



# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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

### Summary record of the 669th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 25 August 2023, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Fefoame

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

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

*(continued)*

*Initial periodic report of Mauritania (continued)* (CRPD/C/MRT/1;  
CRPD/C/MRT/Q/1 and CRPD/C/MRT/RQ/1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Mauritania joined the meeting.*

*Articles 1–10 and 11–20*

2. **Mr. Sidi** (Mauritania), responding to questions raised during the previous meeting, said that punitive amputations had not been carried out in 37 years. The country also had the longest standing moratorium on the death penalty in the world.

3. **A representative of Mauritania** said that Mauritanian legislation established particularly harsh punishment for acts of violence committed against women with disabilities. Dedicated units of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family, operated by specialized staff, had been set up across the country to prevent and address violence against women and provide support for victims, including victims with disabilities. The National Human Rights Commission and the National Observatory for Women's and Girls' Rights were also important resources in the fight against gender-based violence and the delivery of victim support. In addition, the Government provided financial support to civil society organizations working in the field.

4. **Mr. Sidi** (Mauritania) said that the National Authority for Combating Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants provided comprehensive responses to situations of human trafficking, with a particular focus on the protection of persons with disabilities.

5. **A representative of Mauritania** said that persons with disabilities enjoyed legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life and were provided with the support they required for exercising that right, in accordance with the nature of their disability. In order to ensure equal access to justice, all court buildings were accessible and interpretation services were made available for deaf persons.

6. In fulfilment of its obligations under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Government was delivering assistance and providing housing, health care, education, food and registration services to a large number of migrants, including migrants with disabilities, at the Mbera camp near the southern border. The same assistance was afforded to migrants in transit. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the country had rolled out a targeted vaccination campaign to reach vulnerable populations, including refugees.

7. The delegation had taken note of the Committee's concern about the absence of women with disabilities on the governing board of the National Observatory for Women's and Girls' Rights. As the board's mandate was about to expire, the Government would alert member organizations to the need to elect women with disabilities as board members in the upcoming elections.

8. With regard to the Committee's suggestion to establish an early warning system for gender-based violence, it was important to bear in mind that the broad mandate of the National Human Rights Commission included, as a priority, the monitoring of human rights violations committed against vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. In addition, the National Observatory for Women's and Girls' Rights monitored gender-related issues, including gender-based violence; the national mechanism for the prevention of torture monitored the situation in places of detention, including by way of unannounced visits; and the National Authority for Combating Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants kept track of trafficking-related violations. Together, those entities constituted a robust early warning and monitoring system.

9. **A representative of Mauritania** said that, in the framework of a project funded by the European Union, court buildings had been refurbished to ensure accessibility. The two persons with physical disabilities currently in detention had been provided with wheelchairs

by the prison administration. All new court buildings would be equipped with ramps to enable physical accessibility. Persons with low incomes, including persons with disabilities, were entitled to legal aid. Legal aid offices had been set up in all provincial capitals and nearly 11 million ouguiyas were allocated to legal aid annually. In 2022, legal aid had been granted in 136 cases, including 55 cases involving women.

10. Any person endowed with reason aged 18 years or older had the right to marry. Under article 6 of the Personal Status Code, guardians could consent to the marriage of persons with disabilities if such marriage was in the best interest of their ward. Guardians who agreed to the marriage of a person with disabilities against the person's best interest were liable to sanctions. Assessments of evidence of best interest were entrusted to the competent judge.

11. With regard to the physical penalties defined for certain crimes, it was important to remember that Mauritanian legislation derived from Islamic law. Still, those punishments were subject to a moratorium and had not been imposed since the 1980s.

12. Basic training programmes for judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers included modules on human rights, and continuous professional training curricula covered human rights issues specific to the trainees' field of work. Targeted workshops had been conducted to raise awareness of human rights among judicial staff and security officers. The crimes of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment were classified as crimes without statute of limitations, and all allegations of torture or ill-treatment were investigated promptly and impartially. Disability constituted an aggravating factor. Trafficking offences committed against persons with disabilities, for example, were liable to double the penalty. Corporal punishment of children, including children with disabilities, was established as a criminal offence.

13. The Government recognized the important role played by persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design of disaster contingency plans. Therefore, the national action plan to strengthen disaster risk reduction and response capacities adopted in 2015 had been developed on the basis of the findings and recommendations of the midterm review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. A project aimed at building resilience in humanitarian action, which had been finalized recently, also took account of the special needs of persons with disabilities. A nationwide humanitarian risk assessment conducted in preparation of the project had been validated in a workshop with all stakeholders, including the Mauritanian Federation of National Associations of Persons with Disabilities. The national disaster management and civil protection agency was a key resource for emergency response and operated offices across the country.

14. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family and the Commission on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society had worked closely with organizations of persons with disabilities in designing the pandemic response. A social solidarity fund with a budget of 5 million ouguiyas had been set up to support 30,000 poor families, including women-led households and households with persons with disabilities. The Commission, in cooperation with civil society organizations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, had developed guidelines on the inclusion of human rights standards in pandemic management based on the lessons drawn from the COVID-19 experience.

15. **Mr. Sidi** (Mauritania) said that a national strategy on access to justice for the period 2019 to 2029 was currently being rolled out. A justice summit held in January 2023 on the topic "What justice do we want?" had concluded in a document on justice reform and development for the period 2023–2024, which took due account of the concerns of persons with disabilities. The document had been submitted to the President and would form the basis of a future law.

16. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the Reproductive Health Act and the Code governing the judicial protection of children prohibited female genital mutilation. The Government was implementing a programme to promote the voluntary abandonment of female genital mutilation, in close cooperation with relevant United Nations entities and international, national and local civil society organizations. Community-based mechanisms, in particular, were an important entry point to stamp out the practice. The participation of

religious leaders and medical professionals in public awareness campaigns, including the dissemination of a fatwa on the prohibition of female genital mutilation, had also been critical. Awareness-raising campaigns conducted at the national, regional and local levels and across sectors had helped increase the willingness to abandon the harmful practice altogether. In 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family had organized 26 workshops for more than 300 women's cooperatives and in 28 schools in Nouakchott and regional capitals. Twenty-two public statements had been issued to promote the eradication of female genital mutilation, including from village leaders.

17. In recognition of the cross-cutting nature of disability, disability inclusion had been mainstreamed in all areas covered by the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity 2015–2030. The Mauritanian Federation of National Associations of Persons with Disabilities had participated actively in the design and development of the Strategy. A multisectoral committee, with focal points in all ministries, had been established to ensure that disability considerations were included across programmes, strategies and action plans.

18. Birth registration was recognized as a fundamental right and a prerequisite for the enjoyment of other civil rights. A national campaign had been launched to register all unregistered residents, in cooperation with civil society organizations and with support from the Commission on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society and the National Agency for the Population Registry and Secure Identity Documents. All of the Agency's offices were accessible to persons with disabilities.

19. On a separate note, he wished to point out that there was no forced sterilization in Mauritania.

20. **Mr. Sidi** (Mauritania) said that the National Human Rights Commission, with support from the United Nations, had led a considerable campaign to ensure that registration centres were accessible for persons with disabilities. The bill on violence against women and girls clearly criminalized female genital mutilation, which carried the penalty of imprisonment and a fine; the penalty was harsher if the victim had a disability. After some disagreement over the bill, a satisfactory version had been arrived at and should be adopted by the Council of Ministers soon.

21. **A representative of Mauritania** said that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a 24-hour helpline had been set up and mobile support units had distributed masks and other protective equipment to persons with disabilities. Where necessary, the State had also stepped in to cover utility bills and provide food packages. It had ensured that health-care facilities in the various governorates, including a new hospital, had the necessary equipment and supplies, such as high-capacity ventilators, diagnostic tools, medicines, cold transport and storage, and millions of doses of the vaccine. A national centre for health emergencies had been established to conduct disease surveillance, along with a multisectoral rapid-response committee.

22. **A representative of Mauritania** said that, while the quota for the employment of persons with disabilities was met in the public service, the number of posts at the local level was insufficient for the quota to apply. As for the private sector, the State, as regulator, ensured that there was no discrimination against persons with disabilities in terms of salary, trade union rights, social protection and access to credit and entrepreneurship, among others, and that their rights were respected.

23. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities had been set up under the authority of the Office of the Prime Minister to assist the various line ministries in coordinating and monitoring rehabilitation and integration services and advise them on the prevention of disability and the advancement of persons with disabilities, to design six guides for persons with disabilities and to participate in awareness-raising campaigns in the media. The Council had established a technical committee, of which the Mauritanian Federation of National Associations of Persons with Disabilities was a member, to develop an action plan to better understand the situation of persons with disabilities in terms of autonomy, accessibility and access to health care, social security, education, employment and training. The Government had implemented most of the recommendations stemming from that work. An appropriate system for the issuance of the disability card, as well as an integration and advancement fund, had been set

up, and cash transfers for the families of children with multiple disabilities had been generalized. An operating budget for the Council was being discussed.

24. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the Ministry for Social Welfare, Children and the Family purchased mobility aids annually, including wheelchairs, crutches, white canes and walking frames, through a public bidding process. Bids were considered by a dedicated committee in which the Mauritanian Federation of National Associations of Persons with Disabilities and the Department for Persons with Disabilities were represented. Some 5,000 people had benefited from the aids in the past three years, half of whom lived in the regions. To continuously improve the quality and number of aids available, the Government had increased the budget allocation, from 25 million ouguiyas in 2020 to 50 million ouguiyas in 2023. Technical partners also contributed to the stock of mobility aids, and persons with disabilities could have easier access to affordable aids through their health insurance. The National Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation Centre produced such aids.

25. To receive the disability card, persons with disabilities had to submit an application comprising a medical certificate issued by a doctor or specialist, specifying the nature, degree and cause of the disability, proof of residence, a national identification card and two photographs. Once applications were approved, the Department for Persons with Disabilities issued and distributed the cards through the regional offices of the Ministry for Social Welfare, Children and the Family. Of the 11,000 applications, 6,000 cards had been issued thus far, in other words more than 55 per cent.

26. **A representative of Mauritania** said that all new buildings were subject to accessibility regulations. There were some 200 persons with disabilities in the higher echelons of various government departments, including the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commission on Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Relations with Civil Society, as well as the central bank. The introduction of the quota for the employment of persons with disabilities in the public service had not only boosted recruitment but had also led to workplace adaptations. It was worth noting that the integration of so many persons with disabilities in the public service was a sign that ordinary schools had made it possible for them to gain the necessary knowledge. On a separate note, she wished to point out that television screens in public spaces were installed so as to be seen by all, including persons of small stature.

27. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the judicial authorities were required to initiate an investigation into all allegations of torture. Furthermore, a national anti-trafficking body had been established in July 2022, along with a helpline to report trafficking cases and a fund for victims; mobile awareness-raising units had been deployed on several occasions.

28. **A representative of Mauritania**, recalling that the Government had rolled out a raft of measures to enable persons with disabilities to take part in public life, make their own decisions and live with whom they wished, said that the right to equality and to live autonomously was enshrined in the Constitution. Moreover, under Ordinance No. 2006-034, the State was required to take the appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to be a part of and benefit from society. Monitoring of inclusion was the responsibility of the National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities. Thanks to the reform of the education system launched by the President, true equality of opportunity had been brought about through equal access to education. Except where their disability required specific attention, children with disabilities attended the same schools as their peers without disabilities. New schools had to be accessible, while existing ones had been retrofitted to ensure accessibility.

29. **Mr. Sidi** (Mauritania) added that accessibility in that context should be understood to mean the physical accessibility of buildings.

30. **A representative of Mauritania** said that various mechanisms and strategies had been established to protect children, including the National Children's Council and the children's parliament. Efforts to eradicate child marriage had consisted in providing training to specific groups, such as journalists, broadcasting on radio and television information on the consequences of child marriage, including for the health and education of girls, and raising awareness countrywide.

*Articles 21–33*

31. **Mr. Makni** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know how the State ensured that persons with disabilities enjoyed their right to freedom of expression and opinion and their right to access to information on an equal basis with others, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, public services, and radio and television broadcasts and what measures were in place to ensure the accessibility of communications for deaf and blind persons and persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

32. He would be interested to hear about any legal action, and associated rulings, taken against individuals or legal persons who had violated confidentiality and about the nature and effectiveness of the legislative and administrative measures the State was taking to ensure the full realization of the rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities in terms of guardianship and adoption.

33. Pointing out that article 33 of Ordinance No. 2006-043 on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities legitimized special education and that article 34 was contrary to the Committee's general comment No. 4 (2016) on inclusive education, he wondered when the ministerial order on the terms of admission and testing of children with disabilities referred to in article 34 would be adopted. Did the State party have free, good quality education within a reasonable distance and of all levels for all persons with disabilities, irrespective of the nature of their disability?

34. Noting that, while over half of applications resulted in the issuance of a disability card, it remained that less than 15 per cent of persons with disabilities had such a card, he invited the delegation to comment on the health coverage that was afforded to those who did not hold a card, on the geographical distribution of health-care services in the State party and the sufficiency of staffing to assist persons with disabilities.

35. Noting that Ordinance No. 2006-043 did not establish sanctions for discrimination in recruitment, he said he would like to know whether it would not make sense to expand the mandate of the National Human Rights Commission and provide it with sufficient financial resources to support the National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities in monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

36. **Mr. Kouassi** (Country Rapporteur) said that he had heard no response to the request for information, including figures, on persons placed under guardianship and on the steps taken to protect women with psychosocial disabilities in facilities that also housed men.

37. Concerning article 11 of the Convention, he would be grateful for an indication of whether the national action plan on disaster risk reduction provided for specific measures that took into account the situation of persons with disabilities.

38. **Mr. Morris** said that he wished to know whether the State party had a comprehensive strategic plan to promote fully inclusive education, how many children with disabilities were enrolled in inclusive educational institutions, how many persons with disabilities were registered in tertiary institutions and whether students with disabilities were provided with assistive technology to facilitate their learning.

39. He would welcome details of the efforts under way to ensure that health professionals were exposed to the human rights model of disability and to disability-specific and disability-sensitive content in their training. An indication of whether the State party had a strategy to eliminate sheltered workshops and help their employees to transition to the open labour market would also be appreciated.

40. It would be useful to know the number of parliamentarians with disabilities, whether those individuals were active in the community of persons with disabilities and whether the State party had plans to ratify or accede to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

41. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that she had received no reply to her questions concerning the 67 women who had given birth as a result of rape in segregation units in 2019, in particular on the criminal sanctions imposed on the perpetrators and the restorative justice measures adopted in favour of the victims.

42. She invited the delegation to comment on reports that women with psychosocial disabilities were provided with no procedural support to ensure their right to a fair trial, to indicate whether the prohibition of discrimination under the Personal Status Code protected women with psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities, to describe the support provided under the Code to parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities, to explain whether the measures mentioned in paragraphs 85 and 88 of the replies to the list of issues had effectively reduced poverty and to indicate whether persons with disabilities were granted housing subsidies.

43. **Ms. Fitoussi** said that it would be helpful to know what was done to encourage eligible individuals to apply for a disability card, why thousands of applications had been unsuccessful and whether the application process was fully accessible. She would also be interested to hear about the steps taken to promote the school enrolment of girls with disabilities and ensure that persons with intellectual disabilities received health-related information in a format that they could understand.

44. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that she would be glad of an update on whether the training and support centre for children with disabilities referred to in paragraph 163 of the State party's report was still operational, together with information on whether the centre was considered a school and, if so, what education was provided there. She would also appreciate data, disaggregated by age and type of disability, on the number of children enrolled in the centre, an indication of the length of the academic year and an explanation of whether consideration had been given to shifting responsibility for the centre from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family to the Ministry of National Education. She wished to know how many children with disabilities were out of school, what was being done to ensure their inclusion in the education system and what measures were taken to guarantee the full accessibility of polling stations and electoral campaign material and to encourage persons with disabilities to run for decision-making positions.

45. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that it would be interesting to know whether amendments would be introduced to the Personal Status Code to prohibit child marriage without exception and to the Criminal Code to prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including physical penalties for certain offences, bearing in mind the issuance of amputation and stoning verdicts by domestic courts over the previous decade despite the moratorium. Details of concrete steps to establish a system of supported decision-making for persons with disabilities would also be appreciated.

46. **Mr. Kabue** said that he would welcome information on the implementation of Decree No. 2017-169 on accessibility and on the measures in place to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life beyond mere voting. In that regard, he wished to know the extent to which persons with disabilities were involved in the work of government decision-making bodies and the parliament.

47. **Ms. Boresli** said that the very low rate of issuance of disability cards hindered the collection of statistics on persons with disabilities. According to census data, the population of Mauritania had stood at 4,615,000 in 2021, of whom between 12 and 15 per cent had been persons with disabilities. That equated to roughly 692,000 individuals, yet only 6,000 had received a disability card.

48. Regarding article 30 of the Convention, she would be grateful for information on the steps taken and financial resources allocated by the State party to promote the equal participation of persons with disabilities in sport in Mauritania and abroad.

49. **The Chair** asked what was done to address and prevent workplace discrimination and harassment against persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities and persons with leprosy, what steps were being taken to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa and what measures were envisaged to bring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals back on track by ensuring the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.*

50. **A representative of Mauritania**, drawing the Committee's attention to paragraphs 156 and 157 of the report and paragraph 23 of the replies to the list of issues, said that article 10 of the Constitution guaranteed all citizens the right to freedom of expression and opinion. The High Authority on the Press and Audiovisual Media strictly enforced the law on freedom of the press.

51. **A representative of Mauritania**, drawing the Committee's attention to paragraphs 68 to 73 of the replies to the list of issues, said that Education Act No. 2022-023 laid down the main elements of national policy in the field of education and training, and provided for schooling that was forward-looking and offered equality of opportunity to all. The centre for the education and social development of children with disabilities established by Decree No. 142-2014 was a public administrative body under the aegis of several government ministries whose mission was to provide vocational training to young persons with disabilities and meet the inclusive and special education needs of children with disabilities, including through the development of curricula, capacity-building for special education teachers and the production of teaching aids. The centre comprised 10 facilities, including a school for children aged 4 to 18 years with moderate or severe hearing impairments, who were taught adapted curricula in French Sign Language and "standardized" Arabic Sign Language, and a school for children with visual impairments from years 1 to 6, where teaching was provided in Braille and adaptive electronic media from years 1 to 3, with the aim of preparing pupils for inclusion in the mainstream education system from year 5 onwards. A programme was being carried out with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to provide every pupil at the latter school with a tablet computer. There was also a special education unit for children with autism, offering a structured learning environment in which pupils were encouraged to develop new skills and positive behaviour, and those with mild autism were provided with appropriate support to integrate into mainstream schools.

52. The centre had a special education unit for children with intellectual disabilities, where children were placed in one of four groups depending on the degree of their disabilities. It also had a vocational training unit where a variety of activities were organized, including a plastic arts workshop for deaf children, a sewing workshop for deaf girls and girls with disabilities, and hairdressing and baking workshops for deaf children. Four regional branches of the centre had been opened around the country. Enrolled children were provided with learning materials and a regular, safe transport service to take them to and from the centre. They also benefited from the services of a child psychiatrist, who visited the centre every week thanks to an agreement with the National Hospital Centre.

53. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the Government's aim was to ensure that every person with a disability in Mauritania had a disability card. Around 5,000 of the 11,000 people who had submitted an application would receive their cards by the end of the year. As things stood, a technical commission had been tasked with issuing the cards. However, to ensure that people received their cards more quickly, plans had been made to devolve the responsibility for issuing the cards to regional authorities. The Government also intended to carry out a series of campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the cards among people living in rural areas.

54. Every year, 50 million ouguiyas of public funds were allocated to the acquisition of technical aids for persons with reduced mobility.

55. Each year, the State invested 1 per cent of its total tax revenues in sport. The national parasports federation, which received funding from the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport as well as support from the Mauritanian Federation of National Associations of Persons with Disabilities, was in charge of making the necessary arrangements to enable Mauritanian para-athletes to compete abroad. It also organized national competitions, including an event held to coincide with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

56. With respect to participation in cultural life, representative associations of persons with disabilities took part in various festivals, including a festival for unity and social cohesion in Djeol. Most of the programmes broadcast on the family television channel of the Ministry for Social Welfare, Children and the Family were made for persons with disabilities. On the same channel, television presenters with disabilities also introduced debates on



disability issues and hosted concerts organized by representative associations of persons with disabilities.

57. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and its accompanying road map had been drawn up in cooperation with the International Labour Office and UNICEF. The goals of the five-year Action Plan had been to strengthen the legal and institutional framework on child labour, to build the technical and operational capacities of stakeholders in the fight against child labour, to raise awareness of the worst forms of child labour among children, and to implement specific measures aimed at combating child labour. The Action Plan had come to an end in 2020, and relevant stakeholders would soon meet to formulate a new plan and road map for the following five years.

58. Workers were protected against all forms of abuse or harassment in the workplace under the country's labour regulations. Those regulations applied on an equal basis to all workers, including persons with disabilities.

59. **A representative of Mauritania** said that 743 children, including 287 girls, were enrolled at the centre for the education and social development of children with disabilities. They included children with visual impairments, deaf children, children with intellectual disabilities, children with Down syndrome and children with autism. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Social Welfare, Children and the Family were in the process of drafting a new order to give effect to Ordinance No. 2006-043 on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities in matters relating to education.

60. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the General Delegation for National Solidarity and the Fight against Exclusion had been created in 2020. Its main mission was to reduce poverty and improve the living conditions of poor and vulnerable people. It had provided food packages, regular cash transfers and funding for income-generating activities to over 100,000 poor households, including over 20,000 households where persons with disabilities resided. As a result, 23,342 persons with disabilities had benefited from the General Delegation's activities, which amounted to over half of all persons with disabilities in Mauritania. Moreover, over half of women with disabilities in the country had received funding for income-generating activities. The General Delegation had constructed 1,432 social housing units intended for vulnerable population groups in the 10 regional capitals of the country, while the Ministry for Social Welfare, Children and the Family had also allocated 200 new social housing units to persons with disabilities.

61. Under a national programme to combat tuberculosis and leprosy originally launched in the 1990s, persons affected by leprosy received State subsidies. A special employment scheme had also been put in place under which persons affected by leprosy were recruited to guard cars in public areas in working conditions suited to their needs.

62. **A representative of Mauritania** said that, pursuant to a legislative amendment adopted in February 2021, two seats at the National Assembly were now systematically reserved for persons with disabilities at the time of parliamentary elections. Accordingly, the Independent National Electoral Commission had issued a circular establishing that all electoral lists put forward for those elections must include at least two persons with disabilities. Since the introduction of the new rule, four persons with disabilities had been elected to the National Assembly, including one woman.

63. The adoption of Act No. 2021-004 on associations, foundations and networks had greatly facilitated the registration of and access to associations, including for persons with disabilities. The Mauritanian Federation of National Associations of Persons with Disabilities currently represented 57 associations in public institutions and at national conferences. Mauritania was in the process of ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. It had already ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and was planning to sign the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa in the near future.

64. **A representative of Mauritania** said that his country was fully aware of the importance of collecting accurate data on persons with disabilities. To that end, the

Washington Group short set of questions on functioning would be incorporated into the general housing and population census that was scheduled to take place before the end of 2023.

65. **A representative of Mauritania** said that the Ministry of Health had adopted an action plan on the training of senior health-care professionals on the treatment of persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, training for people who worked at rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities was provided by the national health college. The Ministry of Health was currently implementing 16 national programmes covering a broad spectrum of care and services. Under the national neurological and intellectual health programme, persons with intellectual and neurological diseases could receive specialist treatment at the hospital for head, neck and musculoskeletal conditions. At a general level, the Ministry of Health's facilities provided all users with equal access to the treatment and services that they offered, without distinction as to or discrimination based on race, colour, sex, disability or age. Those facilities, like all new buildings, were subject to the physical accessibility standards set out in Decree No. 2017-169.

66. **Mr. Bouhoubeyni** (National Human Rights Commission, Mauritania) said that the National Human Rights Commission had recently visited a village where it had encountered a large number of persons with disabilities who did not have disability cards and were not even aware that they had rights. It was therefore clear that the Government needed to launch a major campaign to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Government should also make reforms to the justice system, including by extending the availability of legal aid to criminal cases, reassigning the task of administering legal aid away from the public prosecutor and making the services of accredited interpreters available in all courts. Elsewhere, the National Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation Centre needed strengthening. Lastly, the Commission intended to bring a proposal before the Government to the effect that the Commission should be restructured to include three new mechanisms: a mechanism against torture, a mechanism for the rights of persons with disabilities and a mechanism for the rights of children.

67. **Mr. Sidi** (Mauritania) said that he thanked all Committee members for their comments and questions. The Government looked forward to receiving the Committee's concluding observations, which would be addressed by the interministerial technical committee tasked with drafting reports and following up on the implementation of the recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review process.

68. **Mr. Kouassi** said that the State party should take the necessary measures to ensure that the lives of persons with disabilities were tangibly improved as a result of its implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

69. **Mr. Makni** said that he thanked the delegation for its participation in a constructive and fruitful dialogue with the Committee. He urged the Government to bring the Committee's concluding observations to the attention of the country's lawmakers and to ensure that all recommended changes to national legislation were brought into effect.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*