



# 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

### Thirteenth session

New York, 30 November, 1, 3 and 11 December 2020

### Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 November 2020, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Espinosa Cañizares ..... (Ecuador)

## Contents

Agenda item 1: Opening of the thirteenth session of the Conference of States Parties

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda

Agenda item 3: Organization of work

Agenda item 7: Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

Agenda item 4: Election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons  
with Disabilities

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

### **Agenda item 1: Opening of the thirteenth session of the Conference of States Parties**

1. **The President** declared open the Conference of States Parties and requested that all participants comply with the requirements set forth in the occupational safety and health plan established to enable the holding of meetings at the United Nations Headquarters complex during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

### **Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda** (CRPD/CSP/2020/1)

2. *The agenda was adopted.*

### **Agenda item 3: Organization of work**

#### *Accreditation and registration of non-governmental organizations*

3. **The President** drew attention to the list of non-governmental organizations requesting accreditation to the Conference circulated to States parties by the Secretariat on 28 October 2020. He said he took it that the States parties wished to accede to the requests of 23 non-governmental organizations to participate as observer.

4. *It was so decided.*

#### *Opening remarks*

5. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador), speaking in his capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the Conference was one of the largest and most important global forums on the rights of persons with disabilities. The current session had been postponed from its original dates in June 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had tested the economic capacities and health-care systems of Member States. As a result of the pandemic, persons with disabilities faced a number of challenges that were contributing to the erosion of their human rights, including a disproportionate risk of COVID-19 infection, inadequate access to essential health-care services and education, and job losses. The current session would therefore focus on the importance of promoting the well-being of people worldwide, acknowledging the hard work of health-care personnel, and ensuring that persons with disabilities were not left behind, in particular in responses to the pandemic and in subsequent economic recovery efforts.

6. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the first human rights convention open

to signature by regional integration organizations; it currently had 182 States parties. The Convention's entry into force in 2008 had marked the culmination of decades of work to change attitudes towards persons with disabilities, who were now rights-holders with the power to make decisions about their lives on the basis of free and informed consent, and to participate as active members of society. The current session of the Conference would provide an opportunity for participants to discuss their common objectives of ensuring the full implementation of the Convention, protecting human rights and promoting inclusive and sustainable development for persons with disabilities. Participants would also have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and lessons learned, and to identify remaining shortcomings in order to improve the implementation of the Convention.

7. Member States must ensure that the world emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic a more just place, free of discrimination and violence, including by working together to resolve social problems and by protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Those persons must have equal access to health services, including medications, vaccines and medical equipment, and must be provided with critical information related to the pandemic in accessible formats. Similarly, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be encouraged to participate actively in all stages of the response to, and recovery from, the pandemic.

8. **The Secretary-General** said that he was pleased to join the participants at the thirteenth session of the Conference of States Parties, noting that the International Day of Persons with Disabilities would also be observed later in the week. He took the issue of disability inclusion extremely seriously. Securing the rights of persons with disabilities was necessary for upholding the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That was why, in 2019, he had launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, which aimed to bring about lasting and transformative change in the Organization's work on disability inclusion across its policies, programmes and operations. The Strategy would contribute to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. One year on, the Strategy was having a tangible impact.

9. His first report on disability inclusion in the United Nations system (A/75/314) contained progress reports from 57 entities and seven United Nations country teams that were participating in the early roll-out of the country team accountability scorecard on

disability inclusion. The report provided a first comprehensive assessment of disability inclusion within the United Nations system. It presented an honest picture of the current situation and where improvements needed to be made. For the most part, the system was still just beginning to consider disability inclusion in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, whether in relation to humanitarian action, human rights or sustainable development. Overall, however, the report demonstrated that the Strategy had triggered action across the United Nations system. It had raised awareness and had created a platform for coordination and knowledge-sharing on disability inclusion, reflecting a collective commitment and ambition to make progress.

10. The current session of the Conference was taking place in unprecedented circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic had been affecting communities and societies at their very core, deepening pre-existing inequalities. Even under normal circumstances, the 1 billion persons with disabilities worldwide were less likely to enjoy access to education, health care and livelihoods, or to participate and be included in the community. They were more likely to live in poverty and experience higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse. Moreover, when crises gripped communities, persons with disabilities were among the worst affected. The pandemic was exacerbating those inequalities and producing new threats. In May 2020, he had issued a policy brief highlighting the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities and calling for their inclusion in response and recovery efforts.

11. Promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities meant, first of all, recognizing and protecting their rights. Those rights touched on every aspect of life: the right to go to school, live in their communities, engage in political life, start a family, play sports, travel and have access to health care and decent work. Through the implementation of its Disability Inclusion Strategy, the United Nations system was working to lead by example by being an employer of choice for persons with disabilities and ensuring that their vision and aspirations were included and accounted for in a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world. That vision would only be achieved through active consultations with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations and by ensuring their full participation in decision-making processes.

12. In moving forward, a whole-of-society approach must be taken to ensure disability inclusion. It was only by working together that Governments, United Nations entities and civil society – including organizations of

persons with disabilities, the private sector and communities of experts – could effectively implement the Convention and tackle the obstacles, injustice and discrimination faced by such persons. The realization of the rights of persons with disabilities was crucial to the fulfilment of the core promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: to leave no one behind. In all actions of the United Nations, its goal was clear: a world in which all persons had equal opportunities, participated in decision-making and truly benefited from economic, social, political and cultural life. That was a goal worth fighting for.

13. **Mr. Bozkır** (Turkey), President of the General Assembly, said that he welcomed the overarching theme of the current session: “A decade of action and delivery for inclusive sustainable development: implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for all persons with disabilities”. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had plunged the world into deep uncertainty, news of efforts to develop and broadly and equitably distribute vaccines gave cause for hope of an end to the crisis. The United Nations must therefore not lose focus on its long-term goals, in particular those focusing on the most vulnerable.

14. COVID-19 recovery efforts should be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, Member States should respond with renewed momentum to the call for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. In accordance with the principle of “nothing about us without us”, persons with disabilities should be fully included in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of women and girls with disabilities in developing countries, who faced disproportionate challenges in attaining access to education and health care, and in securing livelihoods. Mainstreaming disability inclusion throughout the United Nations system must remain a priority, given the critical importance of accessibility for facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities.

15. **Mr. Basharu** (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that he welcomed the overarching theme of the current session. While notable efforts had been made to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda, the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, demonstrating the significant remaining scope for progress in understanding the human rights model of disability enshrined in the Convention and in implementing its provisions. The Convention was the instrument of

reference for the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in planning and recovery measures and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

16. Since the start of the pandemic, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been conducting its work online, having held three meetings in a virtual format; constructive dialogues with States parties had been postponed, however. Comprehensive information regarding the Committee's twenty-third session and the fourteenth session of its pre-session working group could be found on the Committee's website. The Committee had continued its engagement with civil society representatives, and he commended those States parties that had consulted persons with disabilities in preparing their submissions to the Committee. Regrettably, the transition to virtual meetings on an exceptional basis had exacerbated the lack of accessibility and reasonable accommodation in United Nations meetings, in particular for persons with visual impairment, who had had to rely on the support of personal assistants whose work was not financially compensated by the United Nations. A sustainable framework to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities participating in United Nations meetings had yet to be developed, notwithstanding the references to that concept in the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and General Assembly resolution [68/268](#). The United Nations and States parties must establish reasonable accommodation policies in accordance with the Convention, and the Organization should establish a reasonable accommodation fund, accessible through simplified administrative procedures.

17. With support from the International Labour Organization, the Committee was preparing a draft general comment on the right to work and employment for persons with disabilities, with a view to ensuring that all efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8, target 8.5, on decent work for all, were guided by the Convention. The Committee would work between sessions with a view to producing, for publication on its website, an outline of the draft general comment for consultation by stakeholders, and to convening a day of general discussion on the matter at its next in-person session. States parties should consider the establishment of a voluntary fund to improve accessibility at the United Nations and beyond, in accordance with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. Lastly, he hoped that the results of the elections to be held at the current meeting would contribute to upholding the principles of gender parity, diversity and inclusion.

18. **Mr. Quinn** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had

undermined progress towards the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as basic services had been reduced, preventive measures had been inadequately implemented, confidence in institutions had been eroded and women and girls with disabilities had been disproportionately affected by domestic violence. In the future, systemic change would be needed to give full effect to the understanding of persons with disabilities as subjects with rights rather than objects of charity, a paradigm that had been eroded by the pandemic, as demonstrated in the October 2020 report of the COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor. To that end, the Sustainable Development Goals should be harnessed to bolster implementation of the Convention, given the mutually reinforcing nature of the two instruments. In that connection, he welcomed the increasing tendency of members of the Committee to refer to the Goals in order to reinforce their analysis and conclusions. During his tenure as Special Rapporteur, he would focus on strengthening responses to the pandemic and to climate change, as well as preparing for future crises, and would promote the inclusion of those left furthest behind, including indigenous persons with disabilities, older persons with disabilities and prisoners with disabilities.

19. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the significant remaining challenges to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States should respond to the call for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development by addressing those challenges, focusing in particular on high-impact, cross-cutting issues.

20. The obstacles faced by persons with disabilities in attaining access to health care, food, medication, personal assistance, education and work during the lockdowns imposed as a result of the pandemic reflected the inadequate accessibility of physical environments, information and communication, technology, transportation and service provision, for which duly trained personnel were required. Although the Convention had been in force for 12 years and currently had 182 States parties, the legal obligation to ensure accessibility still had not been fulfilled. Global big data should be harnessed to promote accessibility during and after the pandemic, with a particular focus on health care, to ensure more effective responses to future humanitarian emergencies and enable communities and Governments to better understand the link between accessibility, human rights and sustainable development.

21. The disproportionate violence and abuse faced by women and girls with disabilities, in particular during the pandemic, should be addressed as a matter of priority during the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to be conducted in 2021. Similarly, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/154](#) on inclusive development for and with persons with disabilities, the Commission on the Status of Women should, in its agreed conclusions at its sixty-fifth session, highlight the importance of eliminating violence against women with disabilities and enabling them to exercise their rights, including their right to participate in political and public life. Clear guidelines on those matters must be established to inform the decisions of relevant government ministries worldwide. In addition, women with disabilities and their representative organizations should be included in the Generation Equality Forum, to be launched in 2021.

22. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/154](#), private sector stakeholders should demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development by improving workplace accessibility to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market, and by ensuring the accessibility of products and services. Such stakeholders should also invest a portion of their profits in sustainable causes, such as promoting the accessibility of public spaces. The implementation of the Convention and the fulfilment of the Goals would enhance the protection of the dignity and rights of all people and, accordingly, the inclusivity of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

23. *A short video on the importance of accessibility for the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms was shown.*

24. **Mr. Maiga** (Observer for Disabled Peoples' International), in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda set forth a vision for a more equitable and equal world, in which there were internationally agreed norms prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities that could be enforced through legal action. That vision was being threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had killed persons with disabilities in disproportionate numbers, had resulted in violations of their right to life and health and to live independently, and had destroyed the systems on which they relied for support and services, employment, social protection and health care. Persons with disabilities had also lacked access to information relating to the pandemic and had been excluded from response efforts at all levels.

25. The threat of the pandemic had been compounded by the prospect of future policy decisions that failed to respect the equal rights of persons with disabilities, representing apathy at best and intentional discrimination at worst. To avoid such an outcome, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be empowered to participate in pandemic response and recovery efforts at all levels of decision-making. Indeed, the principle of “nothing about us without us” enshrined in the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals was not being upheld, as demonstrated by the results of the first global survey of the International Disability Alliance on the participation of persons with disabilities in development programmes and policies, in which the majority of respondents had indicated their dissatisfaction with their level of engagement with their Governments and with the degree of support that had been provided to enable their participation. The COVID-19 pandemic was a test not only of the Organization’s capacity to respond to a public health crisis, but of its values and integrity.

#### **Agenda item 7: Decisions by the Conference of States Parties**

26. **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: Venue and timing of the fourteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

27. *Draft decision 1 was adopted.*

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

28. *Draft decision 2 was adopted.*

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

29. *Draft decision 3 was adopted.*

**Agenda item 4: Election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/CSP/2020/CRP.1 and CRPD/CSP/2020/CRP.1/Add.1)**

30. **The President** said that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, had continued to fulfil their mandates by temporarily resorting to virtual working methods. While in-person meetings in Geneva remained the default *modus operandi* for the foreseeable future, members of the Committee should have the capacity to work in a virtual format during the Committee's sessions.

31. Drawing attention to paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of article 34 of the Convention, he recalled that, in accordance with article 34, nine Committee members were to be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States parties to replace those members whose terms would expire on 31 December 2020. Pursuant to article 34, paragraphs 5 and 6, of the Convention, the Secretary-General had invited States parties, in a note verbale dated 10 February 2020, to submit nominations to fill those positions within two months. Following the announcement of the postponement of the thirteenth session of the Conference of States Parties owing to the pandemic, the deadline for nominations had been extended until 1 October 2020.

32. He drew attention to the list of 28 candidates nominated by States parties in document [CRPD/CSP/2020/CRP.1](#). On 26 November 2020, the Secretariat had been informed of the withdrawal of the nomination of Mr. Alazeh (Jordan) as a candidate ([CRPD/CSP/2020/CRP.1/Add.1](#)).

33. He invited the Conference to elect, by secret ballot, 9 candidates from the list of 27 candidates to replace members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for a four-year term ending on 31 December 2024.

34. *At the invitation of the President, Mr. Falzeta Zanini (Brazil), Ms. Hettiwelige (Sri Lanka), Ms. Lombeh (Liberia), Mr. Sass (Hungary), Ms. Staunton (Ireland) and Ms. Wong (Singapore) acted as tellers.*

35. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	181
Number of valid ballots:	181
Number of representatives voting:	181
Required majority:	91
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Martin (New Zealand)	121
Ms. Fitoussi (Israel)	109
Ms. Amrani (Morocco)	103
Ms. Aldana Salguero (Guatemala)	100
Ms. Fernández de Torrijos (Panama)	94
Ms. Dondovdorj (Mongolia)	85
Mr. Kabue (Kenya)	78
Ms. Thongkuay (Thailand)	76
Mr. Alsaif (Saudi Arabia)	72
Mr. Morris (Jamaica)	71
Mr. Corporán Lorenzo (Dominican Republic)	70
Mr. Al-Farsi (Oman)	66
Mr. Fall (Senegal)	65
Ms. Azzopardi Lane (Malta)	62
Ms. Kronfle Gómez (Ecuador)	55
Mr. Chaker (Tunisia)	50
Mr. Toplak (Slovenia)	41
Ms. Holst (Denmark)	37
Mr. Diarra (Mali)	36
Mr. Camara (Mauritania)	35
Ms. Jovanovic (Serbia)	35
Ms. Amela (Mozambique)	32
Ms. Kaltayeva (Kazakhstan)	31
Mr. Ndayisenga (Burundi)	24
Ms. Yaqoobi (Afghanistan)	19
Ms. Roszewska (Poland)	14
Ms. Sachuck (Ukraine)	12

36. *Having obtained the required majority, Ms. Aldana Salguero (Guatemala), Ms. Amrani (Morocco), Ms. Fernández de Torrijos (Panama), Ms. Fitoussi (Israel) and Mr. Martin (New Zealand) were elected or re-elected as members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for a four-year term beginning on 1 January 2021.*

*The meeting rose at 2.15 p.m.*