



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
2 April 2024

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Thirtieth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 689th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 4 March 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Fefoame

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the thirtieth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Tribute to the memory of Damjan Tatić and Monthian Buntan, former members of the Committee

2. **The Chair** paid tribute to the memory of Damjan Tatić and Monthian Buntan, who had passed away, acknowledging their contributions to the Committee's work and those of the other late members, Soumia Amrani, Gábor Gombos and Danlami Basharu.

3. *At the invitation of the Chair, those present observed a minute of silence.*

Opening statement by the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

4. **Mr. Ori** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that a series of initiatives had been launched to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2023. As part of the Push for Pledges campaign, more than 35 Member States had pledged to improve social inclusion and the well-being of persons with disabilities, while, as a result of the campaign for the ratification of human rights treaties, Cameroon, Liechtenstein, Solomon Islands, South Sudan and Timor-Leste had ratified the Convention and Kazakhstan and Timor-Leste had ratified the Optional Protocol, bringing the total number of States parties to those instruments to 190 and 106, respectively. The Committee was to be commended on its full engagement with the ratification campaign.

5. Since the Committee's previous session, a number of major events and developments related to the rights of persons with disabilities had taken place. In the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 September 2023, States had committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities actively participated in and equally benefited from sustainable development efforts.

6. Various resolutions had been adopted regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. At its seventy-eighth session, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 78/195 on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in relation to situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and resolution 78/213 on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies. At its fifty-fourth session, the Human Rights Council had adopted resolution 54/21 on the right to privacy in the digital age and resolution 54/6 on the centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective.

7. On 26 February 2024, OHCHR had organized the annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming, with the theme "Harnessing multilateral efforts to embed, amplify and realize the rights of persons with disabilities, with a focus on full and effective participation and inclusion in society". The discussion had focused on the challenges faced, progress made and next steps to be taken with regard to implementing the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

8. The Forum on Business and Human Rights had been held on 27 November 2023. For the first time, a panel discussion on the rights of persons of disabilities had been organized as part of the Forum, to examine the place of persons with disabilities in the business and human rights agenda and employment opportunities for them.

9. On 11 October 2023, the *2023 Global Survey Report on Persons with Disabilities and Disasters* had been released by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The report highlighted the challenges faced by persons with disabilities during natural disasters, climate-related crises and global health emergencies and emphasized the need to transform commitments into tangible action for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and to respect legal obligations.

10. On 9 October 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) and OHCHR had published guidance to assist countries with bringing their legislation on mental health into line with the Convention. The guidance promoted a human rights model of disability and the integration of mental health into general legislation, rather than the adoption of mental health-specific laws.

11. In November 2023, in Spain, the Supreme Court had confirmed the binding nature for the State party of the decisions adopted by the Committee on individual communications.

12. The International Day of Persons with Disabilities, on 1 December 2023, had been marked at United Nations Headquarters in New York with an event focused on the need to address major obstacles to inclusive and sustainable development for persons with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities. Also in December 2023, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had issued a guide on best practices for improving digital inclusion and the accessibility of digital solutions for girls with disabilities, while the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) had issued a policy brief that underscored the persistent discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities and published a corporate strategy for their empowerment. In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) had published a comprehensive compilation of good corporate practices from 30 multinational enterprises that shared the goal of creating a welcoming and inclusive work culture for persons with disabilities.

13. In January 2024, OHCHR had issued a report on good practices of support systems enabling community inclusion of persons with disabilities, which underlined the significance of a rights-based approach to support and care and the need for a transformative departure from traditional care models. In collaboration with UN-Women and ILO, OHCHR had organized a high-level event in October 2023 to celebrate the first International Day of Care and Support and raise awareness of the need to boost investment in rights-based care and support systems.

14. OHCHR continued its work to support the strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies. Key developments had been the issuance in May 2023 of the Office's working paper on options and guiding questions in that regard, the adoption of the conclusions of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on the working paper at their thirty-fifth annual meeting, held in June 2023, and the convening in November 2023 of the Office's informal briefing on the treaty body strengthening process. At the briefing, the High Commissioner had appealed to States to provide the essential resources required to ensure the proper functioning of the treaty body system.

15. Looking ahead to 2024, the shared strategic goal was to mobilize support from States to strengthen and harmonize the work of the treaty bodies based on the Chairs' conclusions and the OHCHR working paper. Decisions taken by States, in particular regarding the provision of financial and human resources, would determine the future trajectory of the treaty body system. He hoped that, when the General Assembly adopted its biennial resolution on the treaty body system in December 2024, there would be a robust budget for its implementation.

Adoption of the agenda (CRPD/C/30/1)

16. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Committee

17. **The Chair** said that she had represented the Committee at a number of events: the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly in New York, where she had presented the Committee's principal activities, achievements and challenges to the Third Committee; the celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities; the high-level event to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and the informal meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies in February 2024. The Chairs had submitted a joint letter to the President of the General Assembly to highlight the need for appropriate resources to be provided to the treaty bodies.

18. While in New York, she had met with the President of the Bureau of the Conference of States Parties to explore avenues for continued collaboration and to ensure that issues related to disability would be prioritized during the Summit of the Future. She had also attended a meeting with the Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Jamaica in their capacity as co-facilitators of the Declaration on Future Generations, at which she had emphasized the importance of including disability as a cross-cutting issue, and she had met with the director of the WHO Office at the United Nations.

19. On 20 October 2023, she had issued a statement on the situation of persons with disabilities in relation to the conflicts in Israel and Gaza. In addition, she had made contributions to the draft recommendation of the Council of Europe on respect for autonomy and mental health; to the themes and sub-themes for the forthcoming Conference of States Parties; to a letter to the Permanent Representatives of Namibia and Germany, who were co-facilitators of the zero draft of the Pact for the Future; and to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

20. She had attended a meeting with the Committee against Torture in October 2023 to discuss possible areas of collaboration. A dialogue with the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would be held on 6 March 2024, and periodic meetings were held with the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

21. With regard to the treaty body strengthening process, she took every opportunity to promote the inclusive and accessible transformation of digital resources in the context of the digital uplift component. She had also initiated discussions on the coordination mechanism, established at the thirty-fifth meeting of the Chairs in June 2023.

22. She would encourage all Member States to participate actively in the upcoming Summit of the Future. She wished to stress that the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development could not be achieved without the inclusion of all people, including those with disabilities.

Submission of reports by parties to the Convention under article 35

23. **Mr. Araya** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, since its previous session, the Committee had received the combined second and third periodic reports of the Philippines and the Dominican Republic and the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Oman and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. There were currently 68 periodic reports pending consideration, which represented a backlog of five years.

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

24. **A representative of Timor-Leste** said that her Government had been actively engaged in various initiatives regarding the rights of persons with disabilities prior to ratification of the Convention in 2023. In 2012, the Government had adopted a national disability policy, which had laid the groundwork for the inaugural national action plan on disability covering the period 2014–2018 and a second action plan covering the period 2021–2030. Pursuant to the new plan, a technical working group had been established comprising representatives from key ministries responsible for implementing the action plan.

25. The Government had set up a social security scheme with measures tailored to individuals with disabilities, including the disbursement of social pensions for individuals with varying degrees of impairment. It had also introduced sign language programming on national and private television channels and comprehensive sign language training initiatives, established a national rehabilitation centre and launched inclusive education policies to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities and the provision of funding to civil society organizations engaged in disability-inclusive programmes.

26. Despite such achievements, many challenges remained to be overcome and required urgent attention. As a small island developing State and a least developed country, Timor-Leste faced a number of limitations, particularly a lack of financial and human

resources, which hindered the implementation of the national action plan on disability and the country's obligations under the Convention.

27. Her Government had outlined immediate priorities to address the situation, including the creation of a national disability council, the extension of the social pension to both older citizens and people with disabilities, the drafting of a law on disability, the expansion of rehabilitation services to the municipalities and the implementation of capacity-building initiatives for rehabilitation services professionals.

28. Timor-Leste remained reliant on the support of its development partners and United Nations agencies to continue fostering a more inclusive society that upheld the rights of persons with disabilities.

29. **Ms. Ramamonjisoa** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the campaign for the ratification of treaties had been spearheaded by the treaty body capacity-building programme in OHCHR, which she coordinated. Countries from the Global South had represented the majority of new ratifications and pledges, with Iceland, Liberia and South Africa pledging to ratify the Optional Protocol. Work was under way to encourage the remaining States that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention, including Bhutan, Eritrea, the Holy See, Lebanon, Niue, Tajikistan, Tonga and the United States of America. OHCHR would again seek the Committee's collaboration in designing and applying tailored advocacy strategies that addressed the unique challenges and obstacles to ratification in those countries.

30. Strategies would involve holding meetings with countries' permanent representatives and delegations in Geneva, organizing side events, engaging in direct advocacy at the country level in collaboration with United Nations agencies and development partners, working with organizations of persons with disabilities and enlisting the help of the Group of Friends of the Convention, led by Mexico and New Zealand. On the advice of OHCHR, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities now included the promotion of universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

31. On 8 May 2024, a practical guide on independent monitoring mechanisms would be launched at an event to be held on the margins of the meeting of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. A number of Committee members had participated in the drafting of the guide, the purpose of which would be to assist States, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations in implementing the provisions of the Convention that pertained to those mechanisms. The event would also see the launch of a web-based repository of existing mechanisms, which would contain information on the type of mechanism that had been established in each State. She hoped that Committee members would be able to participate in the event and that the excellent cooperation between OHCHR and the Committee would continue with a view to achieving the universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

32. **A representative of the 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 Oslo Action Plan 2020–2024, adopted at the Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, reaffirmed the States parties' commitment to respond to the needs of landmine victims and protect their rights. Action 34 of the Plan explicitly requested States parties to align their victim assistance efforts with the Convention, and action 40 called on States parties to ensure the safety and protection of landmine survivors in emergency situations, in line with article 11 of the Convention. She was pleased that the Committee had decided to prepare a general comment on that article, which had encouraged a shift towards a human rights-based approach to ensuring the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. The general comment would enhance understanding of the article and further improve efforts to guarantee the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in such situations.

33. In 2023, the Government of Cambodia had hosted the Third Global Conference on Assistance to the Victims of Anti-Personnel Mines and Other Explosive Ordnance in a Disability Rights Context, the objective of which had been to strengthen States parties' commitment to meeting their victim assistance obligations and aligning their efforts with the

Convention. The Government of Cambodia was also due to host the Fifth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in November 2024, at which States parties would adopt a new five-year action plan. Any input that the Committee could provide to help build on the progress made to date would be welcome. The Committee on Victim Assistance, for its part, would continue to support national and regional dialogues on victim assistance and disability rights in 2024.

34. She looked forward to continued cooperation with the Committee and encouraged Committee members to incorporate questions on landmine survivors and their inclusion in disability frameworks into its lists of issues. The Committee on Victim Assistance and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit stood ready to provide support in that regard.

35. **Ms. Hagrass** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities), speaking in a pre-recorded video message, said she hoped that the current meeting would mark the start of many years of excellent collaboration between herself and the Committee. In the 10 years since the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities had been created, cooperation between the mandate holders and the Committee had taken many forms. For example, the mandate holders had systematically consulted the Committee's general comments and jurisprudence when preparing their thematic reports and communications and had taken account of the Committee's concluding observations when engaging with States, while the Committee had been closely involved in the efforts of the previous Special Rapporteur to develop the International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities, which had been published in 2020.

36. She intended to work with the Committee to prevent persons with disabilities from being left behind and ensure that they were able to contribute to and benefit from development on an equal basis. She had been advocating for the effective mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in the sustainable development agenda and the outcome document of the Summit of the Future and hoped that the Committee would join her in doing so. At the forthcoming session of the Human Rights Council, she would hold an interactive dialogue with States and present her first thematic report, which would take stock of her predecessors' achievements and outline the thematic priorities and objectives that she had set with the aim of advancing the disability agenda.

37. **Ms. Miranda Galarza** (Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) and their family members), speaking in a pre-recorded video message, said that leprosy was a disease that not only destroyed the health of the individuals affected, but also caused them to face social, economic, political and cultural barriers that prevented them from exercising their rights. WHO had estimated that 3 to 4 million people worldwide were currently living with a leprosy-related disability, and the communities historically affected by the disease faced the same marginalization and discrimination as that experienced by persons with disabilities.

38. Her experience had shown her that it was essential for individuals affected by leprosy to be recognized by and receive support from the wider disability rights movement in order for them to be able to defend their rights and take steps to transform the lives of their communities. The approval by the United Nations in 2010 of the principles and guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members and the creation of the mandate of Special Rapporteur in 2017 had been significant milestones in that regard. The Convention had also made an important contribution by guaranteeing and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities more generally. She wished to invite Committee members to support efforts to ensure that individuals affected by leprosy were able to fully enjoy their rights and to promote cooperation and understanding between groups representing such individuals and the wider disability rights movement. It was crucial for individuals affected by leprosy to be given a voice in spaces in which the rights of persons with disabilities were being defended.

39. **Ms. Miti-Drummond** (Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism) said that albinism was a profoundly misunderstood condition that affected individuals of all nationalities and races. While reports of the killing of individuals with albinism had been limited to a number of African countries, individuals with the

condition across the world suffered human rights violations, were victims of intersectional discrimination and often lacked access to health services, education and employment opportunities. In her thematic reports submitted to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, she had consistently underscored the fundamental need to include persons with albinism in policies and discussions concerning persons with disabilities and had referred to the safeguards established under the Convention and its provisions on reasonable accommodation and health, education and employment rights.

40. She would welcome the Committee's support in addressing the severe lack of data on individuals with albinism. Access to such data was hindered by the fact that the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning failed to recognize a lack of melanin and vulnerability to skin cancer as a disability and made no distinction between individuals with visual impairments and individuals with visual impairments linked to albinism. There was also a lack of awareness of the reasonable accommodation needs of individuals with albinism, in particular those arising from their increased susceptibility to skin cancer. It was essential to continue educating health-care providers, educators, employers and social workers about albinism. For her part, she was deeply committed to advocating for improved access to high-quality sunscreen products for individuals with albinism as a way of reducing mortality related to skin cancer.

41. She wished to commend the Committee for including recommendations aimed at addressing the situation of individuals with albinism in its concluding observations. It would be helpful for the Committee to mainstream the issues faced by individuals with albinism in all other parts of its work, given the critical role that it could play in raising awareness of such issues and preventing individuals with albinism from being left behind.

42. **A representative of the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights** said that the Rapporteurship's first-ever thematic report on the human rights situation of persons with disabilities in the Americas was due to be published in the first quarter of 2024. The report would outline the impact of the medical model of disability used within the legal systems of countries in the region, the most common obstacles faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights and the steps taken by Governments to overcome those obstacles. The Rapporteurship's plan of action for 2024 would focus on tackling the stigmatization and violence experienced by persons with disabilities, supporting Governments in recognizing the differentiated needs of such persons and addressing the lack of attention given to disability issues in human rights institutions in the region. He hoped that the Committee would support those efforts and that the two bodies would be able to develop joint initiatives in relation to the launching and dissemination of the thematic report and the training of key stakeholders in the region. The Rapporteurship would be organizing a high-level round table with missions of the Organization of American States in order to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the public agenda; the Committee's participation in that event would also be welcome.

43. **Mr. Barrett** (World Health Organization) said that World Health Assembly resolution 74.8 on the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities, adopted in 2021, had shone a light on the poor health outcomes of persons with disabilities and the steps to be taken by stakeholders in the health sector to address that situation. In response to the resolution, in 2022 WHO had published a global report on health equity for persons with disabilities, which revealed that persons with disabilities were more likely to die earlier and have poorer health and functioning than the general population. A disability guide for action had been developed by WHO to help States implement the recommendations contained in the report. The guide focused on the integration of disability issues into health system governance, planning and monitoring processes. He would be more than willing to arrange a meeting with the Committee on the margins of the current session in order to discuss the guide in more detail, particularly since it was a tool that would help States fulfil their obligations under article 25 of the Convention.

44. WHO was working to implement the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and had integrated disability issues into its technical programmes at the country and regional levels. It organized dialogues and capacity-building sessions with stakeholders from all sectors to mainstream disability inclusion into health systems and ensure that persons with disabilities had full and equal access to health services. A disability inclusion marker was in

the process of being implemented in order to track efforts to mainstream disability inclusion in programmes across WHO, and steps were being taken to connect local, regional and international organizations of persons with disabilities with WHO offices. The Committee had a fundamental role to play in securing the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities; WHO stood ready to provide any support that the Committee might require in that regard.

45. **A representative of the International Disability Alliance** said that his organization appreciated the Committee's engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities within the framework of reviews of State party reports and looked forward to contributing to the Committee's work at the current session, including the development of its forthcoming general comments. It was committed to working with other human rights treaty bodies so that they integrated disability standards into their work. For example, it had recently engaged with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee. It was also seeking to contribute a disability perspective to the general comments currently being developed by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on Migrant Workers.

46. The Alliance was aware of the resource constraints that were currently affecting the Committee's work. It noted with regret the postponement of the adoption of the lists of issues for Cyprus, Moldova and Monaco. Such delays would exacerbate the existing backlog in the consideration of State party reports and increase the time between submission and review, underscoring the urgent need for increased budget allocations to ensure timely human rights monitoring.

47. His organization was also concerned about the abrupt discontinuation of remote participation for representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and other groups in official meetings of the treaty bodies. The failure to establish a permanent framework for remote participation in 2024 would hinder engagement with civil society. It would be deeply disappointing if the United Nations failed to ensure inclusive and meaningful participation, which was essential for a properly functioning human rights framework. He therefore urged Member States to augment the budget for the Committee's activities and to devise innovative solutions to address the backlog of State party reports.

48. Regarding the development of the general comments on article 11 of the Convention on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, the Alliance appreciated the Committee's efforts to consider all relevant conflicts, situations of occupation and other crisis situations that fell within its mandate. It noted with concern the lack of information on the impact of such situations on persons with disabilities.

49. Lastly, noting that nine members of the Committee would be elected or re-elected in June 2024, he called upon States parties to maintain the Committee's gender balance and to increase representation from underrepresented regions, such as Eastern Europe, and disability constituencies, such as persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with psychosocial disabilities, in accordance with article 34 of the Convention.

50. **Representatives of the Spanish National Organization for Blind Persons (ONCE)** said that they would deliver their statement jointly. ONCE had been working to build a more egalitarian society since 1938 and was now the fourth largest public-sector employer in Spain, with more than 73,000 employees, 60 per cent of whom were persons with disabilities. In 2019, in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank, ONCE had launched the "Por Talento Latinoamérica" project to increase the labour-market participation of persons with disabilities in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador. Different approaches were taken in each country, with the involvement of key actors such as organizations of persons with disabilities, United Nations agencies, public authorities, the private sector and academia. New systems had been set up to disseminate information on disability and the labour market and thus inform public policy decisions. A business network, consisting of more than 60 national and multinational companies committed to the employment of persons with disabilities, had been established. More than 1,000 human resources, communication and marketing professionals had participated in training and awareness-raising on the Convention. Thanks to such training, which had taken place in all

four countries, more than 500 human resources professionals were now developing their own systems for the recruitment of persons with disabilities.

51. **A representative of Maynooth University and a representative of Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies**, delivering their statement jointly, said that they wished to present the findings of their research, which had been published in the book *Federalism and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (Hart Publishing, 2023). One of the aims of the research had been to understand the reasons behind the uneven progress made in advancing disability rights. The book focused on the effects of federal structures on the implementation of the Convention and offered a comprehensive analysis of relevant national experiences. The analysis covered countries that had ratified the Convention more than 10 years previously, were broadly understood to have federal systems, even if they did not formally define them as such, and had reportedly encountered difficulties in implementing the Convention. The countries selected in accordance with those criteria were Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom. The selected countries were located in different geographical regions, including the Global South, and had different legal traditions. The European Union was also included in the analysis.

52. In each case, the authors had considered the implementation of specific areas of the Convention, including the concept of disability, equality, accessibility, participation and national implementation and monitoring under article 33. The research had revealed, firstly, that ratification of the Convention had created centralizing dynamics, most notably in terms of the concept of disability, equality and accessibility. Thus, many countries had adopted, in their federal laws, a definition of disability aligned with the social model set out in article 1 of the Convention – an important step, which had enabled federal courts to advance the understanding of disability rights as proclaimed in the Convention. Federal legislation had contributed to progress in the area of equality and non-discrimination; however, in that regard, action at the subnational level had been lacking, and further harmonization was needed to reduce territorial discrepancies. Centralizing dynamics had also been observed in the area of accessibility, with the adoption of federal legislation such as the Accessible Canada Act of 2019. The second finding was that the participation of persons with disabilities in public policymaking was somewhat uneven, owing to a lack of coordination and communication between participation mechanisms and bodies established at the federal and subnational levels. The third finding was that implementation of article 33 (1) of the Convention, which required the establishment or designation of a coordination mechanism, was lagging in many countries, and that practices in relation to coordination mechanisms were very inconsistent.

53. The authors hoped that their research would encourage reflection and dialogue. They wished to invite the Committee to engage with academics, organizations of persons with disabilities and local and State authorities on the complexities of implementing the Convention in countries with multilevel systems of governance, given the importance of such engagement for the advancement of disability rights and the fulfilment of Convention obligations.

54. **A representative of Red Latinoamericana de Vida Independiente** (Latin American Network for Independent Living) said that the *Movimiento de Personas con Discapacidad* (Movement of Persons with Disabilities), which had emerged in Mexico in 2021, was a social movement that fought for the dignity of persons with disabilities, their full recognition as subjects of rights and the equal exercise of those rights. Through the use of social media, the movement had attracted the support of a large number of people in Mexico and other Latin American countries, and it was still growing. Supporters wore fluorescent yellow garments to give prominence to a group that historically had been invisible and to symbolize the strength, hope and empowerment of persons with disabilities.

55. In 2021, the movement had carried out initiatives to increase the visibility of persons with disabilities. It had met with different groups of persons with disabilities and civil society organizations and had marked the International Day of Persons with Disabilities by organizing marches in 30 Mexican cities and by illuminating public buildings and monuments. In 2022, it had addressed the issue of universal accessibility through a social media campaign in which persons with disabilities had spoken about the impact of barriers

and about challenges for their inclusion. In 2023, the movement had focused on the right of persons with disabilities to employment in decent conditions. To that end, it had engaged with businesses – many of which were unfamiliar with disability issues – and shared experiences and information in order to promote best practices.

56. The movement had already shown that persons with disabilities, if they were united and organized, could effect significant change. She urged the Committee to work directly with persons with disabilities, with future generations in mind, to ensure that their voices were heard and that no one was left behind.

57. **A self-advocate from Colombia** said that she wished to share her life story as an example of the experiences of persons with autism in developing countries. She had been born with autism spectrum disorder in a small village in the rural south of Colombia, some 450 kilometres from Bogotá. Her parents, who were illiterate and had no knowledge of autism, had been told that she was incapable. They had nonetheless refused to raise her differently from their other children or in isolation from the community. Her father, in particular, had strived to explain the challenges that she would face and had helped her to develop the communication and social skills that she needed to make her way in the world. With much time and effort, and great persistence, she had exceeded all expectations.

58. Nevertheless, the worsening of her symptoms had resulted in her being admitted to hospital, where she had been institutionalized, prescribed the wrong medication and sterilized without her consent. Educational institutions had not been prepared to provide her with an inclusive education. It had taken her twice as long as other children, and only by dint of perseverance, to be accepted and to obtain the resources she needed to pursue a professional career. She had always been capable of study and willing to contribute to society, but she had been unable to express or demonstrate that willingness. She had needed reasonable accommodation in order to overcome a disability that was sometimes invisible to others. She now worked in Bogotá as a professional for a global technology company.

59. In the light of her experience, she urged the Committee to maintain and strengthen efforts to build a universal model that included persons with autism in all spheres of life. All persons with autism should have access to the education and services they needed, at every stage of life. A truly universal model required a whole-of-society approach, with Governments adopting public policies and programmes that cleared a path for persons with autism, instead of hindering them. It was not enough for States to ratify the Convention; they should also provide reasonable accommodation for persons with autism and establish mechanisms to ensure that their voices were heard. Governments should seek technical assistance from the Committee and from public and private institutions in order to determine the extent to which the Convention had been implemented in their countries and the actions that were needed in order to achieve a truly universal model. They should also recognize and guarantee the participation of persons with autism; implement the Committee's guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies (CRPD/C/5); provide for the individual autonomy and independence of persons with autism in laws, programmes and projects; collect statistics; and remove the barriers that persons with autism faced.

60. Lastly, in view of the forthcoming elections to the Committee, she wished to highlight the importance of electing women and persons with autism or other intellectual disabilities, so that the Committee continued to be an example of gender equity, diversity and inclusion.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 12.15 p.m.