

**SOCIAL FORUM  
RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Opening remarks**

October 3, 2016

**Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Mr. Choi Kyong-Lim, President of the Human Rights Council**

**Mr. Colin Allen, Chairperson of the International Disability Alliance**

**Mr. Carl Allan Reaich, Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d'affaires of New Zealand, and Co-Chair of the Social Forum**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

On behalf of New Zealand and Mexico, It is my honor and privilege to welcome you this morning to the 2016 Social Forum of the Human Rights Council, which this year is devoted to highlighting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention.

We are very pleased to welcome a broad contingent of persons with disabilities and leaders of national and regional organizations from all over the world, that have traveled here to Geneva in order to voice and share both their challenges and successes, to work on best practices and strengthen collaboration, and to support and promote the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. Your active participation is key as we honor the principle "Nothing about us without us".

We would like also to welcome the interest and commitment with this important agenda of all national delegations present today, more diverse in views and positions than in previous editions of the Forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On this occasion, we would like to recall that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the first human rights treaty adopted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that it is among the fastest international regimes to have entered into force, with an unprecedented rate of signatures and ratifications. We welcome the recent ratification by Iceland and we will keep calling upon those States and regional integration organizations that have not yet ratified or acceded to the

Convention and the Optional Protocol, to do so as a matter of priority so we can continue our path towards universal ratification.

Allow me to emphasize the importance of the Convention's contribution in fostering an important paradigm shift that should continue to lead us to the consolidation of a deeply-rooted cultural change in our societies. As we remain committed to change the way in which we address the situation of persons with disabilities, let us not forget that the Convention 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.

While we welcome and celebrate the achievements during the past 10 years, we ought to remind ourselves that there is still much to do in order to accomplish the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion without discrimination in our societies.

Let us recognize that persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society and violations of their human rights in all parts of the world. Moreover, persons with disabilities are still 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, women 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; humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters have a particular impact on persons with disabilities; and we still face the critical need to address the disproportionate impact of poverty on persons with disabilities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we gather here today to commemorate the 10<sup>o</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, New Zealand and Mexico take this occasion to renew their commitment with the principles of the CRPD.

Over the next 3 days, we will have the opportunity to address different issues and specific challenges from a wide range of perspectives such as diversity and awareness raising; accessibility and non-discrimination; meaningful participation and empowerment; inclusive development; strengthening accountability; and the implementation of the Agenda 2030 under the CRPD.

We call upon States to continue with the task of mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities both, in their national agendas and through international initiatives, and we invite all to take the opportunity of this Social Forum to share their national best practices on the implementation of the Convention.

Allow me to conclude by inviting States and civil society actors to further engage with the work undertaken by relevant mandate holders, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other relevant UN Agencies towards a world of inclusive societies where no one is left behind.