



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Eighth session

New York, 9-11 June 2015

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 June 2015, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. Eliasson (Deputy Secretary-General)

President: Mr. Oh Joon. (Republic of Korea)

later: Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Vice-President). (Brazil)

Contents

Opening of the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties

Election of officers

Adoption of the agenda

Organization of work

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention

(a) General debate

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Opening of the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties

1. **The Temporary President**, speaking as representative of the Secretary-General, declared open the Conference of States Parties.

Election of officers

2. *Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea) was elected President of the Conference by acclamation.*

3. *Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil), Mr. Cardi (Italy), Mr. Winid (Poland), and Mr. Manongi (Tanzania) were elected Vice-Presidents by acclamation.*

4. *Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea) took the Chair.*

Adoption of the agenda (CRPD/CSP/2015/1)

5. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organization of work

Accreditation and registration of non-governmental organizations

6. **The President** drew attention to the list of non-governmental organizations requesting accreditation to the Conference circulated to States parties by the Secretariat on 11 May 2015. He said he took it that the States parties wished to accede to those requests.

7. *It was so decided.*

8. **The President** said that the protection and promotion of human dignity and human rights was one of the main pillars of the work of the United Nations, and much progress had been made through the adoption of international conventions on the rights of vulnerable social minority groups. In the nine years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the international community had taken significant steps to advance its implementation. Yet a great deal of work remained to be done to achieve the goals of the Convention and to create societies free of discrimination and exclusion. The focus must be on ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in education, health, service provision, employment and all aspects of life. The challenge for the 154 States parties to the Convention was to translate their firm commitments into concrete actions and tangible outcomes on the ground.

9. Despite the progress made, greater efforts were needed to make a difference in the lives of the over one billion persons living with disabilities. With the conclusion of the term of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, United Nations Member States were about to adopt a new inclusive and participatory post-2015 development agenda around a sustainable development framework. In that context, the Bureau, in consultation with regional group members, had chosen as the overarching theme of the eighth session of the Conference: “Mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development agenda”.

10. The first sub-theme — mainstreaming disability in the reduction of poverty and inequality — was important and timely, as it recognized the interrelationship between poverty and disability. The second sub-theme — improvement of disability data and statistics: objectives and challenges — underscored the importance of collecting, processing and using quality data and statistics to inform development policy and to evaluate and monitor implementation of relevant policies and programmes. The third sub-theme addressed the vulnerability and exclusion of persons with disabilities and had been chosen to underscore that inclusion saved lives in disaster and humanitarian crises, and that persons with disabilities and their organizations must be proactively consulted and engaged in all stages of development. He looked forward to exploring options for further enhanced cooperation and partnerships among States parties, United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders to advance the shared mission of promoting disability inclusion in all aspects of development and society.

11. **Mr. Eliasson** (Deputy Secretary-General) said that he vividly recalled the adoption of the Convention in 2006, during his term as President of the General Assembly. At the time, he had called it the first convention of magnitude for the century. The fundamental message remained that all human beings were equal and that it was essential to continue to live up to that assertion of human dignity.

12. The next three days were an opportunity to take stock of past achievements and look ahead at strategies for the future. That was especially important in 2015, which the Secretary-General had, appropriately, called a time for global action. The Organization was working to shape an inclusive, accessible and sustainable society for all, guided by a new vision for development

for the next 15 years, which Member States would adopt in September. The post-2015 development agenda built on the Charter of the United Nations, which had been forged out of the timeless commitment “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person; to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

13. The Convention of 2006 had marked a conceptual shift from a charity and medical approach to the human rights-based view of disability. That shift would provide guidance in the right direction. Commending the 154 States parties to the Convention and the 86 that had ratified or acceded to its Optional Protocol, he invited them to adopt laws and policies which gave effect to the rights enshrined in the Convention. That would translate those rights into reality and would also provide a substantive platform for a rights-based implementation of the forthcoming sustainable development goals. Similarly, he called on all other States to accede to the Convention and carry out its provisions.

14. The Convention had been complemented by the outcome document of the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development in 2013, which reflected the growing engagement by civil society, especially organizations of persons with disabilities. It also provided clear guidance on building a rights-based, inclusive and accessible global development framework.

15. He welcomed the focus on mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development agenda, which would help advance the campaign to “Leave no one behind” and ensure a life of dignity for all. He expressed appreciation to those who had proposed including references to persons with disabilities in the sustainable development goals and encouraged the Conference participants to work out global indicators that reflected the rights enshrined in the Convention. Data would be crucial to ensuring that persons with disabilities were both counted and included in the efforts to achieve those goals.

16. The Convention must guide global, regional and national processes on the road ahead. Persons with disabilities were among the most excluded and isolated in practically all regions of the world, and urgent action was needed to reduce exclusion, inequality and discrimination.

17. He commended the decision of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Ms. Devandas Aguilar, to focus on the right to equal and adequate standards of living. Priority must be given to addressing the vulnerability of persons with disabilities, with intensified efforts to support those facing multiple discrimination — in particular, women and girls, disadvantaged youth, and older persons. The new vision for sustainable development should offer a framework for bold action, benefitting all. Every State should make the right to inclusive education systems a reality for all students, including boys and girls with disabilities. He encouraged all Member States to take action even before the adoption of the new agenda.

18. As a former United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, he called attention to the need for full enjoyment of human rights for persons with disabilities in times of disaster, refugee movements and humanitarian emergencies. The results of the Sendai World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the ongoing consultations in connection with the World Humanitarian Summit had underlined that persons with disabilities were disproportionately left behind. He was confident that States parties would take a leading role in rectifying that situation in all areas.

19. The Conference should be used to strengthen cooperation and partnerships. Member States, the public and private sector, United Nations entities and civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities, should all come together to support implementation of the Convention. All stakeholders must now join forces to build a rights-based post-2015 development agenda that included and was accessible to persons with disabilities and their communities.

20. Empowering persons with disabilities and securing their rights would advance society as a whole. It was time to turn the landmark Convention into a reality for persons with disabilities. The quality of a society was ultimately determined by how it treated its most vulnerable citizens. That was the message of the first three words of the Preamble of the Charter: “We the Peoples”.

21. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Chair, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that both the Conference of States Parties and the Committee had the mandate of enhancing the visibility and the cross-cutting nature of the human rights model for persons with disabilities and that the definition of the

post-2015 agenda presented a unique opportunity in which all stakeholders were invited to participate. She acknowledged the support received from other treaty bodies for the Committee's statements highlighting the importance of including the human rights of persons with disabilities in the social development process. The report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970) had made specific mention of disability and persons with disabilities in five goals: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education; promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; reduce inequality within and among countries; make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development by building capacity and gathering and sharing data.

22. However, there were fundamental challenges and tasks for all stakeholders. The first was to draft, by March 2016, human rights-based indicators that took persons with disabilities into account. It was incongruous for social development to continue to be measured solely by GDP, ignoring other factors such as equality, non-discrimination, justice, the fight against corruption, the flexibility of intellectual property systems and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Convention and the standards enshrined therein must be used as a guideline.

23. A second challenge was to present the perspective and human rights model of persons with disabilities at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015 in order to ensure adequate financing. She noted that while the report of the Working Group was a significant step forward, one of its shortcomings was the lack of a target referring to the civil and political rights of persons with disabilities in the goal on reducing inequality. Recognition as equals before the law, legal capacity, physical integrity and protection from violence and cruel and inhumane treatment were essential rights.

24. It was important that the human rights-based model of disability be considered at high-level United Nations events such as the humanitarian and climate change summits. In addition to the nine major groups, persons with disabilities should be the tenth group contributing to the work of the Organization. The United Nations should be a guiding light for social

development, including by ensuring access to activities in compliance with the Secretary-General's bulletin on employment and accessibility for staff members with disabilities in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/SGB/2014/3). The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities considered it fundamental to continue building links with the Conference of States Parties, given the leadership role that the latter should have in relation to the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The Committee was also ready to cooperate with civil society, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.

25. **Mr. Balakrishna** (Honorary President, CBR Global Network) said that almost one billion people in the world had some form of disability. Many were desperately poor, poor enough to die of hunger. Yet, there had come a moment in which they could be given hope with the stroke of a pen. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities represented a promise of transformative change in the lives of persons with disabilities and its ratification by more than 150 countries was a phenomenal step forward. However, persons with disabilities accounted for 20 per cent of the poorest people in the world and it was not enough to claim that measures aimed at the poor were meant for all poor people. If persons with disabilities were not explicitly mentioned in the sustainable development goals, they would be excluded by default. While the Millennium Development Goals had significantly reduced poverty in the global South, persons with disabilities had been largely absent from the success stories. The sustainable development goals provided an opportunity to remedy that situation.

26. The statistics were clear: persons with disabilities accounted for 161 million of the 805 million people suffering from hunger worldwide; 150 million of the more than 750 million people lacking access to clean drinking water; 33 million of the 165 million children under the age of 5 years with chronic malnutrition; and 400,000 of the 2 million children who died every year from preventable diseases. The figures were staggering, and there could be no doubt that the new development goals would not be effective if they failed to make explicit mention of persons with disabilities. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in development benefitted the whole community and made economic sense. Reductions in wage earnings attributed to lower levels of education among persons with disabilities and their caregivers in Bangladesh

cost the economy an estimated \$54 million per year. In contrast, in Pakistan, the rehabilitation of persons with incurable blindness would lead to an increase in household earnings of an estimated \$72 million per year.

27. He recounted the story of a family that subsisted on one dollar a day and in which one of the three children required a pair of crutches. The purchase and the trip involved, which would result in a loss of a few days' wages, left the family with a difficult choice: leave the child without crutches, or starve for a few days in order to purchase them. He asked the delegates how they would respond to the millions of mothers with children with disabilities facing similar survival issues: would they tell them to wait another 15 years? Member States should add indicators and targets to the first and most important sustainable development goal of ending poverty everywhere. At the stroke of a pen, one simple amendment could include persons with disabilities and give hope to millions around the world.

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention

(a) General debate

28. **Mr. Vásquez** (Ecuador) said that his country's recent advances included the mainstreaming of disability in public life and Government policy through an increase in the visibility of persons with disabilities, the provision of technical assistance and access to decent housing, and financial transfers. The organization act on disability had led to the establishment of a technical secretariat for the inclusive management of disabilities. The secretariat was responsible for coordinating Government activities in all sectors wherever persons with disabilities were affected and implementing programmes to achieve their full inclusion. The four strategic areas of action were productive inclusion, in which persons with disabilities received assistance and advice concerning their business plans; participatory inclusion, in which persons with disabilities participated in community life, thereby strengthening the fabric of society; efforts to achieve universal accessibility; and inclusive risk management geared towards raising awareness of the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities in all areas of disaster risk management.

29. Disability was at the top of the national agenda, since national development objectives could not be

achieved unless they took into account the rights, needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities, and the national policy on disability encompassed strategies to integrate persons with disabilities into the community and the nation. Developing countries were capable of taking decisions in favour of inclusion, and should leverage mechanisms such as South-South cooperation.

30. **Ms. Wagner** (New Zealand) said that the focus on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development framework was key to ensuring that the framework would benefit all the peoples of the world. Persons with disabilities were especially vulnerable in conflict situations, and New Zealand, as a member of the Security Council, had advocated the protection of citizens, and persons with disabilities in particular, in situations of conflict.

31. The growth of disability rights had been assisted by the development of a caucus of indigenous persons with disabilities within the World Conference of Indigenous Peoples, and the growing recognition in the Pacific region of the importance of ratifying and implementing the Convention. The increased focus on women with disabilities was also welcome. Persons with disabilities had the most expertise with regard to the implementation of the Convention. New Zealand's disability action plan for 2014-2018 had been designed jointly by persons with disabilities and Government agencies, while the Convention Coalition, a group of organizations representing persons with disabilities, had been included in the independent monitoring mechanism.

32. The Government was taking steps to ensure that persons with disabilities had the same opportunities to secure meaningful employment as other New Zealanders, and was changing the way persons with disabilities received disability support and services so that they had maximum choice and control.

33. **Ms. Ifill** (Barbados) said that her Government had launched a national monitoring committee on the rights of persons with disabilities in July 2014. The committee members, who had diverse technical skills, had reviewed draft legislation in the areas of discrimination, building standards and road safety with a view to improving the lives of persons with disabilities. A key stakeholders' forum would soon review the draft legislation and make recommendations.

34. Poverty reduction could be achieved only through empowerment. The mainstreaming of disability required an intersectoral approach and a paradigm shift. However, as a result of insufficient statistical capacity, there was a shortage of reliable data on disability. Efforts to reduce poverty, inequality and exclusion had intensified, inter alia through a revamping of the social policy framework that guided social development and intervention. The involvement of persons with disabilities was being encouraged at all levels.

35. **Mr. Al-Hussein** (Jordan) said that natural disasters and conflict caused despair and destruction, and in most cases rendered the innocent and the impoverished destitute and/or left them with disabilities. In humanitarian emergencies, many human beings had to face a new reality of living with a disability. The onus was therefore on States Parties to the Convention to make disability more visible, and to transform the experiences of the disability community. The post-2015 development agenda provided just such an opportunity. The draft sustainable development goals were good but an exclusively disability-focused goal was needed to ensure that disability was mainstreamed. The sustainable development goals should also be clear. If the goals were too vague, there would be a greater risk that persons with disabilities would be marginalized or that the goals would be misinterpreted. Persons with disabilities in most countries had waited a long time for tangible results and would not be content with lofty goals on paper. The promise of the Convention was that persons with disabilities would benefit from full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms, and that their inherent dignity would be respected.

36. **Mr. Attila** (Sierra Leone) said that the Ebola virus disease continued to hamper the efforts to make Sierra Leone a society friendly to persons with disabilities. In spite of Ebola, Sierra Leone had demonstrated its commitment to human rights instruments, treaties and conventions, with a special emphasis on the Convention. An act on persons with disabilities had been adopted in 2011, and the national commission for persons with disabilities had a five-year plan to guide the implementation of disability-related programmes and activities. Disability questions had been included in the pilot phase of the national census, and a new education policy required the provision of ramps and other forms of assistive devices

in all public educational institutions. Similarly, a new national electoral disability policy would promote participation by persons with disabilities in the electoral process, and the social safety net programme made provision for them.

37. The Ebola virus disease had had an immeasurable economic, social and humanitarian impact but the shock to vulnerable groups had been especially severe. As a result, the social protection measures introduced by his Government were not only cushioning the effects of poverty but also lifting vulnerable groups out of poverty. The post-2015 development agenda should be built on the core principles of equality and provide a universal, inclusive and accessible framework. To achieve that goal, an enabling environment with resources should support participation by small and large States. Development partners should therefore provide both financial and technical support in the form of special needs experts such as sign language trainers, and orientation and mobility trainers. The hope was that disability would be explicitly included in the post-2015 development framework in order to deliver development for all.

38. **Ms. Bentele** (Germany) said that Germany had made good progress. In March 2015, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had considered Germany's initial report and had provided more than 60 recommendations. The Convention had initiated a debate within German society on the way in which persons with and without disabilities should live together, in particular in the fields of education, training and employment and the planning of public space. The most important projects in that area included the adoption of a federal participation law which would help persons with disabilities to achieve self-determination; the amendment of the act on equal opportunities for persons with disabilities through measures such as the establishment of a mediation body to resolve cases of discrimination; and the further development of an action plan on the implementation of the Convention at the national level and in German development cooperation, in consultation with persons with disabilities.

39. **Ms. Baralt** (Sweden) said that Sweden had had a very inspiring and helpful first dialogue with the Committee in April 2014. The Swedish Government attached great importance to the Convention and was laying the foundations for a new disability strategy based on the Convention and on the Committee's

concluding observations. Some of the concrete measures implemented by the Government were based on the Committee's recommendations and included the launch by the Swedish Agency for Participation of an information campaign on the rights of persons with disabilities to prevent discrimination. Physical accessibility alone would not suffice for persons with disabilities to enjoy fully their human rights. The right to work on an equal basis, pursuant to article 27 of the Convention, was an area of special concern, as work was key to inclusion and participation in society.

40. She recalled the commitments made in the outcome document of the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Disability, in particular, the importance of involving persons with disabilities in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the emerging post-2015 development agenda. The new agenda must achieve results for all and increase accountability. No person should be left behind. The ability to assess needs and analyse barriers, as well as to measure progress and predict challenges, was vital. For that, a coherent monitoring framework was needed. Statistical data, disaggregated by disability and gender, must be in place to address the needs of women, men, boys and girls with disabilities. Delegations should take advantage of the Conference to join forces and discuss further how to achieve those goals.

41. Sweden welcomed the engagement of the new special procedures mandate holder, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, in the preparations leading to a new international development agenda. Her delegation looked forward to the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and underlined the importance of a disability-inclusive process for a truly inclusive post-2015 agenda.

42. **Mr. Ackon** (Ghana) said that after ratifying the Convention, his Government had initiated actions to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, who accounted for three per cent of the population. Specifically, it aimed to create the right environment for them to develop their full potential and participate in the overall development of the country. Act 715 of 2006, the Persons with Disability Act, provided a legal framework for promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and established the National Council for Persons with Disabilities to develop relevant policies and programmes to facilitate the implementation of the Act.

43. Persons with disabilities were mainstreamed in national social protection and poverty reduction strategies. Under the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty programme, over 23,000 persons with disabilities received cash transfers and in 2013, over \$1.5 million had been allocated to beneficiaries, who were also registered under the national health insurance programme and had access to free medical care. Through the District Assemblies' Common Fund, independently monitored by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Ghana allocated two per cent of its total national revenue to the most vulnerable persons with disabilities in local government constituencies, providing access to education, health care and assistive devices and training. The Government was also cooperating with the Ghana Federation of the Disabled to roll out a range of actions to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

44. The Council also collaborated with the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications to implement a pilot disability employment project offering ICT training that enhanced decent employment opportunities. All persons with disabilities in Ghana were registered in a database that guided policy makers in their design of programmes, and the Council was conducting a public awareness and education campaign against existing negative cultural beliefs and attitudes.

45. The State's efforts to address the challenge of exclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls in education, were characterized by free basic education and the provision of special facilities at secondary and tertiary institutions to ensure a positive education experience. Furthermore, the Government had established special education schools for children whose disabilities impeded enrolment in regular schools, and the Special Education Division of the Ministry of Education, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), had implemented a pilot programme and developed an inclusive education policy to ensure access to formal education for marginalized children. In line with Act 715 of 2006, a number of public institutions provided ramps and lifts, reading materials were provided in an accessible format and sign language interpretation was made available during public functions and news telecasts.

46. In addition to the many measures implemented to protect and promote the rights of persons with

disabilities and enhance their inclusion, the Government, which counted a visually impaired Minister in its ranks, was doing all in its power to change the negative perceptions and attitudes that persisted against disability and persons with disabilities. It was also striving to address the critical lack of technical and financial resources that perpetuated deficiencies in the built environment. The Government intended to improve physical accessibility, train sign language interpreters and provide more accessible documents and was working to develop on accessible design standards. It would continue to support full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities, forging partnerships with domestic and international stakeholders, including in the private sector and civil society, to achieve the goals of the Convention.

47. **Mr. Verma** (India) said that the Indian Constitution guaranteed equality, freedom, justice and dignity for all individuals. That implied an inclusive society for all, including the 26.8 million persons with disabilities. Article 41 of the Constitution was particularly relevant as it enshrined the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disability.

48. To implement policy and to ensure equal opportunities, protection of rights and social participation for persons with disabilities, India had established the Central Co-ordination Committee, a mechanism for coordinated action focusing on persons with disabilities and their entitlements created under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995. Combined efforts had led to the development of extensive infrastructure in the form of various national, regional and district level institutes and rehabilitation centres that provided training courses to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The Government had established national institutes specializing in different types of disabilities, a number of Composite Regional Centres for Persons with Disabilities to promote research and training and provide services for persons with disabilities and was setting up new National Centres of Excellence specialising in relevant areas.

49. The Government was also promoting research and development on various aspects of disability, including services, models and programmes, advocacy, early intervention, education, vocational training and adult independent living. It was also undertaking

applied action research to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities, critical disabilities studies and prevention and prevalence studies, incorporating human rights, legal, economic and social perspectives. In addition, the Government was implementing a number of programmes under the seventh five-year plan; it had launched a national action plan to provide vocational training, in partnership with various stakeholders, to 2.5 million persons with disabilities by 2022; and a nationwide flagship campaign had been initiated to focus on universal accessibility in the built environment, transport and information and communication systems.

50. The State provided financial support to persons with disabilities directly, through programmes providing high-end devices to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, and through assistance to non-governmental organizations for the purpose of rehabilitation, education and vocational training. Furthermore, a major initiative had been taken to raise awareness and to promote the legal rights of persons with disabilities. In order to harmonize legislation with the provisions of the Convention, the new Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill had been introduced in the Parliament. When enacted, it would, *inter alia*, increase the rights of persons with disabilities and protect them from discrimination; facilitate mainstreaming and access to care and treatment; and strengthen enforcement mechanisms. India remained committed to building an enabling environment so that all persons with disabilities could enjoy their rights equally with others and realize their full potential. He added that the initial country report would soon be submitted to the Committee, in accordance with article 35 of the Convention.

51. **Ms. Bogopane-Zulu** (South Africa) said that the task of reducing inequality and eradicating poverty among persons with disabilities and their families must be shared. It could not be the responsibility only of States parties, a few Government departments, and the organisations, families and communities of persons with disabilities.

52. As a democratic society in which persons with disabilities were equal citizens with equal rights, South Africa had taken a number of comprehensive social security measures on the road to eradicating poverty and promoting equality of outcome for all. Indigent citizens and residents had access to subsidised State housing, either for ownership or rental, and persons

with disabilities had access to a differentiated supplementary subsidy based on their reasonable accommodation requirements. Furthermore, all households had access to free water, sanitation and municipal services. All children with disabilities under the age of 6 years had access to free health care, including rehabilitation services and assistive devices.

53. The State disbursed a monthly disability grant in cash for both adults and children with disabilities, including military veterans, as well as grants for caregivers. Where public transport systems were available, persons with disabilities had subsidized access. Indigent students with disabilities enrolled in tertiary and vocational institutions had access to an extensive array of reasonable accommodation support grants, including assistive devices and technologies and personal assistance; higher-education institutions also provided support in that regard. Taxpayers with disabilities or their dependents with disabilities could claim rebates on all disability-related expenses. In addition, affirmative action policies protected job-seekers and employees with disabilities from discrimination and ensured access to reasonable accommodation support.

54. Further work was required to increase the geographical reach of those opportunities and to address the compounded marginalisation that certain groups experienced. More work was also needed to ensure that persons with disabilities were aware of their rights and entitlements and where to seek recourse. The Cabinet would shortly approve the National Disability Rights Policy, which was a major step in translating the Convention into domestic law and would be followed by the development of legislation that would ensure the right to equality, dignity and self-reliance; strengthen governance and administrative systems; provide a platform for the review of existing legislation and development of new laws; and strengthen accountability and enforcement of rights.

55. She expressed gratitude to the United Nations and its agencies for the continued technical and financial support which had enabled South Africa to strengthen its policy, legislative, budgetary, monitoring and evaluation instruments aimed at accelerating equality of outcome for persons with disabilities. She also called on delegations present to support International Albinism Awareness Day on 13 June. Citizens with albinism needed individual and collective support and

protection. That would enhance their feeling of safety, end hate speech, and improve their access to appropriate health services, education and employment opportunities. South Africa supported the sustainable development goals as currently drafted and called for collective action and accountability in ensuring that the interests and rights of persons with disabilities were protected and promoted in the post-2015 development agenda.

56. *Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

57. **Ms. Ungureanu** (Romania) said that 2015 was a year of opportunities and no effort should be spared to ensure the adoption of a transformative post-2015 development agenda that would guide policies and activities for the next 15 years. Given the objective of leaving no one behind, attention should be paid to persons with disabilities, who were in many cases subjected to multiple forms of discrimination. Romania was implementing the provisions of the Convention with a view to addressing the interlinkage between disability, poverty, inequality and exclusion and overcoming barriers. To that end, the Government had undertaken measures to strengthen its administrative capacity with the establishment, in February 2015, of the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities, the specialized body responsible for promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

58. Significant efforts had been deployed to mainstream the fight against discrimination based on disability and the promotion of equal opportunities and equal access to services in all national and sectoral strategies affecting persons with disabilities. Such strategies, which focused on issues including children's rights, education, social inclusion, health care, accessibility and employment, would be strengthened by specific actions. The first national strategy based on the Convention, entitled "A society without barriers for people with disabilities" and covering the period 2015-2020, had been developed in that context, with the valuable contribution of persons with disabilities and their organizations. One of the commitments made as part of the national strategy was the establishment of a network of non-residential community-based services that would help to enhance the autonomy of persons with disabilities, while preventing segregation and respecting their rights. Romania was currently defining the timeline and actions needed to transition from a

system based on institutional care to a community-based system. Local authorities would be encouraged to draft their own community service plans.

59. A national plan that focused on accessibility of the physical environment, information and communication would promote reasonable accommodation and provide for research in the area of assistive devices and technologies. In addition, the Government had developed policies to raise the relatively low employment rate among persons with disabilities. Such policies were also relevant for successful sustainable development and inclusive societies. It was important to recognize persons with disabilities not only as beneficiaries, but also as agents of development.

60. **Ms. Caruana** (Malta) said that the incredible paradigm shift triggered by the adoption of the Convention and its Optional Protocol had had a domino effect on all major institutions, creating a readiness for the shift from a medical approach to a broader, social and rights-based approach to disability. Malta had tried to emulate the model adopted by the United Nations by placing disability rights at the top of its agenda and bringing all stakeholders together, with persons with disabilities as protagonists.

61. For two years, Malta had been enhancing the provision of services. The Government had introduced new laws and strengthened the existing legal framework to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoyed the same rights and opportunities as everyone else and to provide the tools to combat the discrimination that exacerbated the situations of persons with disabilities and their families. The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act of 2000 was under review, and the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act of 1969 had been strengthened with incentives for employers and for persons with disabilities reluctant to join the workforce. The Government had implemented the Guardianship Act of 2012 and legislation governing trusts and foundations and had enacted legislation on representation in decision-making bodies. In June 2015 the Cabinet of Ministers had approved a bill to transpose the Convention and its Optional Protocol into domestic law, providing a strong framework for protection against discrimination and a remedy before the Constitutional Court, over and above existing remedies and monitoring systems.

62. Persons with disabilities still had the most difficulty finding employment and were among the most vulnerable to social and other challenges. The National Disability Strategy, to be launched at the end of July 2015, built on the National Disability Policy and was designed to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination, abuse and ill treatment and strengthen support services. The Government was beginning to collate the necessary data for identifying and tracking the needs of that community. There could be no progress without such data; the national database would be an important source of information for research-based policies.

63. For no one to be left behind, it was vital to continue to strive for a streamlined, responsive and inclusive post-2015 development agenda and to ensure transparency in all institutions. The Maltese Government was committed to maintaining and enhancing the standard of living and quality of life of persons with disabilities and to ensuring a fair society for all.

64. **Mr. Katopola** (Malawi) said that the Convention provided a new global perspective on disability as a rights and development issue, and the contributions of persons with disabilities to national growth needed to be acknowledged. The inclusion of disability-specific objectives and indicators in the post-2015 development agenda would help all Member States to focus on disability in more concrete terms and provide an opportunity for the discussions at the national and international levels to spread to the regional and continental level. The role of the regional commissions should also be strengthened. Organizations of persons with disabilities should be engaged in all those processes. In addition to constitutional guarantees protecting persons with disabilities, the disability act adopted in Malawi in 2012 was intended to domesticate the Convention and ensure, inter alia, that persons with disabilities enjoyed equal opportunities. The Government ministry responsible for disability-related issues was developing a national strategy on mainstreaming disability; establishing national institutions including a national coordinating committee on disability; building sectoral capacity through training in disability mainstreaming; developing a multisectoral national plan of action on children with disabilities; and incorporating emerging issues into the national policy on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

65. However, the implementation of disability policies and programme also faced challenges, which included gross violations of the human rights of persons with albinism. The President had taken the lead in condemning those atrocities. A multisectoral national steering committee had been established to implement a strategic intervention plan including education and awareness-raising; intensified internal security; investigative research; strengthened administration of justice and victim support; enforcement of laws on trafficking in body parts; and capacity-building for the association of persons with albinism, in some cases with the support of development partners. His Government had completed its initial and second reports on implementation of the Convention and would submit them to the Committee in due course.

66. **Mr. Nyitrai** (Hungary) said that his country had been among the first to ratify the Convention and that highly qualified Hungarian experts had been participating in the work of the Committee since the very beginning. The Convention should be more than a legal norm and should ensure that disability issues were an integral part of public thinking. In Hungary, a national disability programme for 2015-2025 had recently been adopted by a large majority of the national assembly, and the related action plan was being prepared. Hungary had introduced disability policies based on the Convention, such as an act on sign language, the introduction of the legal institution of supported decision-making, the creation of a university-level programme on autism, the only one of its kind in Europe, and a deinstitutionalization strategy under which 4,000 persons would ultimately leave institutional care and move to community housing. The Convention had shown how to proceed with disability policies in future and the Government would continue to give priority to disability issues.

67. **Mr. Choi** Jong-kyun (Republic of Korea) said that his Government was seeking to introduce a human rights-based approach to recognise persons with disabilities as subjects of rights. Specifically, it would apply a human rights-based approach to anti-poverty policies by providing financial assistance to lower-income individuals and families. The personalized system would reflect the situation of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. The Government had also incorporated a disability allowance into the pension system and was making

every effort to support independent living for those who were capable of working. To that end, the Government was expanding the disability employment subsidy. Statistical data disaggregated by disability were being collected in national surveys and used to implement the strategy adopted by member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

68. **Ms. Maciejewska** (Poland) said that the post-2015 development agenda rightly emphasized integration and social cohesion, without discrimination. Education, employment and health care were prerequisites for full participation in society, but a change in attitudes was also needed. In Poland, positive changes had taken place, largely as a result of efforts made by persons with disabilities themselves. Activities to support the full participation of persons with disabilities were funded by employers, the State and the European Union. On the strength of much experience of professional integration, Poland would henceforth focus on increasing social skills and access to information and services on the Internet. The key principle was that organizations of persons with disabilities should be involved in planning and implementing projects that affected them. The authorities also relied on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing persons with disabilities at the local level to organize activities and prepare new legislation. Civil society was the foundation on which the goals of the post-2015 development agenda would be achieved.

69. **Mr. Ferreira** (Brazil) said that his Government had achieved considerable success in implementing the through a national plan involving 15 ministries and \$3 billion invested in education, health care, social inclusion and accessibility. Over 15,000 multifunctional resource rooms for specialized educational services were in place. Some 2,300 buses provided school transportation for 60,000 students with disabilities, and over 600 Brazilian sign language interpreters had been hired. Certification had been issued for 117 specialized rehabilitation centres and 6,000 oral health professionals had been trained to treat persons with disabilities. Guide dog instructors had been trained throughout the country and numerous tax relief policies were targeted at persons with disabilities. New goals were being defined and Brazil aspired to be recognized as a country of equality, justice, opportunity, sustainable development and welfare.

70. **Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) said that there could be no inclusive society or sustainable development without the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Promoting their participation in economic, social and cultural development was therefore not only a moral imperative but also a smart choice. Following its ratification of the Convention, Italy had established a national observatory that called on all main stakeholders to follow through with a mechanism for monitoring the Convention. Disability was also an area of focus for Italian international cooperation. The national action plan on disability developed in consultation with civil society and within the context of official development assistance had five main pillars, namely, policies and strategies; inclusive project design; an accessible environment, goods and services; humanitarian aid in emergency situations affecting, *inter alia*, persons with disabilities; and making the most of the best practices developed by civil society organizations and private sector in the area of disability. The action plan also identified geographical priorities and put special emphasis on knowledge and information sharing. The post-2015 development agenda should take into account the views and needs of persons with disabilities by ensuring the social and political inclusion of all persons.

71. **Ms. Yparraguirre** (Philippines) said that the constitution of the Philippines valued the dignity of every human person and guaranteed full respect for all human rights. The national human rights plan aimed to mainstream human rights standards into all parts of national life and reflected the obligation to safeguard the human rights of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Furthermore, measures had been introduced to empower those vulnerable groups through policies that aimed to increase their participation and integration into society. The National Council on Disability Affairs had worked with Government agencies, local authorities, NGOs and organizations representative of persons with disabilities to establish local structures responsible for policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of disability-relevant laws at the local level. The Council had organized 33 functional disability-related structures and trained more than 500 local leaders and stakeholders on disability laws, programmes and policies.

72. Regional committees on disability affairs were translating national laws into programmes and services for persons with disabilities at the grassroots level, as a means of building their capacity to participate in the social and economic activities of their communities. New benefits for persons with disabilities included 20-per-cent discounts on domestic air travel, drugs, hotels, restaurants, recreational centres and other places of leisure. Persons with disabilities should not be neglected in the post-2015 development agenda, in particular in the areas of food security, health care, education and employment. They should be empowered as agents of development in the post-2015 development agenda.

73. **Ms. Wong Kuan Ying** (Singapore) said that the rights of persons with disabilities should be taken into account in the ambitious post-2015 development agenda and reflected in the sustainable development goals. In Singapore, the Government's Enabling Masterplan provided the framework for building an inclusive society in which persons with disabilities were fully integrated and could achieve their full potential. However, the plan was merely the first step, and support systems were needed for its implementation. The Open Door Fund subsidized the costs incurred by employers to recruit, train and provide job accommodations for employees with disabilities. Employment credit schemes were extended to persons with disabilities and their employers, regardless of age, and had benefited thousands.

74. The Government had set aside \$3 million dollars in grants to help transport companies defray the costs of purchasing and retrofitting vans and buses to improve accessibility for commuters with mobility challenges, and all public buses were due to be wheelchair-accessible by 2020. Persons with hearing disabilities now had access to mandatory hearing enhancement systems in auditoriums and concert halls. Building codes mandated the use of braille and tactile information. To make assistive technology more affordable, the Government assistive technology fund would be expanded to cover all persons with disabilities of all ages and for all purposes. Singapore had adopted a pragmatic and outcomes-based approach to building a society that was inclusive for persons with disabilities and would soon submit its initial report to the Committee.

75. **Mr. Corporán** (Dominican Republic) said that a disability perspective should be mainstreamed into the

post-2015 development agenda and policies on inclusion should be bolstered. The Dominican Republic had recently submitted its initial report to the Committee and had doubled the budget allocation to the Government agency responsible for implementing the Convention. The national statistical office had carried out the first survey of social, economic and environmental indicators concerning persons with disabilities and their families. More generally, public policies were being aligned to include persons with disabilities and children with disabilities in particular. The new Government's programmes included a programme for raising the visibility of needs among local actors and managers in 72 municipalities and communities, with more to follow. Similarly, the Ministry of Education was providing literacy training to thousands of persons with disabilities.

76. The terminology used in the Convention to refer to persons with disabilities was being disseminated through a national and regional awareness-raising campaign. At the same time, national legislation was being aligned with the Convention, the Dominican constitution and Act No. 5-13. Progress had been made in the area of universal accessibility, in particular in the tourism sector, and the first conference on accessible tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean would be held in Santo Domingo in July 2015, both to address challenges and to highlight competitive advantages as well as the economic benefits. Accessible tourism was inclusive because it attracted the elderly, pregnant women, families with babies and health care tourists. Audio guides were being introduced in museums, and the colonial-era parts of Santo Domingo were being refurbished to ensure a high level of accessibility for visitors. Tourist destinations such as beaches and caves had been certified as accessible. Accessible tourism was an excellent tool for implementing the Convention within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda since it combined social, economic and environmental development with human rights.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.