effective implementation of the Macao Plan of Action.

The Commission is invited to consider and endorse the guidelines on the implementation of the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific as contained in the present document.

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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				
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date	
1 Understanding of the issues and implications of population ageing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a national coordinating body on ageing • Establish a national programme of study, research, and public education on population ageing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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	Immediate	2005 2005

2	Preparation for an ageing process that is productive and fulfilling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a national infrastructure of services for older persons with three key components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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				
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date	
1 Governments should prepare for the productive ageing of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a programme to promote lifelong education 	2001	2006	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide equal opportunities to allow older persons to remain engaged in as many social, economic and community activities as possible 	Immediate	2005	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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				
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date	
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
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	• Strengthen intergenerational relationships and the traditional support system	Immediate	2005
		• 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

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				
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date	
1	Governments should put a systematic programme of activities in place to educate the population on healthy ageing	• Educate the public on healthy ageing, especially the following components: (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	• Disseminate information about common ailments	Immediate	2005
		• Conduct mass screening programmes	2001	2006
		• Provide nutritional and dietary advice to the public	Immediate	2005
		• Provide security of minimum nutrition needs	Immediate	2005
3	Governments should explore innovative options of health-care financing for older persons	• Assess and evaluate the co-payment of medical costs between employees and employers, and medical funds, and explore insurance-based schemes	2001	2006
		• Provide medical care at concessionary rates to older persons	2001	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			
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date
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.

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Older persons and the market			
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date

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

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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				
	Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date
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 workers	2001	2006
2	Governments should encourage older persons' participation in the workforce	• Implement flexible retirement scheme and legal protection	2001	2006
		• Establish job creation and retention programmes	2001	2006
		• Introduce programmes to upgrade worker knowledge and skills	2001	2006
		• 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	• Devote additional resources to such schemes to improve coverage and level of benefits	Immediate	2005
		• Make intensive studies to examine the implications and evolve new instruments of income security	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			
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date
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			
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Invitation date	Review date
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	• Specify attainable goals and targets within well-defined time frames in line with national conditions	Immediate	2005
	• Gather inputs from participating sectors	Immediate	2005
	• Bear in mind gender equality and minimize urban-rural imbalance	Immediate	2005
3 Governments should work closely with NGOs as well as the private sector	• Encourage the development of a strong non-governmental sector by formulating a legal framework for establishment and registration, provision of budgetary subvention and assistance	Immediate	2005
	• Promote open competition by the private sector in service delivery	Immediate	2005
	• 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	• Explore new ways of financing, including establishing a dedicated fund to provide for additional resources	Immediate	2005
	• Give assistance in NGO fund-raising activities	Immediate	2005
	• Facilitate community resource mobilization through capital grants, tax exemptions or other fiscal incentives	Immediate	2005
	• 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					
Plan of Action goals	Targets	Initiation date	Review date		
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 demonstration projects with the assistance of ESCAP	<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 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 	Immediate	2005	
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	