Group of Friends of Rights of Older Persons Statement

At WHO’s 146th Executive Board

(3-8 February 2020)

Item 17: Decade of Healthy Ageing

Geneva, 7 February 2020

Mr. Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the cross-regional Group of Friends of Rights of Older Persons, namely Argentina, Austria, Brazil, El Salvador, Montenegro, Namibia, Portugal, Singapore, Tunisia, Uruguay and my own country Slovenia. Our group would like to use this opportunity to express our support to WHO’s proposal for the creation of a Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030. We understand this as a much needed response of WHO to recent trends in demographic changes leading to the ageing of the world population.

The task of leaving no one behind, as we implement Agenda 2030, includes older persons. According to available data, there will be 1.4 billion people aged 60 or older by 2030. We cannot stand indifferent; we must act and do everything in our power to prepare our health and social protection systems and other policies for this demographic shift.

Good health is crucial, in particular when we grow old. Healthy older persons can continue to participate in and be an integral part of the everyday life of their families and communities. They can strengthen societies. Ageing-in-place and community-based care are critical elements to support that.

As we move on towards the Decade of Healthy Ageing, we need to make sure to take a rights-based approach to healthy ageing, based on equality and non-discrimination, with a firm stance against ageism. This requires a whole-of-society approach to enable older persons to remain healthy and active, empowered and resilient as they grow well into their silver years.

I thank you.