

Colombo Declaration on ‘Healthy ageing through strengthened primary health care’

Adopted by the Ministers of Health of
Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region
at the Seventy-eighth Session of the
WHO Regional Committee



We, the Ministers of Health of the Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region, meeting at the Seventy-eighth Session of the Regional Committee,

Recognizing the Region's rapid demographic shift, with the population aged 60 years and above projected to nearly double, from 11.3% in 2024 to 20.9% in 2050, reflecting Member States' collective achievements in extending life expectancy and expanding health-care access and well-being initiatives, and taking cognizance of the fact that older people, when in good health and with functional ability, are vital assets and continue to contribute to and enrich families, communities and societies;

Concerned that many older people face complex and inter-related health and well-being challenges that are compounded by social issues, including a significant burden of noncommunicable and communicable diseases, age-related decline in mobility, cognitive, psychological, hearing, vision, and metabolic capacities, as well as social isolation, and inequities particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as older women, persons with disabilities, those living in rural or difficult areas, minorities, and the economically disadvantaged;

Affirming that older persons are rights-holders and valuable members of society, and that optimizing intrinsic capacity and functional ability across the life-course is central to achieving healthy ageing;

Reaffirming our commitment to prioritize healthy ageing under global and regional frameworks, including the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), the WHO Global Strategy on Ageing and Health (2016), the Declaration of Astana on PHC (2018), the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), the Delhi Declaration on PHC (2018), the SEAR Regional Strategy on PHC (2022–2030), the 2023 UNGA Political Declaration on UHC, and the WHO South-East Asia Regional Strategy on Healthy Ageing (2024–2030);

Appreciating the relevance of the WHO South-East Asia Regional Strategy on Healthy Ageing 2024–2030, developed through consultation with Member States, experts and stakeholders to support national responses in advancing the health and well-being of older people, organized around the foci of the UN Decade of Healthy Aging — combating ageism, fostering age-friendly environments, delivering integrated care, and ensuring access to long-term care (LTC) when needed;

Acknowledging that primary health care is the most inclusive, effective, and efficient pathway to achieve universal health coverage and to realize the vision of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing — ensuring that older people can live long, healthy and meaningful lives — and emphasizing that UHC cannot be achieved without addressing the needs and perspectives of older persons;

And noting that realizing healthy ageing will require coordinated, multisectoral efforts spanning health, finance, social protection, education, labour, housing, transport, and communication sectors, and the active engagement of national and local governments, civil society, service providers, academia, the private sector, and older people and their caregivers;

COMMIT to:

- 1. Embed healthy ageing in national policies and PHC-oriented health systems**, ensuring accessible, equitable, integrated and age-responsive services across the continuum of care, from health promotion and prevention to rehabilitation, long-term care and palliative care,
- 2. Combat ageism** through laws, inclusive policies, public sensitization and education, and intergenerational initiatives that challenge stereotypes and discrimination, while fostering respect, dignity and solidarity between generations,
- 3. Ensure health sector leadership in multisectoral coordination**, especially with social welfare, finance, housing, transport, education and labour, through dedicated coordination mechanisms and programmatic alignment,
- 4. Prioritize and allocate adequate resources** for policies and programmes targeting older people, exploring innovative financing, public-private partnerships, and cross-ministerial cost-sharing mechanisms to support financial protection and universal coverage,
- 5. Deliver integrated, right-based, person-centred and gender sensitive care** for older persons tailored to their assessed needs, preferences, and choices, by strengthening primary care as the first point of contact,

expanding community-based services, and coordinating health, well-being and social care — including long-term care — without imposing financial hardship,

6. **Strengthen the health and care workforce** by building geriatric and gender sensitive competencies, supporting paid and unpaid caregivers, and enabling multidisciplinary, community-based teams to deliver quality health and care services to older people at all stages,
7. **Strengthen data systems** to collect and use age, sex and disability disaggregated information on intrinsic capacity, functional ability, and access to quality health and care services to inform evidence-based policies and programmes, monitor progress on commitments made, recalibrate existing programmes, and enhance accountability,
8. **Create inclusive age-friendly environments** that support the abilities of older people through multisectoral collaboration in safe housing, accessible transport, social protection, and inclusive community infrastructure,
9. **Harness digital health and innovation** to improve access, efficiency, and quality of care, ensuring digital inclusion for older persons, and
10. **Promote research and knowledge exchange** on healthy ageing, age-friendly environments, and effective service models, and sharing best practices within and beyond the Region;

AND CALL UPON the World Health Organization, together with multilateral agencies including development banks, and partners to mobilize coordinated technical, policy and financial support to advance the healthy ageing agenda in line with the Regional Strategy for Healthy Ageing (2024–2030) and to strengthen cooperation across Member States,

AND FURTHER APPEAL to philanthropic foundations, the private sector, communities and individuals to invest resources, share knowledge and drive innovations that support governments in meeting the health and care needs of older people and in building sustainable and equitable systems that protect and empower them.

TOGETHER, WE COMMIT TO building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable primary health care systems that enable all people in our Region to live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

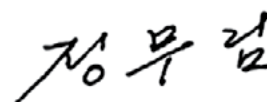
Adopted in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 15 October 2025



Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh



Royal Government
of Bhutan



Government of the Democratic
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Government of India



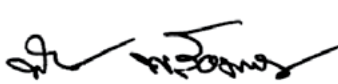
Government of the
Republic of Maldives



Government of Nepal



Government of the Democratic
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



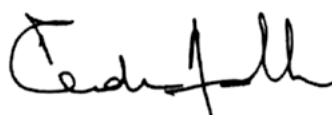
Royal Thai Government



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Republic of Timor-Leste



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