



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

Tenth session

New York, 13–15 June 2017

Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 June 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Sinirlioğlu** (Turkey), speaking also on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Australia, said that the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a welcome step, as their participation was integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Further efforts must be made to integrate the rights, perspectives and needs of persons with disabilities in policies and programmes aimed at implementing the Convention. It was important, therefore, to consult and actively involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development and implementation of legislation and policies and other decision-making processes.

2. Persons with disabilities continued to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, which infringed their human rights and fundamental freedoms and hampered their full and effective participation and inclusion in society. Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia were determined to work with their global partners and with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

3. Persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected in situations of risk, such as armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies or natural disasters. Large movements of refugees and migrants had demonstrated the urgent need for inclusive humanitarian action. In addition, inclusive urban development policies should be promoted to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

4. Noting the importance of international cooperation in support of national efforts to implement the Convention, he said that the goal of leaving no one behind required firm action at the global, regional and national levels. Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia were committed to taking appropriate and effective measures in that regard.

5. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that his delegation welcomed the inclusion of disability as a cross-cutting issue in the Sustainable Development Goals, as disability issues had been absent from the Millennium Development Goals. In Azerbaijan, persons with disabilities accounted for 5.5 per cent of the population. His Government was committed to creating

a more equal and inclusive society so that persons with disabilities could realize their full potential.

6. The country's main strategy paper, "Azerbaijan 2020: The Vision of the Future", contained specific provisions on protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Effective implementation of the national action plan for the period 2014–2018 was yielding positive results. The Government attached great importance to increasing monthly pensions and disability benefits, introducing vocational training, supporting job creation and promoting entrepreneurship, for instance by granting loans to persons with disabilities. Inclusive education had also been introduced to enable children with special needs to receive schooling at home.

7. The Committee had considered the country's initial report in 2014 and had commended the Government for initiating a number of state programmes and ensuring accessibility to court buildings. In addition, progress had been made in incorporating the Convention into domestic legislation. A working group comprising representatives from line ministries and non-governmental organizations had been established under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population to coordinate its implementation, while the Office of the Ombudsman was responsible for independent monitoring.

8. **Mr. Mohd Hazli Bin Ahmad** (Malaysia) said that even before Malaysia had ratified the Convention in 2010, the country had developed a Policy and Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities, which had come into force in 2008. In 2016 it had been revised to take into account the country's commitments under the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

9. The revised Policy and Plan of Action committed Malaysia to building a stronger policy framework to mainstream disability issues and ensure the effective participation in society of persons with disabilities by 2022. In that connection, he noted that the empowerment and well-being of persons with disabilities was the responsibility of all, including ministries, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.

10. The Persons with Disabilities Act had also come into force in 2008. It provided for the registration, protection, rehabilitation and development of persons with disabilities, with a view to ensuring their well-being and allowing them to achieve their full potential. The Act had also provided for the establishment of a National Council for Persons with Disabilities, which

was responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Policy and Plan of Action.

11. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development supported the New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). The Ministry was committed to promoting inclusive urban development and recognized the importance of incorporating universal design principles to ensure the accessibility of infrastructure, in particular for persons with disabilities, elderly persons and pregnant women. The importance of universal design for strengthening inclusivity had been acknowledged in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan and the Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities for the period 2016–2022.

12. **Mr. Eisa** (Observer for Gedaref Digital City Organization) said that Gedaref Digital City Organization was a public-private partnership founded with the help of the digital city of Eindhoven, the Netherlands, and supported by the state government of Al-Gedaref, the Sudan. With help from Dutch volunteers and other partners, the organization sought to use information and communications technology (ICT) for community development.

13. The organization was guided by the Convention, in particular articles 9, 12, 21, 24, 27, 30–32 and 38. It was contributing to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and working to implement the action lines of the World Summit on the Information Society and the 10 principles of the United Nations Global Compact. It also worked with the International Telecommunication Union, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme to connect persons with disabilities in the Arab world through ICT, in addition to its work with other organizations such as the Telecentre Foundation.

14. Gedaref Digital City Organization had established three centres for persons with disabilities and provided persons with disabilities with home computers. In order to improve training, capacity-building and skills development and to share knowledge, experiences and best practices, the organization had participated in many national, regional and international conferences. Nevertheless, while much progress had been made, the organization faced many challenges. ICT was not part of the culture in the Sudan and there was resistance to change. Moreover, ICT was not a priority for persons with disabilities, more than 80 per cent of whom were extremely poor.

15. **Mr. Karimu** (Togo) said that there were close to 900,000 persons with disabilities in Togo, out of a total population of 6 million. Together with partners and civil

society, the Government had developed a number of strategies and taken large-scale action to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

16. At the legislative level, a revised draft law on the social protection of persons with disabilities was under review. At the strategic level, the 2015–2017 programme budget of the Social Action, Advancement of Women and Literacy Ministry had taken into consideration the concerns of persons with disabilities, in particular in the areas related to strengthening the access of vulnerable people to a protective and enabling environment, preventing poverty and enhancing the accessibility of basic social services.

17. In addition, a social and professional integration programme for persons with disabilities had been developed; the national community-based action policy, which addressed the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, had been revised; and inclusive education had been integrated into the teacher training curriculum.

18. A total of 10 specialized care centres for children with intellectual disabilities had been fully subsidized; subsidies had been increased for 17 specialized institutes responsible for children with other disabilities; 644 teachers had been trained in inclusive education; 295 health workers and 143 social workers had received training on disability issues, inclusive community development and gender; a community-based rehabilitation programme for children with disabilities had provided 80 access ramps for rural clinics and schools so that an additional 174 children could attend school; and women with disabilities had been given access to credit through the National Fund for Inclusive Finance.

19. **Ms. Kone** (Mali) said that her country was committed to creating an enabling environment that would ensure that persons with disabilities could thrive and had made considerable efforts to promote and protect their rights. A number of legislative and regulatory measures had been adopted, such as the General Civil Service Statute, which set out positive discrimination measures aimed at helping persons with disabilities to secure employment in the civil service. Various policies and programmes on social protection, employment, vocational training, humanitarian action, sanitation and community-based rehabilitation had also been developed.

20. In addition, Mali had adopted a Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities for the period from 2015 to 2024. The Plan covered issues including health care, rehabilitation, education, decent work and social protection and was intended to

guarantee the full participation of persons with disabilities and ensure that they had equal opportunities.

21. Women and children with disabilities were a priority and had adequate legal protection against exploitation, violence and abuse. In order to improve inclusion, the Government was working with a number of civil society organizations, including the Malian Federation of Associations of Persons with Disabilities, which sought to promote non-discrimination and the full participation of persons with disabilities.

22. **Mr. Sapala** (Malawi) said that, in accordance with the Convention, section 20(1) of the Constitution of Malawi prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, while section 30(1) enshrined the right of all persons to economic, social, cultural and political development, in particular women, children and persons with disabilities. The Disability Act of 2012 provided for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities through the promotion and protection of their rights.

23. Malawi had also developed a national disability mainstreaming strategy, made institutional arrangements to promote disability issues at the national level, conducted capacity-building through training on disability mainstreaming, drawn up a multisectoral plan of action for children with disabilities, developed national standards to ensure the accessibility and usability of the built environment, and mainstreamed disability in the national disaster response plan.

24. Despite such achievements, however, in Malawi persons with albinism continued to be abducted and killed, and their remains exhumed for body parts. Measures were being taken to address such atrocities, which had been strongly condemned by the President of Malawi. The Government had reviewed the Penal Code, introduced stiffer penalties, intensified security, strengthened community policing and conducted awareness-raising and research. Noting that resource constraints continued to be a challenge, he said that the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund had provided financial support for some areas of the response plan.

25. **Mr. AlKadi** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government had approved several pieces of legislation that promoted the rights of persons with disabilities. That legislation included a national project to address attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, autism, developmental disorders and to provide early medical detection of metabolic disorders in newborns. The Government had established 38 comprehensive

rehabilitation centres in various areas of the Kingdom and had staffed them with specialists and had also approved programmes for home-based health care. The Saudi Arabian Federation for Sports for Special Needs had established 15 training centres that provided facilities for all sports, and the Saudi special needs team had won the International Federation for Intellectual Impairment Sport World Football Championships three years in a row.

26. In addition, persons with disabilities were entitled to various State benefits, such as a monthly stipend. Prosthetic devices and hearing aids were free of charge. Transportation was accessible to persons with disabilities at reduced fares. The Government provided medical and psychological care, and persons with disabilities were granted specially equipped vehicles. Persons with disabilities were employed in the government sector, and the private sector was given incentives to hire them. Persons with disabilities could receive an education at both specialized institutes and regular schools.

27. **Ms. Kayess** (Observer for People with Disability Australia and the National Association of Community Legal Centres) said that the call for "nothing about us without us", which had been heard frequently during the tenth session, was not new. The call had been a key demand of organizations of persons with disabilities during the negotiations on the Convention. It was time to move beyond slogans and give substance to the claim of making persons with disabilities part of the policy discourse. States had an obligation to work closely with, consult and include persons with disabilities in implementation, monitoring and decision-making. Persons with disabilities must be included throughout the policy cycle, from design and planning to implementation and evaluation.

28. Drawing attention to article 31 of the Convention, on statistics and data collection, she said that high-quality data was essential for effective implementation. That required strong and effective engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, who must be allowed to define the policy questions and inform the evidence base.

29. All efforts to meet those obligations must be based on respect, transparency and the principle of fit for purpose. Respect meant acknowledging the leadership, work and expertise of organizations of persons with disabilities and ensuring that they had sufficient resources to engage effectively. Noting that States should be transparent about utilizing the expertise of persons with disabilities, she said that there must be

clarity around terms such as consultation, partnership and co-design and what such policy processes involved.

30. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that the realization of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities and their full and effective participation and inclusion in society was a priority for Maldives. Immediately after ratifying the Convention in 2010, Maldives had enacted the Disability Act, which integrated the provisions of the Convention into the national policy agenda. The Maldives Disability Council had subsequently been established and was responsible for compiling and updating a national database on persons with disabilities.

31. While the Millennium Development Goals had failed to mention persons with disabilities, the 2030 Agenda referenced persons with disabilities in five of the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, it was now accepted that policies that were inclusive of persons with disabilities were a sound investment in society as a whole and that excluding persons with disabilities from development programmes had considerable economic and social costs.

32. His Government placed particular emphasis on ensuring that persons with disabilities had access to education, health care and employment. The “No Child Left Behind” education policy focused on inclusivity and equal opportunity, while the universal health-care programme ensured that persons with disabilities had access to health care. In addition, a number of programmes had been developed to help persons with disabilities to find employment and the Government employed persons with disabilities in State owned companies.

33. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, according to article 81 of his country’s Constitution, persons with disabilities or special needs had the right to the full and autonomous exercise of their abilities and to integration into their families and communities. The State, with the participation of families and society, guaranteed them respect for their human dignity, equality of opportunity and satisfactory working conditions, and would promote their training, education and access to employment. In addition, his country had enacted a disability law that reflected the move towards inclusive public policies and the changing perception of persons with disabilities.

34. The Misión José Gregorio Hernández, one of the country’s social initiatives, ran inclusive social programmes designed to help vulnerable individuals and safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities. It provided comprehensive free health care to all persons with disabilities, whether the disability was the result of

a genetic disorder, a medical condition or an accident, with priority given to those who were economically vulnerable or lived in remote areas. In addition, the country boasted 44 primary education centres for children with disabilities, 341 schools for persons with intellectual disabilities, 19 schools for persons with visual impairments, 6 schools for persons with other forms of disability and 52 educational centres in hospitals.

35. **Mr. Regenass** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that armed conflict was a major cause of disability. Not only did weapons of war inflict physical and psychosocial impairments, but conflict also erected new barriers around persons with pre-existing physical, mental and intellectual impairments. ICRC worked with people who were coming to terms with war-related impairments, such as the loss of a limb, and people whose untreated preventable or chronic diseases had left them incapacitated.

36. Modern conflict involved high numbers of explosive weapons, often in densely populated urban areas, resulting in an epidemic of impairment. ICRC called on all parties to armed conflicts to conduct hostilities in conformity with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to avoid the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area in densely populated zones.

37. Noting that the provision of rehabilitation services could influence the impact of a person’s disability, he said that ICRC was working with 34 States to develop modern rehabilitation services. He urged States to allocate more resources for persons with disabilities during and after armed conflicts to meet rising need and capitalize on heightened awareness. In that connection, he drew attention to the Humanitarian Impact Bond, an innovative investment fund intended to reduce the limitations of persons with disabilities.

38. Armed conflict also multiplied disabling barriers for persons with pre-existing impairments by destroying accessible accommodation and preventing access to vital services, information and social networks. Persons with disabilities were often excluded from community protection strategies, such as flight or concealment, humanitarian assessments and aid distributions. States must ensure that basic services remained accessible to persons with disabilities, with a view to lowering such barriers.

39. **Ms. Gough** (Observer for the New Zealand Human Rights Commission) said that the Commission, an “A” status national human rights institution, was responsible for promoting the Convention and

monitoring its implementation in formal partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities. She urged other national human rights institutions and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions to involve persons with disabilities in all aspects of their work and to engage in and add value to debates on disability rights.

40. Data were essential for implementing the Convention and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. A tool must be put in place to collect disaggregated disability data, and it was important to be transparent about the shortcomings of any tool adopted.

41. Welcoming the increased participation of organizations of persons with disabilities, she said that the Commission supported calls to develop general comments on articles 4.3 and 33 of the Convention. The Commission also welcomed the adoption of General comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education. The importance of inclusion should be reflected in all general comments, including draft general comment No. 5 on the right to independent living.

42. In the spirit of “nothing about us without us”, persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and neurological disorders should be better represented at future sessions and the membership of the Committee should be more diverse. In the elections due to take place in 2018, the Commission would support women candidates and those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and neurological disorders.

43. There had been little progress in legislation policy and practice on supported decision-making. The use of forced treatment, seclusion, restraint and detention was a major problem. Society had yet to learn from the horrific historic abuse that had occurred in institutions.

44. **Ms. Hartley** (Observer for the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)) said that every day more than 15 people fell victim to landmines and other explosive remnants of war. For those who survived, life was often profoundly difficult as they had to adapt to physical and psychological disabilities while living in a conflict or post-conflict setting. Survivors had specific needs and requirements that must not be forgotten when considering the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities.

45. UNMAS acted as a voice for survivors and provided practical assistance, such as helping victims to earn a living. On the first anniversary of the World Humanitarian Summit, the Secretary-General had said that all people should have access to humanitarian assistance and protection in their time of need, and have

the opportunity to thrive in the long term. UNMAS put that goal into practice across the world.

46. Persons with disabilities living in fragile, war-torn communities were at great risk of being left behind. UNMAS was determined to continue its work to realize the vision of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013–2018 of a world where the human rights and needs of mine and explosive remnants of war victims were met and survivors were fully integrated as equal members of their societies.

47. **Ms. Alghaib** (Observer for the International Disability and Development Consortium) said that the Consortium was a grouping of over 20 non-governmental organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities that worked in more than 100 countries. The Consortium’s four strategic priorities were advocacy, capacity development, collaboration in the global South and organizational development. Specifically, its goal was to ensure that international cooperation was inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

48. To achieve that goal, the Consortium worked in partnership with a number of organizations, in particular the International Disability Alliance. The two organizations engaged in broad programmatic activities, including follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, monitoring and implementation of the Convention (with a particular focus on countries in the global South), capacity-building of organizations of persons with disabilities in the global South, data collection and disaggregation, humanitarian preparedness and response, disaster risk reduction and gender equality.

49. The two organizations had also developed an intensive training programme called BRIDGE CRPD-SDG, which was supported by the Disability Rights Fund. The programme was intended to help organizations of persons with disabilities and disability rights advocates to develop an inclusive and comprehensive perspective on development, with a view to strengthening their advocacy efforts.

50. To achieve the goal of leaving no one behind, partnerships must be formed to make use of existing knowledge and expertise. In that connection, the Consortium would continue to support partnerships such as the Global Action on Disability Network and the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

51. **Ms. Longcroft** (Observer for the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) said that WIPO was working to increase access to knowledge and educational opportunities for the 285 million persons worldwide who were blind, visually impaired or

otherwise print disabled. The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, which had been adopted in 2013, provided a legal framework for the production and transfer of accessible books across national borders. To date, it had been ratified by 28 countries.

52. One of the initiatives taken to implement the Marrakesh Treaty was the Accessible Books Consortium, which had been launched in 2014. A public-private partnership led by WIPO, the Consortium brought together organizations representing persons who were print disabled, such as the World Blind Union; libraries for the blind; standards bodies; organizations representing authors and publishers; and collective management organizations. Its goal was to increase the number of books available worldwide in accessible formats.

53. The Consortium had established projects in seven developing and least developed countries to provide training, technical assistance and funding for the production of accessible educational materials in national languages. The Consortium had also developed an online database of accessible books, known as the Global Book Service, through which participating libraries for the blind could supplement their collections free of charge.

54. States should support such initiatives by providing training and funding for the production of accessible books and the purchase of reading devices, and by facilitating the participation of libraries in the Global Book Service. The Marrakesh Treaty and the Accessible Books Consortium were strategically aligned with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goals 4, 9 and 10.

55. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Observer for the International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the involvement of employers and workers was fundamental for implementing the Convention. ILO coordinated the Global Business and Disability Network, which brought together multinational companies, business networks and non-governmental organizations. With its support, national networks of disability-inclusive companies had been established in Bangladesh and Indonesia and activities were being organized in Peru, South Africa and the United States of America.

56. A guide for companies on reasonable accommodation in the workplace had been launched. In addition, ILO was working with the United Nations Global Compact to produce a guide on how to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the private sector. A number of activities involving trade

union representatives from around the world had been organized to mobilize support for persons with disabilities and strengthen their representative organizations.

57. ILO was working with the United Nations family, civil society and the Washington Group on Disability Statistics to improve the availability of reliable and comparable labour market statistics and disaggregated data. At the International Labour Conference, the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), had been adopted, replacing Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation, 1944 (No. 71). The new recommendation addressed employment rights in crisis situations and the needs of persons with disabilities. ILO was also carrying out a standard-setting process on violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work, which included references to persons with disabilities.

58. **Mr. Abdallah** (Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities) said that his organization represented 16 Arab States and worked on urging the Governments of the region to ratify and implement the Convention and to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. It also urged those Governments to adopt a human rights model rather than a medical and charity model towards persons with disabilities.

59. The Organization worked to train persons with disabilities and empower women with disabilities. For many years now, his organization had been dealing with the consequences of the greatest outbreak of violence that the Arab region had ever seen. That violence had turned millions into refugees and caused tens of thousands of disabilities. He implored States parties and international actors to stand with his organization and help it respond to the violence that had affected the lives of so many refugees, including, in particular, persons with disabilities. He hoped that donor States would adopt inclusive standards so as to enable persons with disabilities to receive aid.

60. **Ms. Joshi** (Observer for the Ballerina Management Institute, India) said that the Ballerina Management Institute was a non-governmental organization that carried out advocacy for persons with disabilities and their families in India, in particular persons who were visually impaired. One of the Institute's main goals was to raise awareness in the home, in the workplace and at schools and universities, because lack of awareness was one of the reasons that people were unsympathetic to disability issues. In remote areas, there was a particular lack of awareness of the issues faced by persons with disabilities and how to address them.

61. The Institute's awareness-raising activities included producing documentaries and publishing braille magazines that covered domestic and global events. The Institute also provided colourful tactile books for visually impaired children who were unable to attend school or afford books.

Interactive dialogue between States parties and the United Nations system on the implementation of the Convention

62. **The President** said that the panellists would provide briefings on their work to support Member States and major stakeholders in promoting inclusive development and the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities.

63. **Ms. Yang Wenyan** (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), speaking on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said that her Department was the focal point within the United Nations system on disability. Its main activities in that regard constituted providing substantive and technical support to intergovernmental processes on disability; building and strengthening networks of experts and practitioners; technical cooperation and capacity-building on disability-related matters; mainstreaming disability issues within the United Nations; conducting research and analysis; and promoting awareness of the Convention.

64. Over the past year, the Department had focused on identifying and building upon the interlinkages between the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. Among other initiatives, it had organized a high-level forum on disability inclusion and accessible urban development at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in October 2016.

65. With regard to disability mainstreaming within the United Nations system, the Department was co-Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and promoted coordination among almost 30 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. It also continued to lead an informal network of United Nations departments and offices with the aim of improving accessibility, which had resulted in the development of the first policy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in United Nations work.

66. In addition to its analytical work in support of intergovernmental processes, the Department was leading preparations for the first United Nations flagship report on disability and development, to be published in 2018. The report would serve as an

evidence base for disability-inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

67. In the area of technical cooperation and capacity-building, the Department supported Government efforts to implement disability-inclusive legislation, policies and programmes. Over the past year, the Statistics Division had conducted five regional workshops on disability statistics and had begun updating the United Nations Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics.

68. Lastly, in terms of outreach, the Department produced a monthly newsletter on disability in several languages and had over 15,000 subscribers, while the official website of the secretariat of the Convention, United Nations Enable, and its Facebook and Twitter accounts continued to serve as global information hubs on disability.

69. **Ms. Puri** (Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) said that every country, whether rich or poor, experienced the intersectionality of gender and disability. Disability was more prevalent among women, occurring at a rate of almost 20 per cent versus 12 per cent among men. Some of the contributory factors were lower economic and social status, violence, and demographic ageing. The intersectionality was particularly relevant in the global South, where needs and barriers appeared to be greater. When considering the issue of disability from the perspective of gender equality and women's empowerment, therefore, the entire spectrum of human rights must be taken into account, including political and civil rights and social and economic rights. There was an interface between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular with regard to monitoring.

70. UN-Women had evolved, and the organization wished to place its work on disability on a more systematic and systemic footing, which would be reflected in its strategic plan for 2018–2021. In addition, it was developing a disability marker to inform its programmes and investments. UN-Women had also pledged to make the gender equality compact embedded in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals disability-responsive.

71. As part of its advocacy activities, UN-Women aimed to highlight disability issues such as equal access to physical infrastructure, cultural openness to inclusion and protection from violence and discrimination.

Empowerment involved realization of the full potential of all women and girls with disabilities, in contrast to some of the other concepts traditionally used in the discourses on disability and gender, such as protection and guardianship. It was therefore vital to emphasize the independence and legal capacity of women and girls with disabilities, and a suitable environment would be needed to make that a reality.

72. With regard to statistics on gender and disability, UN-Women encouraged the use of the Washington Group's questions and supported data disaggregation, global monitoring of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to improve data quality.

73. In programming terms, UN-Women country offices promoted the development of synergies between the gender equality and disability inclusion agendas. In Morocco, for example, UN-Women had supported a baseline gender analysis and the inclusion of gender-specific indicators in a national plan on the rights of persons with disabilities. The organization supported leadership by women with disabilities and their participation in decision-making, and in that regard, urged Member States to nominate women for election to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

74. Lastly, the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities must be addressed in order to fulfil the pledge to leave no one behind. It was the supreme responsibility of the United Nations system to support Member States in every area of its work in order to truly realize the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

75. **Ms. Funk** (World Health Organization), speaking on behalf of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said that the Support Group was a network tasked with advancing implementation of the Convention and increasing the scale and effectiveness of United Nations involvement in disability issues. It was composed of around 30 United Nations agencies, along with other stakeholders, and was currently chaired by the World Health Organization.

76. Over the past year, the Support Group had promoted the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the implementation of the Convention through its four working groups. Two of the working groups were closely aligned with the sub-themes of the tenth session of the Conference, since they focused on article 11 of the Convention and on women and girls with disabilities. A third working group was exploring criteria for compliance with the Convention in existing community initiatives implemented by members of the Support Group, while

a working group on the proposed system-wide action plan on disability was examining the possibility of using the plan to address challenges in implementing the Convention.

77. To ensure that no one was left behind, the Support Group worked at the national, regional and international levels to promote a non-discriminatory approach and to facilitate dialogue among the United Nations agencies on policy and capacity-building. The working group on women and girls with disabilities aimed to mainstream gender and the rights of persons with disabilities, and to support leadership by and participation of women and girls with disabilities.

78. In the area of humanitarian action, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action had been endorsed at the World Humanitarian Summit, including by organizations of persons with disabilities. She wished to acknowledge the work of the former Chair of the Support Group, UNHCR, which had led the process under the guidance of its Disability Adviser. The creation of that role had changed the scope of UNHCR and she encouraged all United Nations organizations to appoint a focal point. In addition, the working group on article 11 of the Convention was contributing to the work of a task team on the development of guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, which had been created by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

79. The full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in their communities would not be possible without equitable and affordable access to physical and social infrastructure. Persons with disabilities often faced profound barriers in accessing housing, transport and basic services. The Support Group therefore celebrated the New Urban Agenda and was working to raise awareness and promote inclusive urban development in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11.

80. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the number of States having ratified or acceded to the Convention had risen to 174, and States parties were making invaluable efforts to increase that number through mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review. Nevertheless, a similar level must be sought for the Optional Protocol.

81. OHCHR looked forward to greater collaboration with States parties in New York, to ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were fully involved in all New York-based processes

relating to the 2030 Agenda. OHCHR had also offered its collaboration to support the inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the thematic discussions linked to the 2030 Agenda, such as those taking place as part of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

82. In line with the call made in the 2030 Agenda for disaggregation by disability, better use must be made of existing data disaggregation tools. OHCHR had recommended the use of the short set of questions developed by the Washington Group and the UNICEF/Washington Group module on child functioning, both of which could easily and cost effectively be incorporated into all national data collection efforts. OHCHR therefore urged States parties to establish a statistical baseline in the 2020 round of censuses for measuring implementation of the disability targets in the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to make progress towards fulfilling their obligations under article 31 of the Convention on statistics and data collection.

83. In November 2016, with a view to facilitating implementation of the Convention that was consistent with the 2030 Agenda, OHCHR had launched a project to develop human rights indicators for the Convention and policy guidelines that linked the Sustainable Development Goals to human rights obligations under the Convention.

84. The OHCHR thematic study published in December 2016 had been conducted on the subject of equality and non-discrimination, which provided a comparative analysis of national practices in the area of reasonable accommodation and the corresponding legal frameworks. The current thematic study was looking at the right of access to justice and OHCHR welcomed contributions from all States and partners.

85. In many ways, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had broken new ground. However, every effort must be made to achieve a better regional and gender balance among its members. OHCHR therefore strongly encouraged States parties to propose a majority of women candidates for the 2018 elections. It also called on all international institutions to ensure that disability focal points remained in place to continue their important work.

86. The participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the implementation of the Convention was a fundamental principle of the human rights-based approach to disability, and he wished to commend the President and Vice-Presidents for their efforts to increase the involvement of persons with disabilities in the preparations for the Conference

and as panellists, and he encouraged them to adopt rules on such participation.

87. Lastly, OHCHR appealed to Member States to commit to actively including persons with disabilities in the negotiations of the global compact for migration, and in the comprehensive refugee response framework. Persons with disabilities represented a significant proportion of those on the move, especially those forcibly displaced by conflict and disaster. The United Nations must not fail that population by ignoring their voice and their right to participate on an equal basis with others.

88. **Ms. O'Hara** (Deputy Director of New York Office, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that in situations of forced displacement, and particularly in conflict situations, persons with disabilities were often physically left behind. Even if they managed to reach places of relative safety, their journey did not end, because they frequently encountered barriers in accessing protection and assistance.

89. The work of UNHCR was grounded in the Convention, and the organization strove to listen to people's specific needs and adjust its programming accordingly. However, owing to a funding shortfall, persons with disabilities, among others, continued to be left behind in programming. By failing to comprehensively meet their needs and hence fully respect their rights, the United Nations was undercutting their potential. UNHCR was grateful for the support of donors, but at the point of delivery it was acutely aware of the impact of funding and staffing shortfalls.

90. UNHCR had played an active role at the World Humanitarian Summit in championing the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, and was committed to its promotion. UNHCR also participated in the task team created by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to coordinate global guidelines for the full and respectful inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

91. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the comprehensive refugee response framework and the work towards the adoption of a compact on refugees and a compact on migrants was a platform that could be used to lobby for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in specific aspects of the response to displacement. UNHCR considered itself a leader in knowledge of displacement. However, when it came to responding to the specificities of the needs of persons with disabilities in a displacement context, the organization acknowledged that it had much to learn and that it could only make progress by working

directly with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. However, it was firmly committed to so doing.

92. **Mr. Decorte** (Acting Director and Officer-in-Charge of New York Office, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that his organization had made a new commitment in the form of the New Urban Agenda. Built environments had a very strong impact on quality of life and opportunities, but especially so in the case of persons with disabilities. The Sustainable Development Goals provided the targets, while the New Urban Agenda set out how they could be achieved. Civil society participation in the drafting of the document had been strong, which was reflected in its content, and a Braille version would shortly be available.

93. Many cities were poorly planned and managed, and retrofitting those environments to meet the needs of persons with disabilities was extremely difficult, costly and time-consuming. The New Urban Agenda made clear that urbanization, when well planned and well managed from the start, went a long way towards creating a transformative environment, addressing needs and creating opportunities for everyone, including persons with disabilities. The representation of persons with disabilities in the urban pool was higher than for other groups, yet the barriers they faced prevented them from enjoying the benefits of urbanization. As persons with disabilities were not a homogenous group, their diverse needs must be taken into account during urban planning. The New Urban Agenda made clear that persons with disabilities must participate in action to address their needs with regard to access to jobs, public spaces, transport, basic services and adequate housing.

94. UN-Habitat had begun to take action on those commitments. It had produced guidelines and handbooks on subjects such as physical access to housing and general accessibility to cities. In addition, it had launched a number of pilot projects; in Nairobi, UN-Habitat was working with small private bus operators to improve access to transport for persons with disabilities and show how that would deliver benefits for all. The New Urban Agenda called on UN-Habitat to act as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and his organization looked forward to working with States parties and other partners. The challenge was how to deliver on the Agenda and show results in a few years' time.

95. **Mr. Kumar** (Director of the Social Development Division, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) said that many countries in Asia and the Pacific lacked appropriate services for early-childhood

disability detection and intervention and disability-inclusive education management. Surveys and analyses undertaken by the Commission had shown that children with disabilities were more likely to drop out of school, persons with disabilities were less likely to find employment, and employed persons with disabilities often worked in the informal sector without any social security or protection. Such exclusion of persons with disabilities came at great economic cost.

96. In order to address those challenges, the Commission had been promoting implementation of the Convention through the 2012 Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, which represented the world's first regionally agreed set of disability-inclusive goals. On the basis of the Incheon Strategy, the Commission had launched the third successive Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons for the period 2013 to 2022. Much progress had already been achieved by 2017, the midpoint of the Decade. For instance, the target number of States parties to the Convention had been reached in 2015, two years ahead of schedule. It was encouraging that several Governments in the region, such as those of Japan, India, Bangladesh and Malaysia, had adopted national legislation, action plans and policies to promote and uphold the rights of citizens with disabilities, while disability-inclusive action plans had been adopted by Indonesia, Cambodia and Georgia. The recently adopted Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016–2025 and the ongoing efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Commission on Human Rights were also very promising.

97. Also in the context of the midpoint of the Decade, the Commission would conduct a survey on data collection and the implementation of the Strategy, and organize a high level intergovernmental meeting at the end of November 2017 in Beijing, to be hosted by the Government of China. The Commission would continue to work with Member States in Asia and the Pacific, as well as other United Nations entities, to assist them in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategy.

98. **Ms. Sage** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Finland, Iceland, Jamaica, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Panama, Poland, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Zambia, said that the Short Set of Questions on Disability prepared by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, which was an appropriate and broadly tested methodology, should be used as a tool to disaggregate data by disability, particularly in

household surveys and national censuses. Such disaggregation was a requirement under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Statistics Division was urged to utilize the Questions and, without delay, to recommend the tool to national statistical offices and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

99. Focal points on persons with disabilities should be established in United Nations agencies, and persons with disabilities should be included in strategic plans and reporting and indicator frameworks, in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. Some United Nations agencies had apparently not yet established focal points, but those roles were crucial to ensuring that no one would be left behind.

100. During the official preparations for the current session of the Conference, Member States had made efforts to ensure the full and meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Member States were urged to continue that practice in the future.

101. **Mr. Cepeda Orvañanos** (Mexico) said that his country had been using the Short Set of Questions developed by the Washington Group in all national surveys since 2001, in order to be able to compare data internationally. The Government of Mexico once again called upon the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to recommend, as soon as possible, that national statistical offices and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators begin using the tool. The Statistical Commission must heed the call made by Member States in General Assembly resolution [71/165](#) to incorporate the Washington Group's guidelines.

102. **Ms. Dausab** (Namibia) said that disability was, by its very nature, a cross-cutting issue. In addition to signatures and ratifications, it also required resources to be channelled towards the relevant programmes. While her country had been rated as middle-income, it still faced challenges in estimating the significant costs associated with disability. She asked whether United Nations agencies could work with Member States to assist with the estimation of such costs. She also asked whether accessibility and the inclusion of persons with disabilities could be included as parameters for rating cities and municipalities.

103. **Mr. Decorte** (Acting Director and Officer in Charge of New York Office, United Nations Human Settlement Programme) said that the Office was developing a comprehensive set of indicators, which would account for persons with disabilities as a part of the City Prosperity Index.

104. **Ms. Degener** (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that the Conference and the Committee were two pillars of the same international mechanism, and the success of one depended on the other. The Convention should be considered as the legal framework for all efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, and it was important to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in State party reporting to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Committee was strongly committed to including those interlinkages in its dialogues with States parties in Geneva.

105. At its sixteenth and seventeenth sessions, the Committee had considered 15 initial State party reports, had adopted concluding observations, including recommendations regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and had initiated the second reporting cycle under the simplified reporting procedures for four States parties. The Committee had adopted two general comments, on women and girls with disabilities and on the right to inclusive education, and it was currently working on two additional draft general comments, on the right to live independently in the community and on non-discrimination and equality, for which written submissions could be made until 30 June 2017. The Committee had also received over 300 communications and had registered 37 cases. It had taken final decisions in 15 cases, adopted eight views with violations, two views without violations, and had taken five decisions of inadmissibility.

106. The Committee had cooperated actively with a great number of United Nations organs and specialized agencies as well as civil society and non-governmental organizations, notably the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, regional human rights organizations, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the International Disability Alliance.

107. With regard to accessibility, the Committee had identified the need to provide easy-read and plain-language texts in order to ensure equal participation of all members during its sessions, and it called on States parties to consider making specific contributions for that purpose. A new Bureau had been elected at the seventeenth session. The Committee had also adopted a statement on advancing and restoring gender parity and equitable geographical distribution in its membership.

108. **Ms. Devandas Aguilar** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) said that she was pleased to see a growing number of United Nations entities participating in the panel. Only a few years previously, there had been no opportunity to hold the agencies accountable for their work on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Conference was now providing a forum where all stakeholders could share their views and concerns and civil society could follow up on the action taken by the United Nations system.

109. As Special Rapporteur, she had conducted four thematic studies to date. The first dealt with social protection, the second with participation in decision-making, the third with disability-inclusive policies and the fourth with support services. She had also carried out official visits to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Paraguay, the Republic of Moldova and Zambia. All the reports on her visits and thematic studies had been published in an easy-to-read format, a practice she trusted other experts and agencies would follow.

110. Among her other activities, she had been closely monitoring various international, regional and national processes and promoting the exchange of knowledge and best practices among the United Nations system, States and civil society. She also continued to work closely with other human rights mechanisms and United Nations entities, in particular with the Committee, to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. In conjunction with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, she had organized a meeting of experts on indigenous peoples with disabilities, as a result of which the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had included disability as a permanent agenda item. A similar joint meeting would be held in 2017 with the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. In addition, she was organizing a meeting with various experts from the human rights treaty bodies to discuss how to include the rights of persons with disabilities in their work in a cross-cutting manner. Much remained to be done before the Convention would be fully implemented, and greater coordination and cooperation among the United Nations system, States and civil society would be needed.

111. Lastly, she wished to express her gratitude to the States and agencies that had added their voices to the urgent call for the Washington Group's methodology to be used to disaggregate data on disability, and to those that had expressed support for the proposed system-wide action plan on disability. The Inter-Agency Support Group had set up a working group to examine the possibility of a system-wide action plan and she hoped that all States would offer their political support

when the time came. Her office was determined to ensure that States, agencies and the community of persons with disabilities had at their disposal tools that facilitated and strengthened accountability and consistency.

112. **Ms. Fefoame** (International Disability and Development Consortium) said that great progress had been made regarding disabilities in society and development, and many Governments were demonstrating true leadership. However, some Governments had been leaving the majority of persons with disabilities behind, and therefore needed to be challenged to implement the Convention. More efforts were needed to improve the methods used to collect disability data. Without effective data, public policy could never be truly responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and Governments could not be held accountable. The Sustainable Development Goals and their indicators clearly stated that data was needed in order to monitor progress effectively. Member States were urged to use the Short Set of Questions on Disability prepared by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

113. It was also important to reflect on which parties were being intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the current process. Transformational change was needed in order to achieve the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities, and the Conference had provided guidance for their systematic inclusion by Governments, the private sector, civil society and development agencies. The right to participation, alongside gender and geographical balance, must be reflected more systematically in the United Nations development system. The full inclusion of all 1 billion persons with disabilities was a highly ambitious vision, but it was achievable if everyone did their part.

114. **Mr. Pellegrini** (Brazil) said that not only was there a gender imbalance on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but the Latin American region was also under-represented. Brazil would therefore like to nominate Mara Gabrilli as a candidate for election to the Committee. She was a very capable congresswoman in the federal Government who had been instrumental in the development of key public policies.

115. **Mr. Betrand Ezewuzie** (International Association of Disability Advocates, Nigeria) said that an important measure of a Government's performance was how it treated the most vulnerable members of society. Support for persons with disabilities was no longer considered "medical charity", but rather had been acknowledged as a human right. It was important to create awareness

among politicians around the world aware that disability issues could be a political asset rather than an economic liability. In fact, issues and policy relating to disability could actually generate votes and win elections, and persons with disabilities could make valuable contributions to both government and society.

116. **Mr. Cepeda Orvañanos** (Mexico), emphasizing his country's willingness to continue cooperating with the United Nations system, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, the Committee and organizations of persons with disabilities, said that at the thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council the Governments of Mexico and New Zealand had proposed an extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further period of three years. Mexico would be interested to know the views of the panellists on the extent of international cooperation on disability issues and their suggestions for making such cooperation more effective.

Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

117. **The President** drew the attention of the Conference to a document containing the text of three draft decisions that had been circulated to all delegations.

Draft decision 1 entitled: Venue and timing of the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

118. *Draft decision 1 was adopted.*

Draft decision 2 entitled: Resources and support for the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

119. *Draft decision 2 was adopted.*

Draft decision 3 entitled: Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the tenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

120. *Draft decision 3 was adopted.*

Closing of the meeting

121. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador), speaking as Vice-President, said that the fruitful exchanges of experiences would help to make international action more effective in the future. His country's commitment to helping persons with disabilities throughout the world stemmed from a desire to ensure social justice and respect for fundamental human rights. Every member of society

had a valuable contribution to make and their involvement was essential for making sustainable development possible.

122. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia), speaking as Acting Vice-President, said that her delegation endorsed the appeals made by the panellists and civil society representatives, particularly in the area of combating poverty among persons with disabilities and providing more reliable data to better identify and take into account the specific needs of children and women with disabilities. The efforts to leave no one behind were taking on their full meaning and significance, and were important for ensuring the integral role of persons with disabilities in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

123. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Vice-President, said that it was now necessary to translate policies into concrete action in line with the 2030 Agenda. The broad participation in the Conference and its expansion over the years was encouraging, but had also brought with it some unique challenges. He would share what he had learned with the members of the incoming Bureau in order to ensure a smooth process of work in the future.

124. **Mr. Glossner** (Germany), speaking as Acting Vice-President, said that members of the Bureau had worked very hard to ensure that civil society could participate in all stages of the Conference. That success should be the basis for preparations for the subsequent session of the Conference. In fact, the Conference could be described as a process, in which the exchanges and discussions and the implementation of the Convention would continue. The Conference had facilitated a vibrant exchange of ideas and experiences and his delegation would continue its efforts in that regard.

125. **The President** said that the variety and richness of the Conference programme, including its general debate, ministerial segment, round-table discussions, civil society forum, side events, performances and receptions, had led to particularly informative and useful exchanges on the implementation of the Convention. The Bureau had emphasized the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as national human rights institutions and other stakeholders, in all deliberations related to the implementation of the Convention, and the Committee and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities had been accorded more prominent roles.

126. The deliberations held during the tenth session would contribute to ensuring that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals would lead to the exercise of all human rights by persons with disabilities

and to their empowerment and inclusion in society on an equal basis with others. The discussions had highlighted issues that required attention and concrete action by States parties and the United Nations system in order to ensure that the commitments of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda would be fulfilled. Given that persons with disabilities were often the most vulnerable, collecting quality data disaggregated by disability was one of the most pressing of those issues. The members of the incoming Bureau would build on the success of the tenth session of the Conference in the preparations for its eleventh session.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.