

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The former President of South Africa and renowned statesman, Nelson Mandela, epitomises the courage, determination and resolute commitment of the people of South Africa, particularly the older persons, to contribute to peace, democracy and the socio-economic development of South Africa and the African continent.

This Report captures the history and context of South Africa's efforts to make meaningful contributions to the creation of a safe and secure world for the older persons, especially since the advent of democracy in 1994.

The Report notes that the World Assembly constitutes a historic milestone in humanity's history and that South Africa is participating for the first time as a democratic state in this process. In this context, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid will go a long way in assisting the country to learn from and share with other countries, the experiences of establishing and further strengthening the country's policies, programmes and systems on ageing, and the challenges we face in the 21st century.

This Report also reflects the constitutional and legal framework that has been created since 1994 that seeks to enhance and entrench a human rights culture with respect to the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons.

The Report further notes that the South African Government recognises the critical and central role of the state in ensuring that the necessary environment is created for older persons to make a meaningful contribution to the socio-economic and political development of the country, within the context of a safe, secure and sustainable developmental environment.

In this regard, the Report elucidates various policies and programmes that have been developed including matters pertaining to poverty eradication and social development; social integration; health; housing and the living environment.

The national and provincial endeavours to build a better life for the people, especially the older persons, is given and this includes, statistical information with regard to older persons.

The role of older persons as community - builders, volunteers and care givers through active participation in community - based programmes, including poverty alleviation and the fight against HIV/AIDS, is also given prominence in this Report. Challenges that

face the South African Government and society at large in providing the necessary support for these noble efforts by older persons are also illustrated.

The Report notes that SA is still faced with huge socio - economic problems that afflict the older persons including poverty, underdevelopment and social exclusion.

Recognition is also given in the Report to the pivotal role being played by civil society including Faith Based Organisations, Community Based Organisations, the media, business, and labour in South Africa, particularly in promoting and protecting the rights of older persons both as partners with the government and independently.

The roles and contributions of South Africa in the development and implementation of the international commitments on older persons especially within the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) processes and not least, the World Summit on Sustainable Development due to be hosted by SA are contained.

In essence, the Report reflects the fact that South Africa, in its eight years of democracy, recognises the invaluable contributions made by older persons in the overall development of our society. It illustrates the significant strides that have been taken thus far in building a caring society and a better life for older persons; the huge challenges that still lie ahead in ensuring that South Africa, the African continent and indeed the world, truly become a better place for humanity at large and most importantly the custodians of our heritage, the older persons to live in.

The Report is far from being exhaustive of the journey thus far traveled and is not fully reflective of the entire spectrum of this crucial social policy matter. However, it is hoped that it will give insight to the commitment of the Government and people of South Africa to deal with the crucial matter of ageing in the 21st century.