



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 June 2017, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms. Moreno (Ecuador)
(Acting Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria), Ms. Moreno (Ecuador), Acting Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (continued)

(a) General debate: The Second Decade of the CRPD: Inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the implementation of the Convention (continued)

1. **Ms. Flores** (Honduras) said that in line with the national Constitution, the Act on Equity and Comprehensive Development for Persons with Disabilities guaranteed persons with disabilities the enjoyment of the inherent right to human dignity, promoted their full participation in society and prohibited all discrimination against them.

2. In 2013 the Government had adopted the Public Policy for the Exercise of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion in Honduras, which was underpinned by the principles of empowerment, solidarity, sustainability, coordination, comprehensiveness and transparency; and which focused on, inter alia, human rights, gender, the whole life cycle and multiculturalism. The Policy promoted institutional and intersectoral strengthening, and inclusive community-based and decentralized development.

3. The Secretariat for Development and Social Inclusion was working with various institutions and federations of persons with disabilities to implement the Policy. Its work included the Honduras for All programme, inspired by the successful Manuela Espejo Solidarity Mission in Ecuador. In October 2016 the former United Nations Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility had recognized the Government for adapting the Ecuadorian programme in order to benefit persons with disabilities in Honduras.

4. Important advances had been made towards inclusion of persons with disabilities in the prevention of and response to emergencies and natural disasters, as well as in the area of democratic participation. Roughly 850,000 persons in Honduras suffered from disabilities, frequently due to preventable causes including poverty and malnutrition. To achieve their full inclusion it would be necessary to invest in education and training.

5. **Mr. Gimolieca** (Angola) said that the Angolan Government had adopted a legal framework to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in normal daily life. Programmes for physical and social rehabilitation, vocational training and social inclusion had been developed by several ministries in partnership with civil society organizations.

6. Three important legal instruments had recently been approved. A presidential decree had approved a strategy for the social inclusion of children with disabilities; another had allocated jobs for persons with disabilities, and a law had mandated that all community systems and services be accessible to persons with disabilities or limited mobility to enable them to fully exercise their citizenship rights. Vocational training and rehabilitation had been emphasized in order to integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market. Angola had set up many facilities for persons with disabilities, including 11 orthopaedic rehabilitation centres, 20 schools for students with special needs and 775 inclusive schools.

7. **Mr. Zamora Rivas** (El Salvador) said that El Salvador had a national council for comprehensive support for persons with disabilities, which maintained ongoing dialogue with high-level representatives of civil society in order to promote measures for equality of opportunity and to reduce inequality and discrimination. The national housing policy, adopted in October 2015, and a national manual on construction and urban design, which had been adopted in 2016, specifically took into account the needs of persons with disabilities.

8. In 2014 a new ground transportation system had been built for the metropolitan area of San Salvador, making public transport accessible for the entire population. With support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization the Government was currently developing a national plan on access and use of information and communications technology (ICT) for persons with disabilities, which would strengthen their access to education, training and employment.

9. With other countries in the Central American region, El Salvador had developed standards for the inclusion, protection and care of persons with disabilities in emergencies and disasters; it was currently drawing up a national plan on the subject that contained a road map for the period 2017-2021. The Government had begun a process of assessment and registration of persons with disabilities living in extreme poverty, and in the short term would be providing economic subsidies to those persons. El

Salvador would submit its combined second and third periodic report in January 2018.

10. **Ms. Goldrick** (Nicaragua) said that since the national reconciliation Government had taken power, it had focused on the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly in the areas of equality, awareness, health and rehabilitation, education, employment and the improvement of infrastructure for accessible transport. The model of citizen participation launched in 2007 had given rise to new organizations, such as the citizen power councils. They included a citizen council of persons with disabilities, which was composed of 42 organizations. Those movements had represented an important step toward citizen participation in public administration, both at the national and municipal levels.

11. A major achievement had been the development of the “Voices for All” programme. In 2016 almost 10,000 persons with disabilities entered that programme, which offered services such as medical and surgical consultations, genetics consultations and referrals for critical patients. Voices for All had been a continuous success. It not only offered medical services, but also supplied food packages, wheelchairs, and devices to assist with mobility.

12. **Mr. Carroll** (Observer for Disabled People’s International) said that Disabled People’s International was the first and only global cross-disability disabled persons’ organization. It promoted the full participation by all persons with disabilities in mainstream life. While great gains had been made in many countries since the adoption of the Convention, much remained to be done to remove the physical, social and attitudinal barriers that caused discrimination. Civil society organizations needed and wanted to be involved in the process of ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities were upheld and their lives improved. The Sustainable Development Goals held great promise for lifting persons with disabilities and their families out of poverty.

13. **Mr. Simone** (Observer for Disabled People’s International) said that the main challenge faced by persons with disabilities was a lack of equal treatment and a lack of education and training. Even though some persons with disabilities were able to access such services, a large majority remained untrained. To implement the Convention in all areas of society, United Nations bodies were obliged to develop training programmes that would empower persons with disabilities and allow them to be recognized as equal partners.

14. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country had enacted two rights-based laws regarding persons with disabilities and autism, respectively, and several measures had been taken to establish equal respect, rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Government had established autism resource centres and hostels that were fully accessible to persons with disabilities of both sexes. Since 2009, the Government had been working to establish an integrated disability service centre that would be available in all districts. In December 2015, mobile therapy services had been introduced to deliver door-to-door therapy services.

15. Special attention had been paid to persons with autism. The Government of Bangladesh had approved a comprehensive project to set up a separate disabilities complex and disabilities sports complex. Those complexes would be an international centre of excellence for persons with disabilities, autism and other neurological disorders. At the United Nations, Bangladesh had tabled a resolution addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders, developmental disorders and associated disabilities. It had also arranged annual events at the United Nations in observation of World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April.

16. **Ms. Kaltayeva** (Kazakhstan) said that persons with disabilities had always been a priority for the social policy of her country. In ratifying the Convention, Kazakhstan had made a meaningful shift from a medical model to a human rights model in dealing with persons with disabilities. Even before ratification of the Convention, numerous laws and codes had been amended, and that process had continued.

17. A number of important changes had taken place in Kazakhstan. Social support, goods and services had been expanded for persons with disabilities. Those services were not distributed by central bodies but rather were community-based and were in the process of becoming automated to ensure faster delivery. The Government was implementing a plan to challenge stereotypes of persons with disabilities. In the area of employment, Kazakhstan was creating new standards for job placement, and was subsidizing employers who created jobs for persons with disabilities. Job training had been emphasized, specifically for women entrepreneurs with disabilities. In the area of infrastructure, new rules were being introduced to ensure accessibility and steps were being taken to establish small housing units for persons with cognitive impairments.

18. **Ms. Badio Dennis** (Liberia) said that the Government had established a national commission on disabilities as an autonomous agency with a mandate to ensure the general welfare of all persons with disabilities in the country. The Government also supported capacity building for persons with disabilities by subsidizing organizations for persons with disabilities throughout the country and providing microfinance loans. It had also developed several awareness-raising programmes on disability issues. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection had been tasked with ensuring the welfare of persons with disabilities.

19. The Government had collaborated with international partners such as Sightsavers International and Handicap International to support the effort of the Ministry of Education to provide special and inclusive education. That pilot project featured inclusive education awareness workshops for parents of children with disabilities, community leaders, county authorities, students and representatives of non-governmental organizations. A teacher-training manual on inclusive education practices had also been finalized.

20. **Ms. Brizuela** (Observer for Disability Rights International) said that her organization was dedicated to the promotion of human rights and the full participation in society of persons with disabilities worldwide. Since 1993, Disability Rights International had documented the conditions in institutions such as psychiatric hospitals, orphanages and shelters. It had trained activists with disabilities and had provided technical assistance to Governments and disability rights groups in more than 25 countries. In Latin America her organization had been working around the right of persons with disabilities to live in the community, in accordance with article 19 of the Convention.

21. The institutionalization of persons with disabilities, particularly children, should be ended. States parties to the Convention should regulate the behaviour of foundations, charities and companies to ensure that such organizations did not place children at risk for torture abroad. International and national donors needed to be educated on community-based alternatives to institutional living for children with disabilities, so that they would not replicate segregation models.

22. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine) said that more than 6 per cent of Ukrainian citizens were persons with disabilities. The Convention was a groundbreaking document, and Ukraine would make its best effort to

meet all its commitments under the Convention, despite Russian Federation aggression. The aggression in Donbas and the temporary occupation of the Ukrainian Crimea had challenged the Ukrainian Government, civil society and Ukrainian citizens, and the war had affected persons with disabilities most of all. There were 60,000 internally displaced persons with disabilities, including wounded servicemen. Military actions had had a negative impact on the social and economic situation in the country, with repercussions for social budgetary provisions. Nevertheless, non-governmental organizations working in the area of disability had managed to exert influence on Government policy and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

23. Ukraine was grateful to the United Nations for its fruitful cooperation on disability issues. In order to implement the recommendations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ukraine had adopted an action plan.

24. **Mr. Ayebare** (Uganda) said that his country had established a child helpline service to receive reports of violence against children, including children with disabilities. The Government had developed a national action plan for children with disabilities, and had undertaken country-wide training on service providers. It had also established the National Council for Disability, which had conducted awareness-raising activities.

25. Uganda had created a programme for women entrepreneurs and had stipulated that 30 per cent of participants must be persons with disabilities. Similarly, a programme for youth livelihood had allocated 30 per cent of its spaces to youth with disabilities. The Government had also undertaken to enforce building codes so as to ensure the accessibility and inclusivity of public buildings.

26. Despite those achievements, challenges remained. For example, information needed to be made accessible, including publications in Braille, and more public buildings needed to be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

27. **Mr. Bamyia** (State of Palestine) said that his delegation had recognized a need to empower persons with disabilities and acknowledge their contributions. That change in perspective had led to a decision to review existing legislation on disability in Palestine. A national committee, led by the Ministry of Social Development and members from civil society and various ministries, was working to modernize that law and expand its scope.

28. National policies and the budget would reflect the new orientation through aid, customs exemptions and soft loans. The Central Bureau of Statistics was elaborating the necessary indicators to guide policy-makers, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education had contributed to that national effort by adopting an inclusive education policy. A new strategic plan for local government included provisions for community integration of persons with disabilities.

29. In Palestine, disabilities were not only the result of nature or accidents, but also the result of half a century of Israeli occupation. In 2014, 900 Palestinians had suffered injuries leading to permanent disability as a result of the war against the Gaza Strip. Persons with disabilities were also more vulnerable to the impact of the occupation, including the blockade and military checkpoints.

30. **Ms. Naughton** (Observer for the European Network on Independent Living) said that her organization aimed to promote the right of persons with disabilities to live independently, as set out in article 19 of the Convention. Often, reforms in that area did not lead to full inclusion and participation in the community, but merely substituted one type of exclusion for another, in a smaller institutional setting or the person's home. Institutional living should not be presented as an option, as persons with disabilities were not able to exercise choice on the matter because of a lack of options and legal capacity, pressure from family or long waiting lists.

31. In order to unlock the full potential of the Convention, the Network called on the Committee to finalize a strong, clear and strict comment on article 19 to help States parties ensure that the deinstitutionalization process did not result in reinstitutionalization. Services such as housing, transport, education and health should be accessible to all persons with disabilities, regardless of their needs. Concrete plans should be provided for deinstitutionalization, and public and private funds for institutional care should be prohibited. All persons with disabilities should have access to personal assistance and peer support services.

32. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that the Moroccan constitution prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, and also contained provisions that allowed persons with disabilities to access their full rights. In addition, the Kingdom of Morocco had issued a framework law that had established national standards for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The drafting of that legal text had been the result of extraordinary cooperation among

Moroccan parliamentarians, and had benefited from the input of national institutions and civil society organizations.

33. In 2017, five governmental decisions had been drafted that had set accessibility standards in the areas of communications, transportation and building. Accessibility in four urban sectors (Casablanca, Rabat, Oujda and Tangiers) had been analyzed, and the city of Marrakesh had become a model in that respect. None of the above-mentioned efforts would have reached fruition had it not been for political will.

(d) Round table 3: Promoting inclusive urban development and implementation of the New Urban Agenda

34. *Mr. Torres (Ecuador), Acting Vice-President, and Mr. Simon (civil society) presided as Co-Chairs.*

35. **Mr. Torres** (Ecuador), Co-Chair, said that the round table would focus on addressing key issues and sharing experiences related to the promotion of inclusive urban development and the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Existing data revealed that in the current model of urbanization, persons with disabilities suffered from a general lack of access to the built environment, basic urban services and information and communications technologies. There were a number of additional factors that presented obstacles for the promotion of inclusive urban development for persons with disabilities, including a lack of awareness, knowledge and best practices. Accessibility was a prerequisite for persons with disabilities to live independently and achieve full and equal participation in society.

36. The New Urban Agenda envisioned cities as inclusive, sustainable, safe, fair, equitable and diverse planned spaces designed through participatory and democratic processes. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Agenda sought to leave no one behind. To fulfil that objective, new innovative solutions must be found to promote inclusive urbanization for persons with disabilities, including through the use of information and communications technologies. National and regional strategies should be informed by the experiences and knowledge of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

37. **Mr. Attanayake** (Acting Chief Minister, Uva Provincial Council, Sri Lanka), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that with only 18 per cent of its population living in cities, Sri Lanka was one of the least urbanized countries in the world and thus faced

different challenges. Historically, housing had been considered a priority and inclusive and open urban development had been emphasized. The Government had pledged to ensure sustainable urbanization; 2017 had been declared the year of poverty alleviation.

38. Sri Lanka was one of the fastest ageing countries in the world; persons with disabilities accounted for approximately 10 to 15 per cent of the country's population. The country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016 and was currently drafting laws aligned with its provisions to ensure accessibility.

39. The district of Moneragala was an example of a disability- and age-friendly region of the country. Although it was one of the poorest districts in the country, it had adopted an age-friendly approach to development with the help of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. The focus was on eliminating barriers for persons with disabilities and promoting their inclusion in society. The new approach to urbanization did not only focus on the built environment, but also looked at social and economic inclusion. A specialized unit had been established to replicate the project in other districts.

40. **Mr. Tororei** (Commissioner, National Land Commission and Director, Kenya Society for the Blind), panellist, said that the existing legal policy frameworks, declarations pronounced in various United Nations bodies, national constitutions and municipal laws were sufficient as platforms of action to affirm the rights to property for persons with disabilities; they merely needed to be implemented.

41. The New Urban Agenda had been adopted to guide all future urban development; persons with disabilities sought to be involved in its implementation. The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities championed the inclusion of the needs of persons with disabilities in the New Urban Agenda. It was necessary to understand the principles applied when planning new urban centres. Urban planning assigned uses and user rights to specific spaces; persons with disabilities must be included in all planning, in order to realign urban planning with the policies and legislation protecting the needs of such persons.

42. The road to recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities in Kenya had started in the 1980s with the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which had led to standard rules and culminated in the Convention. The first concrete

contribution of the Programme had been the introduction of the concept of universal design.

43. The recognition of the needs of persons with disabilities must be integrated into national constitutions, municipal laws and international law. More work remained to be done with regard to the New Urban Agenda, as only two paragraphs explicitly mentioned persons with disabilities. However, a broad paradigm shift was occurring, including in Kenya. In his country, it was possible to domesticate any treaty through its Constitution, including the New Urban Agenda.

44. Nairobi was a growing city, 60 per cent of whose population resided in informal settlements, which posed the greatest challenges for persons with disabilities. Kenya and the international community in general must transition from advocacy to practical programmes. The Conference of States Parties was a milestone with regard to recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities; its recommendations would greatly contribute to ensuring a fulfilled, independent life for all such persons.

45. **Mr. Pellegrini** (National Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry for Human Rights, Brazil), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that Brazil had ratified the Convention in 2008 and had also signed the Optional Protocol. Since 2105, it had enacted a legislative statute of inclusion. His office worked to ensure inter-agency coordination between different ministries and government bodies regarding the implementation of the Convention and other related measures.

46. Signing the Convention had entailed an obligation to cities. Financial resources in Brazil had been allocated for public works and modernization. Some of the disability-friendly measures that had been implemented were crosswalks, stoplights and bus stops that were accessible for persons with disabilities. Public parks had also been revitalized with specific equipment and design for persons and children with disabilities.

47. In Brazil, universal design had been adopted in public housing. All houses provided to persons with disabilities must be disability-friendly and meet the specific needs of each person, including changes in mobility over time. Housing units that did not receive government financing would also be required to provide entirely accessible housing in the near future. Hotels and other accommodations used for work or leisure must also include a certain percentage of units that met the standards of universal and accessible

design. With regard to public transport, most urban public transport options were now accessible, thanks to new technologies like low-floor buses and stowaway transfer seats. New obligations had been imposed on the airline industry as well. Brazil was working with the World Health Organization to train professionals and disseminate information on the correct use of wheelchairs.

48. **Mr. Pineda** (President, Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, (GAATES)), panellist, said that he had often remarked to his colleagues in urban planning that while he loved cities, they did not love him back. Not enough had been done to make cities inclusive of all persons and lifestyles.

49. Recounting his personal journey from Venezuela to the United States and his fight for access to education, he explained that he had been able to move from being denied an education to completing a doctoral degree in urban planning because his surrounding environment had changed. The question was therefore how to change environments to support persons with disabilities.

50. His role as president of the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, which had been founded ten years earlier in conjunction with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was to coordinate global efforts to implement article 9 of the Convention. The Alliance also worked with partners to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 on building inclusive and resilient cities.

51. In the New Urban Agenda, there had originally been one or two small mentions of persons with disabilities. However, it was a great success that the final document included 15 references to persons with disabilities, as well as a stand-alone paragraph that specially directed local governments to plan holistically for the needs, opportunities and contributions of such persons.

52. Accessibility was not just a regulatory requirement: it was also a requirement of imagination, political will and partnership. Accessibility should be positioned as the best practice for building schools and transportation systems as well as developing digital technologies. For the first time, the New Urban Agenda included the expressions “universal design”, “reasonable accommodation” and “accessibility” in the context of urban planning for persons with disabilities in mind.

53. A gap remained between national commitments to accessibility and local capacities. The Alliance was

committed to helping coordinate local efforts and building alliances between city governments and global corporation, with a view to exchanging best practices. The Alliance had published a toolkit called Smart Cities for All. An investment of \$1.5 trillion at the local level would be made to deploy technologies to improve digital connectivity. The project developed tools to help local governments ensure that they left no one behind in the realm of digital accessibility; the toolkit had been translated into Portuguese and the project had recently also been launched in Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, Hindi and Marathi.

54. As disability could affect anyone at any time, cities should be built that accommodated all persons. The current rate of urbanization was high and only continued to rise; therefore the international community must consider the accessibility dimensions of many different issues in order to avoid perpetuating inequality and exclusion. The built environment must embody the values of inclusion and human dignity.

55. **Ms. Placencia** (Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, European Commission), panellist, accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that accessibility in the urban environment marked the intersection of three thematic areas indicated in article 9 of the Convention: built environment, transport and information and communications technologies (ICTs). That intersection entailed the need to cut across disciplines to ensure seamless accessibility for persons with disabilities. As ICTs were embedded in built environments, transport systems and service provision, it was not sufficient to ensure the accessibility of the built environment, transport vehicle and telecommunications services separately. For the built environment, the challenge was removing existing barriers. For ICTs, however, the challenge was prevention: making the next generation of ICTs accessible was the most cost-effective solution. It was necessary to invest in accessible technologies and infrastructure, otherwise costly retrofitting would be necessary, as was currently the case for the built environment.

56. Significant new accessibility skills and guidance were therefore needed. Many accessibility solutions currently existed for the built environment and transport vehicles for persons with physical disabilities. There had been important developments and sharing of knowledge on how to make information more accessible for persons with sensory disabilities. However, only recently had attention begun to be paid to making technology accessible to persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. Accessibility requirements for persons with intellectual disabilities

included using consistent terminology; explaining the meaning of symbols; being consistent in the use of words; using readable fonts; having visible and intuitive controls; programming consistent software behaviour; providing enough time for reaction and simple instructions; and allowing personal interface choices. Such requirements embodied the principles of universal design and could also lead to longer lifespans for technological devices, and thus more sustainable consumption patterns.

57. The New Urban Agenda provided a vision for accessibility in infrastructure, housing, transport, and services; it also provided indications for implementation. However, implementation challenges still remained, especially with regard to the perceived need for resources. In fact, if accessibility was embedded in the construction process from the beginning, it could end up accounting for less than 1 per cent of total construction costs. Public money should only be spent when accessibility requirements were respected.

58. There were a number of successful policy frameworks around the world which shared some common elements. Successful frameworks embedded accessibility in legislation and combined protection from discrimination with coherent requirements for both the public and private sectors. Clear responsibilities were assigned to the various actors in the implementation chain, while realistic and adequate time frames for implementation were imposed. Practitioners were provided with guidance in the form of standards and technical documentation. Formal tools existed for monitoring implementation and providing feedback. Successful legislation contained effective enforcement and redress mechanisms that resulted in remedial actions when breaches were identified. It also involved persons with disabilities in implementation efforts and empowered them to participate in legislative enforcement. Finally, successful legislation included accessibility training for professionals, including architects and engineers, as well as preventative policies.

59. Since 2010, the Access City Award had been presented by the European Union to cities that had taken significant steps to improve accessibility. The great diversity of cities new and old that had received the award illustrated that it was possible to build accessible environments and provide ICTs and transportation services for persons with disabilities almost anywhere.

60. **Mr. Schefer** (Professor, University of Basel, Switzerland), panellist, said that the New Urban Agenda took note of the current and future demographic changes that would lead to a substantial increase in the urban population worldwide. It stressed the need for planning, designing, financing, developing, governing and managing cities in way that eradicated poverty, reduced inequality, and eliminated discrimination.

61. Cities should be thought of as experimental laboratories for the implementation of the Convention. Urban areas provided the opportunity to eliminate administrative boundaries and greatly reduced the need for coordination between various governmental bodies, allowing for coherent planning and designing, reducing the risk of confusing and inconsistent financing, and ensuring more transparent governance. Different urban areas could be used to experiment with different approaches and methods to implement the rights of persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, the implementation of the Convention was very often hampered by administrative complexities, vastly different geographical situations and competing governing bodies. However, such obstacles could be avoided with proper planning, especially in newly developed urban areas.

62. Inclusive development strategies should capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of persons and children with disabilities and their representative organizations through consultations and active involvement. Mere participation was not sufficient: it was necessary to fully integrate the particular perspectives of persons with disabilities in building processes from the very beginning of the planning stage. In order to promote such co-construction, the curricula regarding building processes and their management must be reformed. States could also provide relevant incentives to businesses and establish public procurement requirements to employ persons with disabilities as co-contractors.

63. **The representative of Kazakhstan** said that the participation of persons with disabilities should go beyond consultations. She had recently become a member of her city council and had used that leverage to make important changes: as a woman who used a wheelchair, she had ensured that funds were provided for diagnostic equipment to carry out mammograms and gynaecological examinations so that women with disabilities could receive necessary medical care; as a mother, she had ensured that playgrounds were made accessible for children with disabilities; and as a city dweller, she had managed to ensure that all new public transport would be accessible for persons with

disabilities. Persons with disabilities, and specifically women with disabilities, should play an active role in implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

64. **The representative of Qatar** said that the physical and psychological needs of persons with disabilities were not well understood in the Arab region, and thus the environment was not well-adapted to the basic needs of persons with disabilities. Public spaces were not accessible to them, and they faced many obstacles as a result of poor planning and design. Such obstacles directly impacted their lives and thwarted the enjoyment of their rights.

65. Architects and engineers, both globally and in the Arab region, did not take accessibility into account to a sufficient degree. That was due not only to a lack of legislation that compelled them to do so, but also because of a lack of awareness and the failure on the part of architectural and engineering schools to incorporate inclusive design principles. Accessible buildings, transportation and technology were a benefit for persons with disabilities, and also for other groups in society that would be helped by such improvements.

66. In recent years, Qatar had been undergoing a development renaissance, and the plans that had emerged from that process were based on development of human potential. Qatar had paid great attention in particular to inclusive education and health care and the right of access.

67. **The representative of Slovenia** said that the right to accessible built environments was protected in the Constitution of Slovenia. Her Government had adopted various acts and standards, as well as two successive action plans, to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in society. To achieve full accessibility, as prescribed by article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, inclusive urban development must go hand in hand with job offers, affordable housing and a robust network of support services. Nothing was more critical to de-institutionalization and community-based living than the financial independence of persons with disabilities. To that end, all stakeholders must ceaselessly combat prejudice and stereotypes. ICT should also become an integral element of inclusion. The challenge was to achieve full and consistent accessibility, in the public and especially the private sector.

68. Slovenia had various good practices that were worth sharing. The Federation of Disabled Workers of Slovenia had launched a project called A Disability-Friendly Municipality, under which a working group had developed an action plan for municipalities aimed

at raising awareness about disability issues and raising accessibility standards. The involvement of various social groups in the project resulted in actions and activities that would significantly improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities and their families.

69. Slovenia also had accessible tourism, mainly in the areas of wellness and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. Notably, the SENT Slovenian Association for Mental Health had been awarded the World Tourism Organization Ulysses award for innovation for its operation of the highly successful Premiki Travel Agency for Accessible Tourism.

70. In 2015 the Slovenian capital Ljubljana had received the bronze Access City Award for an accessible built environment, public transport and information, and for the variety of services and programmes available to persons with disabilities.

71. **The observer for Christian Blind Mission International** said that her organization was an international disability and development organization focused on developing an inclusive world. The work of Christian Blind Mission International, carried out with more than 350 partners and on various continents, included actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and, particularly, the New Urban Agenda. It supported the meaningful participation of partners from the global South in processes like the global monitoring of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals which took place at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

72. Full participation of organizations of persons with disabilities was critical to ensuring accessible living environments in urban settings. Women and girls with disabilities must be at the centre of efforts to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. To guarantee that progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals benefited persons with disabilities, there should be disability-inclusive indicators and data should be disaggregated. The short set of questions developed by the Washington Group should be used compare international data on progress towards the Goals in relation to persons with disabilities.

73. Christian Blind Mission International also worked with organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure inclusion in times of conflict and the aftermath of natural disasters. It was increasingly supporting mainstream humanitarian actors to become inclusive of persons with disabilities. Christian Blind Mission International would continue to support implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai

Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

74. **The representative of Bulgaria** said that accessibility must be mainstreamed in disability policies. Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria and home to many of its citizens, was making a concerted effort to make public transport and infrastructure accessible. However, assessing the social impact of accessible infrastructure and measuring how many persons with disabilities benefited from it represented an enormous challenge.

75. **The observer for Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil (Brazilian Bar Association)** said that the New Urban Agenda could not be achieved without access to justice for all. The judiciary system as a whole must be accessible so that Governments could be challenged if they failed to implement their national or local development policies.

76. In its concluding observations on the initial report of Brazil, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had suggested that in addition to the Government, members of the legal profession should consider and take action on its recommendations. The Committee's observation regarding the inaccessibility of judicial facilities was of particular concern. Its recommendation that the Government should replace the system of substituted decision-making with a supported decision-making model, in full conformity with article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, must be implemented.

77. The Brazilian Bar Association was active in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities; it did so through its own national commission on the rights of persons with disabilities, established in 2008, and its membership of several Brazilian human rights bodies. It was very closely following the measures taken by the Brazilian Government to make effective the new inclusion law.

78. **The observer for Escola de Gente** said that her organization worked to achieve the inclusion of persons with disabilities, especially in poor communities, by strengthening accessibility across Brazil, including in the Amazon region. The inaccessibility of means of communication and the built environment in New York was striking; several rights of persons with disabilities were being violated.

79. Escola de Gente had launched a global campaign, in collaboration with several partners, whose message was that not ensuring accessibility was inherently criminal. Like all other spaces, United Nations

premises should be monitored for accessibility. Persons with disabilities had the right to the whole planet.

80. **The representative of Morocco** said that persons with disabilities had the right to more and easier independent access to public spaces, housing and public infrastructure. Not only was the exclusion of persons with disabilities a serious violation of their fundamental rights, it undermined countries' efforts aimed at economic growth, human development and poverty reduction. The guidelines and recommendations, means of implementation and follow-up and monitoring framework contained in the New Urban Agenda made it a useful road map for the next 20 years.

81. To improve their social mobility, the law in Morocco stipulated that persons with disabilities would benefit from the housing programmes available to the most economically deprived citizens. Persons with disabilities should be active participants in the development and management of urban spaces. Lastly, the exchange of good practices and national capacity building — especially for developing countries — remained vital in order to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

82. **The representative of Mexico** said that by the middle of the twenty-first century, four out of every five persons would be living in towns and cities. The unprecedented challenge posed by urbanization was intimately linked to development; growth must be sustainable and benefit all individuals. Through the New Urban Agenda diverse stakeholders such as Member States, multilateral organizations, local governments, the private sector and civil society could be brought together to find solutions to the complex challenge of urbanization.

83. Her Government had participated actively in the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), helping develop the New Urban Agenda, which was based on an innovative vision of inclusive, safe and sustainable cities, and which would supersede the current model of urbanization, where persons with disabilities suffered a widespread lack of access to the built environment, basic services and ICT. In its role as co-facilitator of the Conference, her Government had actively promoted three principles that underpinned the New Urban Agenda: the right to the city, gender equality and universal accessibility.

84. Ensuring universal accessibility was important because according to studies carried out by the World Health Organization, everyone would spend, on average, more than six years of their life living with

some sort of disability. Technology had a key role to play in sustainable urban development, including in the areas of mobility and transport, urban planning, public management and capacity building.

85. **The representative of Canada** said that her Government had fought to have groups such as youth, women, children, immigrants, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community officially recognized in the New Urban Agenda, the implementation of which required collaboration and coordination between all actors, including academia, Governments and civil society. Work towards the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda should be predicated on the knowledge that building a more fair, inclusive and equitable society started with understanding the difficulties faced by all citizens.

86. Canada had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010 and continued to fight for the rights that it protected. Forthcoming accessibility legislation, based on consultations with over 6,000 Canadians, would help to build a more inclusive Canada. In addition, the Government had recently announced investments of \$180 billion in accessible infrastructure.

87. **Mr. Pellegrini** (National Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry for Human Rights, Brazil) said that in Brazil, public policies were developed in partnership with civil society, which helped the country to advance. His Government's commitment to inclusion was demonstrated by its legislation, which had been drafted in consultation with persons with disabilities across the country. Although Brazil had made significant progress, issues related to persons with disabilities sometimes caused controversy, making it difficult for mayors to implement important changes. Brazil had signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and that was reflected in its legislation.

88. **The representative of China** said that his Government had, in 2012, introduced regulations on constructing barrier-free infrastructure and environments in cities for the benefit of persons with disabilities, and had arranged for special funds each year to support modification projects for one million households having persons with disabilities, at no cost to them. More and more such persons were enjoying the benefits of urban development. His Government fully supported the concept of inclusive development set forth in the New Urban Agenda. However, the Agenda had made only limited reference to persons with disabilities, and fell short of meeting their

expectations towards urban life. China called on Governments to devote more attention to persons with disabilities and formulate specific solutions and policies for them during the process of implementation of the Agenda, so as to allow them to enjoy a better life in cities.

89. **The representative of Norway** said that his Government accorded high priority to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in particular with respect to persons with disabilities. Accessibility, and environments that were safe and easy to use, were important components of the Norwegian vision of a society where everyone could participate. To achieve its vision, the Government was launching a third National Action Plan. Societies benefited from everyone being able to contribute. Their social and economic sustainability depended on as many people as possible possessing the skills needed to work and live active, independent lives. Universal design was particularly important for persons with disabilities.

90. **The representative of Portugal** said that there had been accessibility legislation in Portugal since 1997. In 2006 the existing law had been replaced by a stricter and more comprehensive accessibility law, which made it obligatory for all public spaces, public facilities and public and residential buildings to comply with the relevant standards. Access was a critical component of citizenship for persons with disabilities. After the adoption of the new accessibility legislation, the Government had enacted other laws in support of the rights of persons with disabilities, including an anti-discrimination law.

91. **The observer for Tribunal da Contas da União (Federal Court of Accounts of Brazil)** said that the Tribunal da Contas da União monitored government action related to accessibility. Its auditing procedures included regulations that ensured accountability for all actions related to accessibility, and it promoted audits of public buildings and service spaces with a view to generating recommendations on the elimination of any barriers to access. It had also promoted several actions that would facilitate the improvement of the services provided by the administration system in order to create a more inclusive society.

92. **The representative of Senegal** said that accessibility was covered by national legislation in her country; notably, the Building Code included provisions on the accessibility of public buildings. The value of advocacy, which formed part of the national plan for disability, could not be overstated: all sectors of society should be involved in advocacy addressed

both to Governments and civil society concerning urban mobility infrastructure, the built environment, and any other area where accessibility was needed. In addition, the accessibility standards established by the International Organization for Standardization should be disseminated. Lastly, developing countries should receive support to improve accessibility.

93. **The representative of Sierra Leone** said that the Persons with Disability Act, 2011 made it mandatory for all public facilities and amenities in Sierra Leone to be accessible. The Act also established the National Commission for Persons with Disability, which was responsible for issuing adjustment orders, when necessary, to the proprietors of public buildings and means of public transportation. Recently, the National Commission for Persons with Disability had enlisted the help of the national parliament, and the United Nations Development Programme, to better ensure strict compliance with accessibility provisions. The Ministry of Works and Infrastructure had established a committee on accessibility, which would ensure that all buildings conformed to the Building Code, to guarantee that persons with disabilities were able to access all public facilities. Each new building that was constructed, especially learning institutions, should be disability-friendly.

94. **The representative of the Sudan** said that, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sudan had taken resolute action to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities in urban spaces. In 2017 a law that contained special provisions for persons with disabilities had been promulgated. The accessibility of public buildings had been improved, and building codes for projects carried out under the National Fund for Housing and Development had been updated to provide for increased accessibility. Public transport had been made more accessible, and certain services provided for persons with disabilities were not taxed.

95. **The representative of Guinea** said that his Government was following up its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with important measures: it was in the process of adopting a law that promoted and protected the rights of persons with disabilities, negotiations to determine quotas for employing persons with disabilities in both the public and private sectors were under way, and an action plan for the period 2016-2020, designed to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities were met, had been drawn up. Inclusive international and national consultations on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals had been held, with the active participation of persons with disabilities. Provisions

were being drafted for the implementation of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities 2010-2019. Lastly, access to free health care for persons with disabilities was becoming a reality.

96. **The representative of the Netherlands** said that the Dutch Government had recently finalized its implementation plan for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The plan consisted of five tracks, one of which centred on local implementation. Multiple municipal governments in the Netherlands were holding town hall meetings with residents, persons with disabilities and local business owners about how to make their cities inclusive, a best practice worth sharing as it could support the development of inclusive cities in the future.

97. **The representative of Turkey** said that persons with disabilities should actively participate in the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda, in order to ensure that urban development resulted in more accessible and inclusive cities. His Government had taken action to increase the social participation of persons with disabilities and improve accessibility; for example it had amended the Turkish Disability Act to guarantee that the opinions of persons with disabilities, their families and representative organizations were taken into account in decision-making processes, including regarding service provision. As a result of the amendment, persons with disabilities could participate in city councils, thereby playing a greater role in urban policy development and implementation. In addition, it had become mandatory for all public transport, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, open spaces, sports facilities, buildings and other infrastructure to be accessible by persons with disabilities.

98. **The representative of Thailand** said that her Government remained committed to the New Urban Agenda, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Incheon Strategy and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act, B.E. 2550 (2007) called for accessible public parks, communities, transport, and houses; assistive technology and devices; and the employment of persons with disabilities. However, much work remained to be done to enable the full social and economic participation of persons with disabilities.

99. **The representative of Ecuador** said that leaving no one behind was not enough: those most in need, who had been the victims of exclusive and perverse models of development — the poor and specifically the

most vulnerable, persons with disabilities — must be prioritized. The New Urban Agenda must be implemented to ensure equal rights and opportunities, social and cultural diversity, and accessible and inclusive public spaces. His Government continued to hold meetings to determine how access for persons with disabilities to the physical environment of cities could be facilitated, in line with paragraph 36 of the Agenda.

100. **The representative of Namibia** said that the making cities inclusive posed a practical challenge in her country. Resources were limited so it was impossible to get everything done; the need for inclusivity vied with the need to ensure access to other services; and poverty, which affected everyone, including persons with disabilities, made it difficult to accomplish goals. She asked how Governments could overcome the challenges of resource limitations to create inclusive cities.

101. **The representative of Malawi** said that the Ministry of Gender in Malawi, in coordination with the Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi and the Malawi Council for the Handicapped, had developed a set of national standards for the accessibility and usability of the built environment. The Government was working to ensure that those responsible for infrastructure and buildings abided by the standards so that persons with disabilities were not left behind. The Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi was involved in all infrastructure projects, to guarantee that the built environment met the needs of persons with disabilities.

102. **The observer for the National Human Rights Commission of Korea** said that his organization had been established in 2001 as an independent national body. Every year beginning in 2009, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea had monitored the accessibility of public and private spaces including universities, hotels, banks, and cultural and sports facilities. In 2016, the Commission had appointed 178 persons with disabilities and members of civil society to monitor six key regional areas across the country, including Seoul. The teams had evaluated the accessibility of 245 public buildings such as post offices and job centres, and 168 large-scale retail facilities. They had then shared their findings with the organizations, 96 per cent of which had submitted improvement plans to the Commission. The Commission had made recommendations to the Government on the basis of its assessments, and it continued to monitor adherence to accessibility standards across the Republic of Korea, including through the use of surveys.

103. **Ms. Placencia** (Senior Expert, Disability and Inclusion Unit, European Commission) said that interrelated and complementary approaches were needed to measure the impact of accessibility. Technical monitoring of accessibility should be combined with surveys on satisfaction and access, and feedback on remaining barriers from persons with disabilities.

104. With regard to overcoming resource limitations, creating accessible cities must be a step-by-step process. Governments should start by using the minimum resources possible. They should use public procurement to construct new buildings, enforce existing standards and clarify obligations. It was important to ensure that accessibility remained an instrument for ensuring equal access for persons with disabilities and did not become politicized.

105. **Mr. Schefer** (Professor, University of Basel, Switzerland) said that money was always scarce; it was necessary to have action plans that covered the overall issues that needed to be addressed in order to allocate funding in the most effective way.

106. **Mr. Tororei** (Commissioner, National Land Commission and Director, Kenya Society for the Blind) said that during the discussion, persons with disabilities had not demanded active participation in the governance of cities and urban areas. Kenya was making great progress in that area with the new Urban Areas and Cities Act, which stipulated that persons with disabilities must be represented in all councils and boards for urban areas and cities; it would be interesting to see how the law strengthened inclusion.

107. The most excluded persons with disabilities were those who lived in informal settlements, and yet informal settlements and the way they fit into urban development had not been discussed. The conference on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should undertake to address that issue.

108. **Mr. Simon** (civil society), Co-Chair, said that the session had underscored the essential nature of the participation of persons with disabilities in any analysis of inclusive urban development, and any relevant initiative or step taken toward such inclusion. Indeed, participation was the best way to foster the inclusion of all disadvantaged groups, not only of persons with disabilities.

109. Urban development must be for all; infrastructure and services, in particular transport and communication technologies, must be accessible by all. The New

Urban Agenda promoted the active participation and inclusion in society of persons with disabilities. It was necessary to determine how to implement locally what had been agreed at the global level. There was currently a great opportunity to make progress, taking inspiration from the experiments and practices that had been discussed during the session and others.

110. **Mr. Torres** (Ecuador), Co-Chair, said that major cities and transport networks must be built for mankind. Solidarity and the basic principles of full participation and inclusion must underlie planning in order for cities to be built to be accessible. A school, church or carpark was not accessible unless everyone could get to it using accessible transport. States must ensure full participation and solidarity in their planning. The financing for inclusion was there; only the will was missing. Everyone was invited to build a better world for all human beings.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.