***World Elder Abuse Awareness Day***

***Access to justice***

**Virtual Event*,* Tuesday 15 June 2021 at 09:00-10:15 EST (NY), 15:00-16:15 CEST (Geneva)**

**Background**

The UN General Assembly designated **15 June** as ***World Elder Abuse Awareness Day*** (res. A/RES/66/127). According to WHO estimates, 1 in 6 people aged over 60 suffers from abuse. That means nearly 141 million people globally. This number might be much higher as Violence, abuse and neglect of older persons are the most hidden and underreported violations of human rights.

COVID-19 has put a spotlight on older persons including distressing reports of instances of abuse and neglect of older persons, particularly in long term care institutions but also in the community where the majority of older persons live. Not only older persons have been at high risk of serious illness and mortality, but they have also been discriminated against, stigmatized and subjected to multiple violations of human rights.

The UN Secretary-General in his 2020 Policy Brief: *The Impact of Covid-19 on Older Persons* claimed that the lack of adequate legislation at national level to protect the rights of older persons and the absence of a dedicated internationally agreed legal framework, may have contributed to the inadequate responses to the COVID-19 crisis and that these gaps must be filled.

**Older Persons deserve access to justice**

Often, national laws and/or legal processes, do not serve the needs of older persons who may seek recourse. Older persons who have experienced situations of violence, abuse and neglect face multiple barriers in accessing judicial remedies. Access to Justice impacts on older person’s abilitiy to fully exercise their human rights; and extends to the right to health, to live in dignity and to adequate social protection. The preservation or restoration of dignity and respect for older persons is crucial in such situations

Access to justice is a core element of the rule of law, a fundamental right in itself and an essential prerequisite for the protection and promotion of all other human rights. Access to justice encompasses the right to a fair trial, including equal access to and equality before the courts, and seeking and obtaining just and timely remedies forrights violations.

Under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, States Parties are required to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy. However, no international human rights instrument has specifically addressed the barriers facing older persons in accessing justice, including physical access, reasonable accommodation, affordability, excessive delays and backlogs in judicial processes, impact of digitalization, cultural norms, gender bias, discrimination, and entrenched ageism in both l policy and practices.

**The event**

An expert panel will discuss the role of human rights mechanisms in enabling access to justice by older persons who suffered violence, abuse and neglect and ensuring accountability by perpetrators both state and non state actors.

The panel will be followed by a session of questions and answers with the audience.

Proposed Panelists:

* Opening words by a representative of the UN Secretary-General and a Member State
* Ms Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons
* Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
* Mr Victor Madrigal, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
* Mr Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

Moderator: TBD

For questions please contact: Silvia Perel-Levin: s.perel58@gmail.com Susan Somers: sbsomers5@aol.com

Suggested list of Speakers: WEAAD 2021 **Wed 19 May 75 Mins**

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| **Organization/****Position** | **Names** | **Country** | **Gender: M/F** | **Invited Y/N** | **Confirmed Y/N** |
| **High level** |   |   |   |   |   |
| Statement from UN-SG  | UN Secretary-General  | N/A  | M  | Time limit will not allow for that |
| African Union  |   |   |   |   |   |
| WHO  | Tedros Ghebreyesus  | N/A  | M  | Not likely. Susan can invite Assistant Director-General Dr Naoko Yamamoto yamamoton@who.int, to join or record a video message. Important to Alana Officer officera@who.int |
| President of EU  |   | Portugal  | N/A  |   |   |
| OHCHR High commissioner  | Michelle Bachelet Peggy  | Chile  | F  | Through Rio. Alternatively, Susan can Invite ASG Ilze-Brands in NY by emailing her special assistant Katarina Manssonmanssonk@un.org; |
| Independent Expert (IE)  | Claudia Mahler  | Austria  | F  |   |   |
| Special Envoy -Disability  |  |  | F |    |
| Special Rapporteur-Health |  | S Africa  | F  |   |   |
| Special Rapporteur- Extreme Poverty |   |   | M |   |   |
| **Other Speakers** |   |   |   |   |   |
| Serbia Red Cross  | Natasha Todorovic  | Serbia  | F  |   |   |
| Serbia Red Cross  | Milutin  Vracević | Serbia  |   |   |   |
|   | Christoph Angster  | Austria  | M  |  Christoph.Angster@sozialministerium.at Since Slovenia will be heading EU Presidency starting July through Dec, and they have the Vice Chair seat at OEWG Bureau, I recommend that Susan invited Ambassador H.E. Ms. Darja Bavdaž Kuret. Susan could email the invite to Spela spela.kosir@gov.si  |