



# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General  
20 March 2019

Original: English

---

## Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Twenty-first session

### Summary record of the third part (public)\* of the 434th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 11 March 2019, at 10 a.m.

*Temporary Chair:* Mr. Nowosad (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)  
*Chair:* Mr. Basharu

## Contents

Election of the Chair and other officers of the Committee (*continued*)

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Committee

Submission of reports by parties to the Convention under article 35

Cooperation with other United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, organizations of persons with disabilities and other competent bodies

---

\* The summary records of the first part (public) and second part (closed) of the meeting appear as documents CRPD/C/SR.434 and CRPD/C/SR.434/Add.1.

---

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



*The third part (public) of the meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.*

#### **Election of the Chair and other officers of the Committee (continued)**

1. **The Temporary Chair** said that, during the second part (closed) of the meeting, Mr. Basharu had been elected to the office of Chair, Mr. Ishikawa, Ms. Kayess and Mr. Ruskus to the three offices of Vice-Chair and Ms. Gamio Ríos to the office of Rapporteur.
2. *Mr. Basharu took the Chair.*

#### **Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Committee**

3. **The Chair** said that a number of activities had taken place during the intersessional period. In December 2018, a meeting on reprisals against persons working with human rights treaty bodies had been held in Geneva. In February 2019, the Chairs of the treaty bodies had met in Copenhagen to discuss the 2020 review of the treaty body system. In addition, an expert working group meeting for addressing women's human rights in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration had taken place via videoconference in February 2019. He welcomed the declaration by the General Assembly of 4 January as World Braille Day, as that would result in millions of blind persons worldwide having the opportunity to read and write Braille. The International Disability Alliance had invited the Committee to take part in the Global Disability Summit; further details would be available in due course.

#### **Submission of reports by parties to the Convention under article 35**

4. **Ms. Fuentes** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Belarus, Benin, Burkina Faso, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kiribati and Maldives had submitted their initial reports since the previous session, bringing the total number of such reports received to 122, with 38 initial reports currently pending review by the Committee. Furthermore, seven periodic reports had been received, from Argentina, Australia, China, Ecuador, New Zealand, Peru and Tunisia, with nine such reports pending review. The number of States that had ratified or acceded to the Convention remained unchanged, at 177; Somalia had become the most recent signatory. Canada and Guinea-Bissau had become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention, increasing the total to 94. The Republic of Moldova had signed the Optional Protocol.

#### **Cooperation with other United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, organizations of persons with disabilities and other competent bodies**

5. **Mr. Da Conceição** (Chair, Committee on Victim Assistance under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction) said that the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was the cornerstone of international efforts to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines. It recognized the rights of victims, including survivors, who, due to their injuries, were often faced with lifelong disabilities. The purpose of victim assistance was to facilitate the care and rehabilitation of mine victims, including their social and economic reintegration, in particular by recognizing the rights and needs of mine survivors and affected families and communities. The States parties to the Convention had agreed to integrate victim assistance into broader national policies, plans and legal frameworks related to the rights of persons with disabilities.
6. The Committee on Victim Assistance reiterated its recommendation that the Committee should adopt a general comment on article 11, which provided a bridge between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and other international disarmament instruments; a general comment would help to clarify how the instruments complemented each other and how they differed. The Committee on Victim Assistance would gladly share the relevant lessons it had learned. It also encouraged the Committee to promote the mainstreaming of mine survivors on an equal basis with other persons with disabilities into efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including through its concluding observations on

reports submitted by States parties that had incurred obligations vis-à-vis a significant number of mine survivors. The Committee on Victim Assistance worked with 30 such States and was available for further interaction with the Committee in that regard.

7. As the Committee on Victim Assistance marked the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, it looked forward to collaborating with disability rights actors in two major events in 2019. The theme of the Global Conference on Victim Assistance to be held in Amman from 10 to 12 September 2019 would be “Fostering Partnerships”. It would seek to strengthen partnerships among and between victim assistance and disability rights actors and to bring victim assistance under the umbrella of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Thanks to financial support from the European Union, national and international victim assistance and disability rights experts, landmine survivors, persons with disabilities and organizations representing the health, education, human rights and development sectors would participate in the Conference. The Committee on Victim Assistance looked forward to the participation and support of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

8. The Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which would be held in November 2019 in Oslo, would adopt an action plan on behalf of mine survivors and persons with disabilities for the following five years. National victim assistance and disability rights experts would attend a side event to discuss the new action plan. The Committee on Victim Assistance counted on the participation and expertise of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It resolved to continue synergizing with the Committee in the search for better strategies to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including landmine survivors, so that they could fully participate in their societies on an equal basis with others and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9. **The Chair** said that the Committee would shortly be drafting a general comment on article 11 of the Convention.

10. **Ms. Grandjean** (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)) said that the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, included specific goals for children with disabilities, and incorporated monitoring mechanisms, including mechanisms to track expenditure.

11. Significant progress had been made in education and early childhood development for children with disabilities in 2018. With regard to the overarching goal of inclusive education for children with disabilities, 93 countries had reported progress in supporting inclusive education policies and sector plans, and 61 countries had reported significant progress in making schools more accessible, often through ramps at entrances and at sanitation facilities. Investment in 2018 had also included the supply of accessible education materials, the training of teachers and efforts to change harmful attitudes towards children with disabilities. UNICEF supported greater accessibility and capacity of early childhood development facilities through training, early intervention materials, construction and creation of demand through advocacy.

12. Significant funds had been invested in 2018 in disaster preparedness for persons with disabilities. With a view to addressing the critical gap in knowledge and capacity in the area of disability-inclusive humanitarian action, UNICEF had issued guidance on including children with disabilities in such action.

13. While numerous countries had reported limited data on disability in 2018, a substantial number of initiatives to collect additional data on children with disabilities had been launched. Six countries had introduced the UNICEF/Washington Group Module on Child Functioning into their national survey framework, adding a comprehensive disability dimension to the survey data.

14. Water, sanitation and hygiene facilities had been made more accessible to children and adults with disabilities in 2018. UNICEF had released new tools and guidance on including persons with disabilities in its water, sanitation and hygiene programming. It had also provided assistive devices for 65,334 children in 2018. It looked forward to working closely with its partners, especially children, their families and their representative

organizations, and with the Committee in further strengthening the inclusion of children and adults with disabilities.

15. **Ms. Lee** (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that the WHO programme of work, endorsed by member States in 2017, had a strong focus on disability. It provided for the strengthening of health systems to support universal health coverage without financial hardship, including equity of access, and disaggregation of data by disability in order to ensure the monitoring of and response to health inequalities.

16. The WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021 focused on removing barriers to health services, strengthening rehabilitation and collecting data. WHO was developing standards for the provision of health care without discrimination, using the best available evidence. The WHO Regional Office for the West Pacific would shortly offer guidance on building disability-inclusive health systems.

17. In the area of mental health, WHO had developed the QualityRights initiative, which involved the provision of guidance materials, face-to-face capacity-building resources and e-training programmes designed to translate the Convention into reality. The impact of the initiative was already reflected in changing attitudes and practices in several member States. In addition, WHO was developing best practice guidance that provided evidence for community-based mental health services that operated without coercion, responded to people's needs, supported recovery and promoted autonomy and inclusion, in line with the Convention.

18. WHO had developed guidance on strengthening the health-care system to provide rehabilitation services, which was being implemented in 11 countries. Action was also being taken to develop tools that would facilitate the inclusion of rehabilitation in universal health coverage and build capacity to provide rehabilitation services.

19. Following the publication of the first WHO list of priority assistive products in 2016 and the World Health Assembly resolution on improving access to assistive technology in 2018, WHO was developing technical tools to support member States in implementing national priority lists. The lists included specifications to guide procurement of priority assistive products in collaboration with UNICEF, financing options, market shaping and training modules to support access to basic assistive products at the community primary health-care level. WHO was also a founding member of a new global partnership to improve access to assistive technology called ATscale.

20. WHO was working with member States to strengthen statistical systems to collect and use high-quality disability data, using the Model Disability Survey that had been developed in partnership with the World Bank and had been implemented in 16 countries. Its work in that area contributed to the monitoring and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention.

21. WHO was committed to fully implementing the United Nations system-wide policy, action plan and accountability framework on disability inclusion and to fully realizing the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities within the Organization.

22. **Mr. Trömel** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO was implementing an initiative based on the view, expressed by member States, disability focal points and global organizations such as the International Disability Alliance (IDA), that the United Nations system lacked a common policy and a systematic approach to disability inclusion. As the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations had shared that view, a decision had been taken in April 2018 to create a working group tasked with developing a system-wide policy and accountability framework on disability inclusion under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was co-chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ILO.

23. The process had begun with a survey of United Nations entities and country teams undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. The findings were being used as input for the system-wide policy and accountability framework. The first version of those tools had been produced in early January 2019 and

the final version was to be submitted within a few weeks' time. The aim was to cover areas such as human resources, policy design, programming, accessibility of premises, conferences and other events, and reasonable accommodation, and to involve organizations of persons with disabilities in all those areas.

24. **Mr. Chávez Penillas** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the Committee's general comments had been taken into consideration in drafting the system-wide action plan documents. He welcomed the participation of the Committee and the secretariat in the consultation process. It was important to discuss ways in which the Committee could use the policy and accountability framework to advance its work and empower organizations of persons with disabilities in the field.

25. **Ms. Lee** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, at its fortieth session, the Human Rights Council was focusing to an unprecedented degree on persons with disabilities. The annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child had been devoted the previous week to the empowerment of children with disabilities, including through inclusive education, and the 2019 annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities had been dedicated to habilitation and rehabilitation pursuant to article 26 of the Convention.

26. OHCHR had highlighted in the report it had prepared that empowerment of children with disabilities enabled them to be fully included in their families and communities, to express their views and to participate. Inclusive education was at the heart of empowerment and, as the Committee had emphasized, was a right of all learners and benefited society as a whole. To mark the annual full-day meeting day on the rights of the child, OHCHR had supported an interactive exhibition organized by UNICEF and Bulgaria on the role of assistive technology in inclusive education.

27. OHCHR had highlighted the cross-sectoral approach to habilitation and rehabilitation enshrined in the Convention. Article 26 established a unifying framework for the provision of coordinated and comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services that were voluntary, individualized and community-based, and that were embedded in human rights through respect for free and informed consent, non-discrimination, participation, availability, affordability and accessibility.

28. The OHCHR report to the Human Rights Council in 2020 would concern article 8, on awareness-raising. The Office looked forward to receiving contributions from all stakeholders regarding good practices in fostering respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, combating negative stereotypes and addressing their portrayal in the media.

29. OHCHR had co-organized a photography exhibition, entitled "Fifteen Percent", in the Palais des Nations on 3 December 2018, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The exhibition, a project of the Italian photographer Christian Tasso, had sought to combat stereotypes and change the way in which persons with disabilities were portrayed in society, for instance as objects of charity. It had shown persons with disabilities from all around the world as members and leaders of their communities. A key feature of the exhibition had been its accessibility, which was facilitated by Braille captions, audio descriptions of works in all United Nations languages, a large print format and a captioned video installation, for example.

30. An Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council had been organized on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities by several missions in cooperation with OHCHR, UNICEF and IDA to discuss the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities. The participants had discussed a more inclusive and participatory approach during conflicts and emergencies and the role of the Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole in ensuring such an approach. The meeting had concluded with the commitment to hold targeted briefings, to strengthen data collection and disaggregation, and to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Security Council resolutions and reporting.

31. OHCHR continued to participate in the Bridging the Gap project, in partnership with the European Union, with a view to developing tools, with the Committee's guidance, to facilitate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee's human rights indicators served as one of the tools, and OHCHR hoped to produce a complete package of tools by autumn 2019.

32. **Mr. Lachwitz** (International Disability Alliance (IDA) and European Disability Forum (EDF)) said that IDA was an alliance of eight global and six regional networks of organizations of persons with disabilities in more than 180 countries. EDF was an independent non-governmental organization that defended the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities.

33. IDA and EDF welcomed the Committee's decision to produce a general comment on article 11, given the serious challenges to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to address environmental changes and humanitarian crises.

34. IDA and EDF looked forward to an increase in the Committee's jurisprudence relating to the rights of women and girls with disabilities, and more references to the intersectionality between gender and disability. The technical secretariat of IDA supported the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities, including organizations of women and children with disabilities, in the work of the Committee and other treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations forums.

35. IDA and EDF also looked forward to hearing about progress in the work of the Committee's joint working group on children with disabilities with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Children with disabilities were still subjected to neglect and abandonment. They accounted for more than 40 per cent of children placed in institutional care, and their only option in most cases was to attend segregated special schools. The Committee should continue to request States parties to implement deinstitutionalization plans and provide support services for persons with disabilities, particularly children, so that they could be included in the community and family environments.

36. The Committee's highly productive work and groundbreaking jurisprudence over the past 10 years had included valuable standards for the interpretation and implementation of the Convention. However, there remained serious challenges with respect to full recognition of legal capacity, forced institutionalization and the implementation of inclusive education.

37. The Committee should continue to strongly urge States parties to amend or repeal obsolete mental health laws that permitted deprivation of liberty on grounds of real or perceived disability. The human rights norms it had developed in that regard should be mainstreamed, since there were still major discrepancies in concluding observations and general comments between the Committee's jurisprudence and that of other treaty bodies. IDA and EDF commended the Committee's criticism of the draft Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment, which flagrantly violated international human rights norms.

38. While the Committee's procedures had been rendered more accessible to persons with disabilities, the same did not apply to other treaty bodies and the United Nations system as a whole. IDA and EDF therefore strongly recommended that the necessary structural and budgetary reforms should be undertaken to make the United Nations system more accessible to all.

39. **Ms. Minkowiz** (Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (CHRUSP)) said that the mission of CHRUSP consisted in realizing the right of everyone to exercise legal capacity, ending forced and non-consensual interventions against people with psychosocial disabilities, and ensuring the availability of support that respected a person's autonomy, will and preferences. Its most significant achievement of 2018 had been an amendment to the Civil Code of Peru that complied with key components of article 12 of the Convention, in line with the Committee's general comment No. 1. A recent

proposal by a Spanish political party that a draft mental health law should prohibit hospitalization and treatment against a person's will would, if adopted, constitute another highly meaningful step forward. She also welcomed the WHO initiative aimed at promoting compliance with the Convention through their revised QualityRights training modules and the project to compile good practices based on freedom from coercion.

40. CHRUSP faced many challenges when it came to upholding the absolute prohibition on non-consensual treatment. It commended, in that context, the Committee's statement against the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine. There was still insufficient awareness among United Nations agencies, Member States and large parts of the academic community of the shift from a medical model to a social model with respect to the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities. CHRUSP therefore requested the Committee to issue a statement on a Convention-based approach to the human rights of people with psychosocial disabilities in order to promote a social model and to reaffirm the absolute prohibition on non-consensual treatment. It also suggested that the Committee should collaborate with organizations of people with psychosocial disabilities in undertaking promotional and pedagogical activities that encouraged a social model approach to full implementation of their rights.

41. CHRUSP, together with other organizations of persons with disabilities, was promoting the incorporation of a disability perspective based on the Convention into a draft instrument on the rights of older persons. It urged the Committee to take into account the situation of older persons with disabilities throughout its work.

42. **Mr. Perl** (Rehabilitation International) said that his organization had been advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities for almost 100 years. It had recently launched a Global Disability Development Fund and an Africa Fund aimed at providing financial support for initiatives for the empowerment of persons with disabilities. It gave special attention to capacity-building initiatives on behalf of women and children with disabilities in rural areas. Funds had been provided to date for projects in Brazil, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Nepal and South Africa. It was important to give organizations of persons with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate to their communities that they could play a meaningful role in building productive lives for persons with disabilities and others in their societies.

43. With a view to developing knowledge and sharing good practices, Rehabilitation International organized a world congress on rehabilitation every four years. The next congress would be held in Aarhus, Denmark, in 2020. It had also begun to organize regional events, such as the European Conference on Socio-Professional Rehabilitation held in Brussels the previous week and the Asia and Pacific Regional Conference to be held in Macau in June 2019.

44. Rehabilitation International sought to promote rehabilitation as a holistic concept that combined care, participation, education, inclusion in the labour market and substantial improvements in the well-being of people with disabilities. However, a significant gap remained between intentions and the delivery of tangible results. As increased awareness did not necessarily lead to an appreciation of the urgent need to address existing issues, Rehabilitation International was promoting inclusion of persons with disabilities not just through advocacy but through concrete initiatives based on more than nine decades of expertise. It assisted governments in ensuring that disability was a part of mainstream policy and services. The realization of the right of persons with disabilities to services called for the building of inclusive societies through a twin-track approach, including both mainstreamed and specific programmes.

45. Rehabilitation International hoped that the Committee would propose further changes at the current session that would have an impact on the lives of persons with disabilities at the grass-roots level.

46. **Ms. Tesoriero** (Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)) said that GANHRI brought together more than 100 national human rights institutions from all regions of the world. Such institutions were well placed to assist in implementing the Convention. While their national legal mandates varied, they were likely to include: a central role in coordinating the national independent monitoring framework under article 33

(2) of the Convention; power to inquire into systemic issues affecting the rights of persons with disabilities; organization of complaint and dispute resolution services; systemic advocacy in respect of policy, legislation and litigation that affected the rights of persons with disabilities; and raising of awareness of the Convention and the Committee's work in the governmental, non-governmental and business sectors and vis-à-vis the general public.

47. As national human rights institutions operated independently of governments, they were an authoritative source of information about the human rights situation on the ground and played an important role in supporting the Committee's work. GANHRI and its members highly valued their long-standing and productive cooperation with the Committee. A landmark event on monitoring had been jointly organized in 2014, bringing together Committee members and more than 100 participants to share their experiences of monitoring the Convention at the international and national levels. GANHRI had participated in the development of guidelines for independent monitoring mechanisms and national human rights institutions and their participation in the Committee. It also provided regular and systematic advice to individual national human rights institutions through its Geneva-based Head Office to support and foster their effective engagement with the Committee.

48. At the Committee's nineteenth session in February 2018, GANHRI and the Committee had adopted a joint declaration which, among other things, recognized the unique and critical role of national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The joint declaration contained several specific follow-up actions and recommendations, including those aimed at: strengthening data collection; developing a common framework of indicators and a repository of good practices for monitoring the Convention; strengthening the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities, including organizations of women and children with disabilities; requesting that international development cooperation efforts should enhance and promote the role of independent monitoring frameworks and national human rights institutions in monitoring the Convention; and continuing the interactive dialogue between the Committee, independent monitoring frameworks and national human rights institutions as a standard item on the Committee's agenda.

49. The GANHRI working group on the rights of persons with disabilities, which had been established the previous week, was composed of two representatives of national human rights institutions from each region of the globe and one representative of the GANHRI Chairperson. Its duties were aligned with many of the actions set out in the joint declaration. The Committee might wish to consider appointing one of its members to liaise with the working group.

50. **Ms. Blok** (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) said that UN-Women had launched its corporate strategy for the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities in 2018 on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The strategy was designed to ensure a more systematic operational response, to support the inclusion and meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities in all priority areas, and to review the accessibility of UN-Women as an organization. In that connection, a survey on inclusion of personnel with disabilities had been launched in 2018 and the findings would be used to develop an action plan to address challenges and gaps.

51. The Inter Sector Coordination Group and the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group co-chaired by UN-Women Bangladesh had produced a brief in 2018 on the interconnectedness of gender, age and disability issues in the response to the Rohingya refugee crisis.

52. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which was managed by UN-Women, was supporting projects by nine organizations aimed at preventing and ending violence against women and children with disabilities. Its grants in 2018 had totalled US\$ 2.9 million and the related projects were expected to reach almost 100,000 beneficiaries and five regions of the world by the end of 2021.

53. The UN-Women Security Office chaired the Inter-Agency Security Management Network's disabilities and security management working group, which was tasked with



investigating how security risk management in the United Nations security system could be rendered more inclusive. UN-Women's security team had developed a communications checklist and sample presentation formats to ensure that all security communications were inclusive and accessible.

54. UN-Women had been actively participating in the inter-agency process of developing a system-wide policy and accountability framework on disability inclusion. Having developed the accountability framework for gender equality, known as UN SWAP, UN-Women was uniquely placed to provide substantive input for the process. Collective action through mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could propel progress towards the systematic inclusion and empowerment of women and children with disabilities at all levels and in all areas of work.

55. **Ms. Ahn**, speaking on behalf of Ms. Alice Cruz, the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, said that leprosy had been associated with the abuse and violation of countless women, men and children for thousands of years. Religious and traditional harmful beliefs and practices, alongside erroneous misconceptions produced by late nineteenth century medicine, had fuelled pervasive multilayered discrimination and structural violence. The Special Rapporteur, on the basis of her work as both an academic and an activist, firmly believed that discrimination was due to labelling rather than leprosy itself.

56. The overlapping of harmful stereotypes, wrongful stereotyping and structural iniquities reinforced exclusion, segregation, discrimination and physical, sexual and psychological violence on the grounds of leprosy. Stigmatization against the estimated 5 million persons affected by leprosy worldwide remained institutionalized, and discriminatory laws against persons affected by leprosy remained in force in more than 50 States. Discriminatory administrative practices were also an enduring and shameful reality, particularly in health and education services, access to and regulation of employment, and access to disability rights, from which the majority of persons affected by leprosy were excluded owing to a lack of institutional recognition of their status as persons with disabilities.

57. Persons affected by leprosy had historically been dehumanized by the stereotype of "leper", widespread discriminatory language and a purely medical approach to their situation. The expression "persons with leprosy" concealed the fact that many persons continued to live with physical and psychological impairments, even after they were cured of the infection. The currently used expression "persons affected by leprosy" had been adopted as the first step towards self-identification.

58. The Special Rapporteur and persons affected by leprosy considered that they themselves and many of their family members should be recognized as persons with disabilities on the grounds of physical impairment and the multiple barriers imposed by society, as well as discrimination based on leprosy itself. Moreover, the State obligation to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify and abolish existing discriminatory laws, regulations, customs and practices against persons affected by leprosy should be immediately enforced pursuant to article 4 of the Convention.

59. The Special Rapporteur requested the Committee to consider referring to the implementation of the principles and guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members in its interaction with States parties. They provided a road map on how legally binding human rights norms should be implemented in the context of systematic and structural violations of the rights of persons affected by leprosy and their family members. The Special Rapporteur also requested the Committee to consider producing a guideline on the elimination of discrimination on grounds of leprosy.

60. **Ms. Akiyama** (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), speaking via audio link, said it had been estimated that some 619 million persons with disabilities were resident in the 62 States members of ESCAP, which had been promoting disability rights since 1993 through three consecutive frameworks. It was currently implementing the third Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

61. ESCAP was expediting the ratification and implementation of the Convention through the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities. ESCAP also promoted disability-inclusive development, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, which was composed of representatives of 15 States and 15 civil society organizations, provided technical advice on the implementation of the Convention, the 2030 Agenda and the Incheon Strategy.

62. As only 13 States in the region had reported the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation on disability, it was essential to promote a rights-based approach in order to implement the Convention. National consultations would be conducted in five States in 2020 on the implementation of the Incheon Strategy and the Beijing Declaration adopted by the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.

63. Disability data was a major issue on account of non-comparable data-collection methods. A technical cooperation project would be undertaken in order to determine the status of accessibility in many countries of the region. ESCAP would be finalizing by mid-2019 a working paper on procurement policy as a tool to promote accessibility. It had studied European Union directives, the Australian Government’s policy and section 508 of the United States Rehabilitation Act for the purpose. A working paper on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction should also be available by the end of 2019. Many States in the region had an unduly narrow understanding of the concept of accessibility, and were unaware of its economic benefits.

64. ESCAP endeavoured to ensure that sign language was legally recognized in the region. It was currently recognized by only four States, namely, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea.

65. ESCAP was contributing to the United Nations system-wide accountability framework on disability inclusion and would be the next Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*