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Centre for Human Rights  
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## PRESS STATEMENT

# PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS LANDMARK RECOMMENDATION ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

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The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, welcomes the adoption of the Recommendation on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa by the Pan African Parliament on 17 May 2018, at its just concluded Sixth Ordinary Session.

This Recommendation is a timely response to an unprecedented change in demographics as the population of older persons grows across Africa. It is estimated that Africa will experience an increase in the ageing population from 64.4 million in 2015 to 220 million by 2050. Persons older than 60 years old experience vulnerabilities related to a wide range of issues such as health care, disparities based on geographic location and social insurance needs. Because of pervasive misconceptions and stereotypes about ageing, older persons in many African countries are isolated, poor, abused and suffer various forms of violence and discrimination. Older persons are victims of ageism, which is a systematic stereotyping and discrimination based on age and physical appearance. As the HIV epidemic caused life expectancy decrease, many older persons, particularly older women, are left behind to raise the young generation (the grandchildren). Older women are particularly vulnerable as they face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on ageism, sexism, disability and the rural/urban divide.

The Recommendation contributes to a growing trend towards strengthening of the protection of the rights of older persons including provisions in the Africa Charter and the Maputo Protocol. The PAP welcomes the adoption of Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the Rights of Older Persons, which is a legally binding instrument that standardises and protects the rights of older persons.

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The PAP is concerned about the status of the Protocol which is yet to come into force as no Member State has yet to ratify. The PAP urges all African states to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons. It also encourages states to support the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in particular, its Working Group on the Rights of Older Persons and People with Disabilities.

The PAP also recommends the adoption of a gender perspective in policy and planning processes at all levels. It further recommends that AU Member States ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against older persons including harmful cultural practices in both the public and private spheres.

The PAP further encourages states to adopt universal social pension schemes that benefit retirees and older persons who did not have the opportunity to contribute to formal social security schemes. States are also urged to ensure universal health coverage including access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Ensuring the wellbeing of older persons also means addressing the challenges they face in contributing to and being party of society. In recognising the rights of older persons to participate in public life, the PAP recommends that States facilitate the training and education programmes, including information, communications and technology skills, particularly for older persons living in rural areas. States must also work to promote intergenerational support and engagement between older persons and young people.

The PAP also acknowledges the critical role of the media, civil society organisations and academic institutions in raising awareness to change negative attitudes and promote positive images of older persons.

The Centre for Human Rights welcomes the PAP's Recommendation and joins the call for Member States of the AU to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Older Person. We learnt that Lesotho is in the process of depositing its instrument of ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons. We urge the South African government to join its neighbour committing to protecting the rights of older persons through ratification of the Protocol.

The PAP is an organ of the African Union (AU), which was established to ensure that Africa takes full ownership and participation in the development and sustainable transformation of the continent. PAP has 255 members representing 55 AU members (five members per Member State). It sits in Midrand, South Africa and meets at least twice a year in ordinary session and can issue resolutions and recommendations as it just did in the recently concluded session.

- [Download the PAP's Recommendation on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa](#)
- [Download the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons](#)

The Centre for Human Rights, through its Women's Rights Unit, is running a year-long [#AgeWithRights](#) campaign focusing on the need for enhanced protection of the rights of older persons.

Visit the campaign website: [www.chr.up.ac.za/AgeWithRights](http://www.chr.up.ac.za/AgeWithRights)

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