

Commemoration of the 10^o anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Group of Friends to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Geneva 19 April 2016.

Mr. Chair,

We have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the first human rights treaty adopted in the 21st century and is among the fastest international treaties to enter into force, with an unprecedented rate of signatures and ratifications. The Convention is also ground-breaking in terms of the active and constructive participation of civil society in the negotiation process. As such, the CRPD marked a new age in the history of international human rights law. It consolidated the efforts that the United Nations has made since its inception relating to human rights and the equal participation in society of persons with disabilities.

To date, 160 States have signed and 161 States and one regional integration organization have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, while 92 States have signed and 88 States have ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

The Convention is a milestone that establishes a comprehensive and robust framework for bringing about changes to the lives of persons with disabilities and building societies that are more just and equal. It is the first international legally binding instrument to specifically address the situation of persons with disabilities and to include the full range of human rights as well as the measures needed to ensure them.

Mr. Chair,

We would like to emphasize that the Convention has helped foster an important paradigm shift that should lead to the consolidation of deep-rooted cultural change in our societies. We remain committed to change the way in which we address the situation of persons with disabilities. The treaty, in effect, transcends the medical-welfare model, in order to fully recognize persons with disabilities as rights-holders and active members of society with autonomy and freedom to make their own choices.

As we gather to commemorate the 10^o anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Group of Friends to the CRPD renews its commitment with the principles of the CRPD in order to

promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Since the adoption of the Convention, the international community, together with organizations of persons with disabilities, have undertaken efforts aimed at both the universalization of the CRPD and the implementation of its provisions at the national level. They have also endeavored to build the mechanisms and mandates to enable the international community to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities within the UN System, as well as to assist States Parties to the Convention in the fulfillment of their obligations under the CRPD.

Among these efforts some specific achievements include:

- (i) the CRPD Committee was established in 2008 and began monitoring the measures taken by States Parties to give effect to their obligations under the Convention; The Committee has also developed general comments in crucial issues such as equal recognition before the law (art. 12) and accessibility (art. 9);
- (ii) the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly have adopted several resolutions on the rights of persons with disabilities aiming at strengthening the implementation of the CRPD and its Optional Protocol;
- (iii) the UN interagency group in support of the CRPD was established in 2011 as well as the United Nations Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its fund;
- (iv) in 2011, the Human Rights Council established a Task Force on secretariat services, accessibility and use of information technology (HRC res 16/21);
- (v) in 2013, the Secretary General appointed a special envoy on disability and accessibility;
- (vi) in 2014, the Human Rights Council created the mandate of the special rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (HRC res 26/20).

We have also promoted a progressive approach to disabilities from a human rights perspective within the disarmament frameworks of conventional weapons, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All of these have been significant accomplishments.

Mr. Chair,

While we welcome and celebrate all of these achievements, we remind ourselves that there is still much to be done in order to achieve the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion without discrimination in our societies.

Today, persons with disabilitiesⁱ continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society and violations of their human rights in all parts of the world. Many are still ⁱⁱ subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, property, birth, age or other status.

Furthermore,ⁱⁱⁱwomen and girls with disabilities are still often at greater risk (both within and outside their homes) of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation. Finally, the critical need to address the negative impact of poverty on persons with disabilities remains.

Besides the remaining challenges previously mentioned, today the international community faces specific issues which have a particular impact on persons with disabilities, such as increasing situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

We take this opportunity to renew our commitment to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in the development of strategies and programs to tackle these situations and call upon all agencies and relevant stakeholders to join these efforts.

Mr. Chair,

Looking ahead, and in order to build upon what we have already achieved, we renew our commitment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as with the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in the relevant agendas. We call upon States to continue to engage with the CRPD committee, and to continue to support the work undertaken by the relevant mandate holders, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UN Agencies in order to achieve inclusive societies for all.

Finally, we also call upon those States and regional integration organizations that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to consider doing so as a matter of priority.

ⁱ Preamble paragraph k of the CRPD

ⁱⁱ Preamble paragraph p

ⁱⁱⁱ Preamble paragraph q