



International Conference

The Rights of Older Persons and Role of Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions

27 September, 2022

Courtyard by Marriott Tbilisi

Tbilisi, Georgia

Background

The world population is [ageing rapidly](#) and it has an unprecedented impact on the socio-economic development of the countries. The challenges of ageing population are being actively debated around the world. Especially [defies in the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms by older persons](#), due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has revealed many shortcomings in the human rights protection systems of many countries in the world. In addition to that, the global pandemic has made violations of the rights of older persons around the globe even more visible and acute.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated in his [policy brief on older persons](#) that the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the existing challenges of older persons in terms of healthcare, medical services, social exclusion, economic poverty, inequality and ageism. As underlined in the [WHO Global Report on Ageism](#) and confirmed by the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, the COVID-19 pandemic has also intensified [ageism and age discrimination](#) that was already deeply rooted in society.

The pandemic also made the need for access and meaningful participation in the digital world by older persons more apparent and increased the social exclusion of older people. The UN chose [Digital Equity for All Ages](#) as a main topic of 2021. The Internet, mobile communication, artificial intelligence, and other technologies have become part of people's daily lives. However, unfortunately, older people, compared to other groups of society, either do not have access to technology at all, or cannot take full advantage of these opportunities.

This barrier prevents them from fully participating in social, cultural, economic and political life. The global health crisis showed us clearly that there is an urgent need to strengthen the international and national mechanisms and frameworks for protecting older persons. It is essential that each country ensure a comprehensive institutional response in order to guarantee the protection of older persons' rights. International, as well as regional cooperation and coordination is also vital.

Ombudsmen play a key role in promoting and protecting the rights of older persons. Given its unique mandate, the Ombudsmen directly monitor the human rights situation of the older persons and constantly engage with national authorities and other relevant actors on states' responsibilities in relation to the protection of older persons' rights. Ombudsmen also report to regional and international organizations, and thus bridge international standards within their national frameworks.

The Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen's (AOM) mission is the promotion and the defence of the fundamental rights in the countries of the Mediterranean basin. It allows to standardize the experiences and the initiatives of the various Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions for a collective enrichment, to strength the relations and the cooperation ties between the members. Therefore, the Office of Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia as a member of the AOM will host a Conference on "The Rights of Older Persons and the Role of Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions" together with AOM.

The main objective of the Conference is aimed primarily at exploring the unique role of Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions in promoting and protecting the rights of older persons at national, regional, as well as international levels especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating the exchange of experiences among other key national, international, and regional stakeholders. The Conference will address several important challenges faced by older persons and the actions taken by the Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions in this regard, in particular, the Conference will cover following topics:

Theme I. Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications on Older Persons and Ombudsman/Mediator's Actions;

Theme II. Human Rights of Older Persons in Digital World: Challenges and Opportunities.

These issues have been particularly acute in recent years, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore, the event will provide an excellent opportunity for participants to discuss possibilities for improvement in respect of working methods and agreeing on comprehensive institutional and concerted actions to respond to the identified problems in an effective, consistent, and protection-sensitive manner. The Conference will be held in-person in September, though online participation will also be possible. The Conference will bring together Ombudsmen and Mediators, which are the members of the AOM, and other Ombudsman and/or networks of National Human Rights Institutions, international and national non-governmental organizations, as well as independent experts working on the rights of older persons.

The outcome of the Conference will be reflected in the Declaration to be adopted at the end of the event on measures to increase the impact of Ombudsman and Mediator Institutions through performing all range of activities that their mandate would entail with regards to the rights of older persons.

Draft Agenda

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Freedom Square 4, 0105 Tbilisi, Georgia

09:30-10:00	<u>Welcome Coffee and Registration</u>
10:00-10:45	<u>Opening Ceremony: Welcome Address and Opening Statements</u> <u>Speakers:</u> Ms. Nino LOMJARIA, Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia Dr. Andreas POTTAKIS, The President of the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen (AOM), Greek Ombudsman (Pre-recorded Message) Mr. Chris FIELD, President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) (Pre-recorded Message) Ms. Debbie KOHNER, Secretary-General of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)
10:45 – 11:00	<u>Group Photo</u>
11:00 – 12:00	<u>Session I. Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications on Older Persons and Ombudsman/Mediators' Actions</u> <u>Moderator:</u> <i>Dr. Tamar GVARAMADZE, First Deputy Public Defender of Georgia</i> <u>Speakers:</u> Mr. Şeref MALKOÇ, Chief Ombudsman of Turkey Ms. Anna CHABIERA, Office of the Human Rights Commissioner of Poland Ms. Tatjana VLAŠIĆ, Deputy Ombudswoman of Croatia Ms. Erinda BALLANCA, People's Advocate of Albania
12:00-12:30	<u>Discussion</u> <u>Moderator:</u> <i>Dr. Tamar GVARAMADZE, First Deputy Public Defender of Georgia</i>
12:30-12:40	<u>Presentation of European Union/Council of Europe Project – European NPM Forum</u>
12:40 -14:00	<u>Lunch</u>

14:00 – 15:00	<p><u>Session II. Human Rights of Older Persons in Digital World: Challenges and Opportunities</u></p> <p><i>Moderator: Dr. Tamar GVARAMADZE, First Deputy Public Defender of Georgia</i></p> <p>Mr. Mohamed BENALILOU, Ombudsman of the Kingdom of Morocco</p> <p>Ms. Rosemary AGNEW, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman</p> <p>Dr. Esther BEN_HAIM, Ph.D., Adv., Head of the Office of the Ombudsman of Israel</p> <p>Mr. Mr. Eunhyeon MUN, Head of the International Human Rights Division of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea</p>
15:00 – 15:30	<p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p><i>Moderator: Dr. Tamar GVARAMADZE, First Deputy Public Defender of Georgia</i></p>
15:30 – 16:00	<p><u>Wrap Up and Closing Remarks</u></p> <p>Ms. Nino LOMJARIA, Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia</p>