



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Seventeenth session

New York, 11–13 June 2024

Report of the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

I. Introduction

1. The seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 13 June 2024.

2. Six meetings were held at the seventeenth session of the Conference. On 11 June, the Conference considered the agenda items regarding the opening of the session, the adoption of the agenda, the organization of work and the election of members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The general debate was held during six meetings held over three days, from 11 to 13 June. Three round tables were held at the 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings, on 12 and 13 June. At its 6th meeting, on the afternoon of 13 June, the Conference considered agenda item 5 (c), “Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention”; item 6, “Decisions by the Conference of States Parties”; and item 7, “Closure of the session”.

3. The text of the decisions adopted by the Conference is contained in annex I, the President’s summary of the session is contained in annex II, and the list of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference is contained in annex III.

II. Opening of the session

4. The seventeenth session of the Conference was opened by the President of the Conference and Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb.

5. At its 1st meeting, the Conference adopted the provisional agenda ([CRPD/CSP/2024/1](#)) and agreed on the organization of work for the session.

6. Pursuant to rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure, and under agenda item 3, six non-governmental organizations were accredited to the Conference (see annex III).

7. Opening statements were made by the President of the Conference; the Deputy Secretary-General; the President of the General Assembly, Dennis Francis (by video



message); the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass; a civil society representative and the President of the World Federation of the Deafblind, Sanja Tarcazy; and a youth representative, Khadija Jallouli (Tunisia).

III. Election of members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

8. At its 1st meeting, under agenda item 4, the Conference elected the following nine members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with terms beginning on 1 January 2025: Hiroshi Tamon (Japan), Magino Corporán Lorenzo (Dominican Republic), Gerel Dondovdorj (Mongolia), Natalia Guala Beathyate (Uruguay), Mara Cristina Gabrilli (Brazil), Christopher Nwanoro (Nigeria), Abdelmajid Makni (Morocco), Floyd Morris (Jamaica), and Inmaculada Placencia Porrero (European Union).

IV. Matters related to the implementation of the Convention

A. General debate

9. Under agenda item 5 (a), 155 statements were made by States parties and signatories to the Convention, groups of States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and United Nations system entities.¹

¹ Statements were delivered, in chronological order, by: Germany; Guyana; Jordan; Liechtenstein; Tunisia; International Disability Alliance; the Office of the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia; the International Labour Organization; Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Türkiye and Australia (known as the MIKTA Group); Australia; Kuwait; Egypt; Zambia; International Disability and Development Consortium; Human Rights Ombudsman of Slovenia; United Nations Office for Project Services; Malta; Greece; Belgium; Iceland; Arab Organization of Disabled Persons; Australian Human Rights Commission; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); Morocco; State of Palestine; Ghana; Canada; Sierra Leone; CBM Global Disability Inclusion; Canadian Human Rights Commission; United Nations Population Fund; Italy; Luxembourg; Uganda; European Union; Cambodia; European Disability Forum; League of Arab States; United Arab Emirates; Paraguay; Djibouti; Chad; Lebanon; Inclusion International; Commonwealth; Philippines; Portugal; Singapore; Poland; Latvia; Women Enabled; Brazil; Türkiye; Cyprus; Armenia; World Federation of the Deafblind; Lithuania; Saudi Arabia; Finland; Norway; Islamic Republic of Iran; Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (Sightsavers); Jamaica; Ukraine; Kazakhstan; Timor-Leste; World Federation of the Deaf; Uruguay; Denmark, on behalf of the LGBTI Core Group; Slovenia, on behalf of Burkina Faso, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Slovenia and Zambia; Mexico, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities; France; Conselho Federal da Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil; Panama; Sri Lanka; Austria; Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum; Georgia; Switzerland; Namibia; Honduras; Ireland; Bulgaria; Guatemala; Hungary; Australian Federation of Disability Organizations; Peru; Qatar; Syrian Arab Republic; Czechia; Colombia; Chile; Women with Disabilities Australia; Romania; South Africa; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Inclusion Canada; Burkina Faso; Mexico; China; Kyrgyzstan; Yemen; Leprosy Mission International; Sweden; Denmark; Kenya; Algeria; Nigeria; Belarus; Down Syndrome New South Wales; Israel; New Zealand; Barbados; Slovenia; Down Syndrome Australia; Thailand; Nicaragua; Spain; Cuba; International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment; El Salvador; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Monaco; Ecuador; India; Keystone Human Services International; Costa Rica; United Republic of Tanzania; Malaysia; Zimbabwe; Iraq; Validity Foundation – Mental Disability Advocacy Centre; Japan; Russian Federation; Nepal; Republic of Moldova; Myanmar; Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Croatia; Mali; Mongolia; Côte d'Ivoire; Fundación Cultural Baur; Solomon Islands; Senegal; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Republic of Korea; Oman; Bahrain; Togo; Viet Nam; Plurinational State of Bolivia and Andorra.

B. Round-table discussions

10. On 12 and 13 June, the Conference held three round tables at its 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings. At each round table, presentations were given by a panel of speakers, followed by interactive discussions.

Round table 1

International cooperation to promote technology innovations and transfer for an inclusive future

11. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (i), was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, and a civil society representative, the President of the World Federation of the Deaf, Joseph Murray. Presentations were made by four panellists: the President of the National Accessibility Authority in Greece, Constantinos Stefanidis; the Head of the Directorate for the Promotion and Protection of Persons with Disabilities of the Ministry of Health and Social Action of Senegal, Mamadou Lamine Faty; a member of the first cohort of the United Nations Population Fund youth advisory group in Guatemala and of San Carlos de Guatemala University, María José Carranza; and a Board member of the World Federation of the Deaf, Hjördís Anna Haraldsdóttir (Iceland).

Round table 2

Persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

12. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (ii), was co-chaired by the adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on human rights issues and Vice-President of the Conference, Niko Tatulashvili, and a civil society representative, the President of the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal, Pratima Gurung. Presentations were made by four panellists: the President of the Board of the Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations (SUSTENTO), Gunta Anča; the President of the National Disability Council of Colombia, Anderson Henao Orozco; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba; and the Senior Programme Manager of Transforming Communities for Inclusion-Global, Waqar Shahid Puri (Pakistan).

Round table 3

Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities to decent work and sustainable livelihood

13. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (iii), was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Evangelos Sekeris, and a civil society representative from the World Federation of the Deafblind, Ezekiel Kumwenda. Presentations were made by four panellists: a senior multilateral cooperation specialist of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Yasin Samatar; the Director of digital accessibility services at Etch Empathy in Singapore, Josh Tseng; an ambassador for Down Syndrome Australia, Michael Cox; and recipient of the Human Rights Watch Marca Bristo Fellowship for Leadership in Disability Rights, Mariana Lozano Medina (Colombia).

C. Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention

14. The interactive dialogue, under agenda item 5 (c), took place at the 6th meeting and was chaired by the President of the Conference. Presentations were given by eight

panellists: the Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, John Wilmoth; a senior human rights officer of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rio Hada; the Global Disability Adviser and lead social specialist of the World Bank, Charlotte Vuyiswa McClain-Nhlapo; the Head of Governance of the United Nations Development Programme, Sarah Lister; the Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu; a senior multilateral cooperation specialist of ILO, Yasin Samatar; the manager of the technical secretariat of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ola Abualghaib; and a civil society representative and the Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum, Setareki Seru Macanawai.

V. Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

15. At its 6th meeting, on 13 June, under agenda item 6, the Conference unanimously adopted three decisions proposed by its Bureau (see annex I).

VI. Closure of the session

16. Under agenda item 7, the President of the Conference announced the composition of the incoming Bureau (2025–2026): President-designate, Sri Lanka (Asia-Pacific States); and Vice-Presidents-designate: Poland (Eastern European States) and Canada (Western European and other States). Two nominations for Vice-Presidents remained to be confirmed, by the Latin American and Caribbean States and the African States, respectively.

17. Remarks were made by the representatives of Georgia, Greece, Panama and Sri Lanka in their capacity as Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

18. The President of the Conference, in his closing statement, expressed his appreciation to all States parties and to the Secretariat for their cooperation and strong support in making the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties a success. He then declared the closure of the session.

Annex I

Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

At its seventeenth session, the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted the following decisions:

Decision 1

Venue and timing of the eighteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recalling General Assembly resolution [61/106](#), and taking into consideration rule 1, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the rules of procedure of the Conference, decides that its eighteenth session will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 12 June 2025.

Decision 2

Resources and support for the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities notes the provision of resources and support, including that for the accessibility of facilities and services, for the seventeenth session of the Conference, and reiterates its recommendation to the Secretary-General to continue the provision of adequate support to the eighteenth and future sessions of the Conference.

Decision 3

Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities decides to request the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Conference on its seventeenth session to all States parties and observers.

Annex II

President's summary of the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Opening of the session

1. In his opening remarks, the President of the Conference, Tarek Ladeb, underlined the importance of the current session in the context of current global events and emerging challenges, and ahead of the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024. Persons with disabilities, who often faced difficulties and challenges, were integral members of societies and had demonstrated that they could fulfil their roles and participate. In Tunisia, the rights of persons with disabilities were regarded as a national priority. The Constitution of 2022 gave those rights constitutional status through its article 54, ensuring the full integration of persons with disabilities in society. In addition, specific laws and policies guaranteed persons with disabilities participation in decision-making and access to education, health, employment, economic empowerment, recreation and sport. Tunisia continued to strengthen its policy and practices in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international agreements, aiming to advance sustainable development for all by including persons with disabilities.

2. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that the Convention, adopted 18 years ago, had been a significant achievement and had reached near-universal ratification, with 191 States parties, demonstrating the global commitment to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and underscored that the commitment needed to be translated into specific actions with tangible outcomes. She also noted that in the *Disability and Development Report 2024* (forthcoming) progress was highlighted in the areas of technology, humanitarian emergencies and decent work but significant gaps were also revealed, illustrating the importance of the three focus areas of the Conference. Firstly, access to assistive technology remained inadequate globally, with significant disparities between countries. Secondly, persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected in humanitarian crises, lacking inclusion in disaster planning and essential services. Thirdly, barriers to employment persisted, with persons with disabilities facing higher risk of poverty and lower employment rates. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that the upcoming Summit of the Future was a pivotal opportunity for multilateral cooperation towards inclusive global governance and development financing, and she underscored the importance of the full participation of persons with disabilities in those processes in order to ensure that the commitments and aspirations of the Convention became a tangible reality for all.

3. The President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, Dennis Francis, noted that over 1.3 billion people worldwide lived with disabilities, making them among the most vulnerable populations, as they faced disproportionate levels of poverty, marginalization and discrimination, with women and girls with disabilities at even greater risk. Individuals such as Paralympic champion Antonio Fantin, however, served as inspirational figures, owing to their courage and determination. The President appealed to all States parties to prioritize inclusivity and to fully implement the Convention. Governments must lead by example, involving persons with disabilities in all aspects of life equally with others. With near-universal ratification, the Convention was pivotal in advancing disability rights globally. The current session of the Conference was therefore crucial for protecting those rights and contributing to the preparations for the Summit of the Future. He called upon

Governments and stakeholders to mainstream disability rights, uphold those rights and collaborate on solutions to address existing gaps. He reiterated his commitment to promoting a United Nations that was accessible and inclusive for all persons with disabilities.

4. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame, said that, in preparation for the Summit of the Future, which would be a critical juncture for disability inclusion, it was essential to retain existing disability rights language and references to inclusion, accessibility and vulnerable groups in the draft outcome documents. The Committee had held over 130 dialogues with States, addressing issues such as the participation of marginalized persons with disabilities, gender mainstreaming, inclusive education, social protection, care and support systems, climate change, disaster preparedness, and the effects of artificial intelligence on self-determination. She recalled that, at the current session of the Conference, discussions would take place on technology innovation, risks and sustainable livelihoods for persons with disabilities, emphasizing their role as agents of change. She stressed that ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in policy design and access to technology was vital. With 191 States having ratified the Convention, it was clear that commitment to the Convention was strong but adequate funding and resources were required for effective implementation.

5. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, recalled that, over the past decade, disability rights had become more visible in global debates on disaster risk reduction, protection in armed conflict and systemic inclusion within the United Nations. Despite that progress, however, significant challenges remained, such as those caused by armed conflicts, climate change and economic crises. She pointed out that the rapid development of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, held transformative potential for disability rights but there was a need for inclusive design and regulation in that regard. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had revealed significant gaps in care and support systems, underscoring the need for substantial investment in disability-inclusive systems. She said that her work in the future would focus on transformative changes and on links between the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals. Her report to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session would address the inclusion of persons with disabilities in discussions relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. She urged States parties to consult with persons with disabilities and to accelerate work towards achieving the Goals, and she expressed the hope that discussions and engagement would continue in that regard.

6. A civil society representative and the President of the World Federation of the Deafblind, Sanja Tarcazy, stated that the collective goal of the over 1.3 billion persons living with disabilities worldwide was to build an inclusive, accessible and participatory world for all. Despite some progress to that end, significant challenges remained, including accessibility barriers and systemic discrimination that had been exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and by armed conflicts. At the national level, financial restrictions and political turmoil hindered the realization of rights under the Convention and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the need for inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies. The civil society forum held prior to the current session of the Conference had underscored such issues, calling for the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. Some underrepresented groups faced additional challenges, necessitating an intersectional approach. As the Summit of the Future approached, she called for a shift from rhetoric to action. Key messages that civil society wished to convey to the Summit included ensuring genuine involvement, increasing funding, strengthening partnerships, building capacity and translating the provisions of the Convention into laws and actions. Collaboration with and among States was essential for advancing disability

inclusion and should be aimed at creating a world where every person could thrive and contribute fully to society.

7. A youth representative, Khadija Jallouli (Tunisia), spoke not just as the Chief Executive Officer of HawKar, a start-up dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with reduced mobility, but also as someone who had lived experience of overcoming mobility challenges. She had refused to be sidelined, using her perspective as a catalyst for change. Mobility was more than transportation; it was a gateway to independence, dignity and social participation. Her experiences had fuelled her dedication to breaking down barriers to inclusion. She encouraged participants to imagine a world where public transport was inaccessible to them and attending social events felt like a distant dream. Unfortunately, for millions of persons with disabilities, that situation remained their reality. Mobility empowered people to fully participate in society, pursue dreams and forge connections. HawKar's electric mobility solutions offered independence and dignity, accessibility and inclusivity. Noting that the world stood on the brink of change, she urged participants to recommit to building a more inclusive future where everyone was valued and empowered.

Round-table discussions

Round table 1

International cooperation to promote technology innovations and transfer for an inclusive future

8. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (i), was co-chaired by the Vice-President of the Conference, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, and a civil society representative, the President of the World Federation of the Deaf, Joseph Murray.

9. In his opening remarks, the Vice-President recognized the vast potential of technology for improving the lives of persons with disabilities and supporting the implementation of the Convention. Innovations such as screen readers, adaptive keyboards, accessible information and communications technology (ICT), educational technology tools, communication applications, telemedicine and smart city initiatives enhanced inclusivity and empowerment. Technologies driven by artificial intelligence, such as smart home systems and speech recognition, had the potential to foster independence. International cooperation, involving Governments, organizations, academia and industry, was crucial for technology transfer, local adaptation and addressing the ethical implications of artificial intelligence. Existing frameworks emphasized cooperation in sharing accessible technologies. In the light of the forthcoming Summit of the Future and related efforts to enhance cooperation and advance a revitalized multilateral framework, he called upon States parties to engage in the present discussion to consider challenges, share successful approaches and suggest strategies to advance disability rights through innovation and technology.

10. The President of the National Accessibility Authority in Greece, Constantinos Stefanidis, highlighted the central importance of accessibility to the rights of persons with disabilities, their individual autonomy, non-discrimination and full societal participation. While accessibility spanned the built environment, physical products, services and the digital realm, he focused on digital accessibility. The broad domain of digital accessibility was aimed at ensuring that everyone, including persons with disabilities, was able to use digital tools and technologies. Decades of research had produced guidelines, assistive technologies, and tools supporting accessible design and development. International organizations, countries and regional groups had promoted digital accessibility through policy and legal initiatives. In Greece, the national action plan for persons with disabilities for the period 2020–2023 was

evolving into a national strategy for the period 2024–2030, and the National Accessibility Authority was leading the efforts to shape public policies and monitor their implementation. Despite some progress, digital accessibility remained elusive in mainstream technologies. Addressing the issue required better understanding of the associated barriers, enhancing education on accessibility and developing new tools. Inclusive artificial intelligence technologies needed to be transparent and user-friendly, involving multidisciplinary efforts and strong international cooperation to foster an inclusive, accessible future.

11. The Director of the Promotion and Protection of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Health and Social Action of Senegal, Mamadou Lamine Faty, introduced the equal opportunity card, which was a technological innovation and a key mechanism for disability inclusion in Senegal. The country's strategic policy framework for disability management was in line with global initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the World Health Organization community-based rehabilitation strategy, and was based on three pillars: legislative, institutional and programmatic. The legislative pillar included the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa and Social Orientation Law No. 2010-15. The institutional pillar encompassed high-level institutions, ministries and the Senegalese Federation of Associations of Persons with Disabilities. The programmatic pillar focused on projects such as the equal opportunity card. The card, established by legislation, acted as a multisectoral social safety net and a crucial mechanism for disability inclusion. Regulated by decree and defined by ministerial order, the card facilitated access for persons with disabilities to seven basic social services: health, rehabilitation, education, training, transport, employment and finance. The card included technical features such as personal data protection, a double-sided, durable design and a decentralized management platform with Internet connectivity and administrator access codes. It could be used to generate provisional disability certificates, as well as beneficiary lists in Excel and PDF formats, and had identification and statistical functions, including a disability assessment system with scoring. Since 2012, 75,098 cards had been issued, significantly providing access for users to social services and support.

12. A member of the first cohort of the United Nations Population Fund youth advisory group in Guatemala, María José Carranza, emphasized that technology and science were vital for persons with disabilities to be able to exercise their rights in terms of access to education, health and employment. The upcoming Summit of the Future needed to foster collaboration among Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society in order to share knowledge and resources. Technological innovation drove inclusion but needed to be accessible and affordable. Research by the United Nations Youth Office and under the United Nations Youth Strategy highlighted the role of technology in developing skills and empowering young persons with disabilities. Young women with disabilities faced significant barriers, including unemployment and limited access to education. They needed to be a part of policy decisions to ensure meaningful youth participation. Technological innovations could improve inclusion and access to essential services. In a guide produced by the United Nations Youth Office, inclusive emergency responses and budgets for assistive technologies were recommended. Artificial intelligence could be used to support independent living, and technology transfer promoted sustainable development and equitable access. Digital skills and combating online violence were essential. Digital inclusion in health care was also crucial. New technologies must protect privacy. Under the proposed global digital compact, Member States would commit to accessible technology and capacity-building. Effective policies and investment in assistive technology were necessary. Young persons with disabilities must be integral to decision-making, contributing

significantly to society. She concluded by highlighting that building an inclusive, accessible and equitable society was everyone's responsibility.

13. A Board member of the World Federation of the Deaf, Hjördís Anna Haraldsdóttir, noted that her Federation promoted the human rights of 70 million deaf people globally, campaigning for, inter alia, self-determination, sign language, education and employment. The Federation focused on access to ICTs as a basic right under articles 9 and 21 of the Convention. Advances in ICT had had a positive impact on deaf people's participation in society through visual solutions such as videos and videoconferencing. Auditory-based technologies, however, excluded deaf people, especially in emergency situations. There was a need for universal design and accessible solutions, which were often provided only after advocacy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the frequency of national sign language interpretation during broadcasts increased but varied in quality. A significant gap remained between high-income and low- and middle-income countries regarding access to ICTs. She stressed the importance of involving deaf organizations in designing new technologies. Both universal design and low-tech solutions were crucial, especially in crisis situations. The Federation supported developing new technologies that took into account the realities of deaf people worldwide, ensuring equal access and their participation in society.

14. During the interactive discussion, statements were made by various States parties and other entities, including Hungary, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Türkiye, Singapore and the United Nations Office for Project Services. The discussion highlighted two key divides affecting persons with disabilities: the divide between persons with and without disabilities and between developed and developing countries. Persons with disabilities did not have access to many technologies in general and lacked access to necessary assistive technologies in particular. Women with disabilities faced even greater barriers. In developing countries, technologies, electricity and Internet access were unreliable and often unaffordable. Participants called for enhanced international cooperation to address those challenges through technology transfer, public-private partnerships, capacity-building and using local production in order to reduce costs. The need to assign budgets for assistive technology and apply universal design principles was emphasized. Involving persons with disabilities in technology development and implementing regulations for ensuring accessibility and data protection were crucial. Investing in digital literacy and sharing innovations, such as digital cards and accessible early warnings in situations of risk and emergencies, were essential for an inclusive future.

Round table 2

Persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

15. The round table was co-chaired by the adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia on human rights issues and Vice-President of the Conference, Niko Tatulashvili, and a civil society representative, the President of the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association of Nepal, Pratima Gurung.

16. In his opening remarks, the Vice-President provided an overview of the key issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in situations of conflict, climate-induced disasters and health emergencies in the context of enjoyment of rights and in terms of the ongoing challenges in implementing disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction frameworks at all stages of preparedness, response and recovery.

17. The President of the Board of the Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations (SUSTENTO), Gunta Anča, highlighted the urgent need for inclusive, accessible and comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plans that

catered for the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. She referred to refugees with disabilities fleeing from the hostilities in Ukraine to illustrate some of the key issues in that regard. Persons with disabilities encountered many difficulties during evacuation procedures, including a lack of awareness among community members and even among those local organizations working on disability inclusion and accessibility; inaccessible information and communication alerts and systems; and interrupted health care and a lack of mental health care and emotional support. Ms. Anča provided several key recommendations, such as developing robust emergency preparedness and evacuation plans for persons with disabilities and their families or support persons; raising awareness of disability inclusion in emergencies among the public; training first responders and other personnel; improving the accessibility of communications systems and channels, including the use of multiple modes of alert systems, such as visual alarms, text messages and vibration alerts; and ensuring the provision of health care, including mental and emotional support, to persons with disabilities in emergencies and during displacement.

18. The President of the National Disability Council of Colombia, Anderson Henao Orozco, focused in his presentation on the context of climate change and armed conflict, using Colombia as a case study. He presented five key guiding principles for government action: the protection of all life; ethics; consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations; the alignment of policymaking with article 11 of the Convention; and international cooperation. He stressed the importance of implementing an intersectional and disability-inclusive approach to risk preparedness, reduction and management by recognizing the specificity and diversity of persons with disabilities, aiming to reduce and avoid harm caused to persons with disabilities, and repairing harm that might have been caused to persons with disabilities owing to inaccessible or non-inclusive humanitarian responses. He concluded his presentation with several recommendations.

19. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, explained the mandate of her Office and recalled that her recent focus had been on children with disabilities in armed conflict. Noting that the topic was vastly underreported and understudied, she presented the findings and conclusions of a recent study published by her Office on the unique repercussions of armed conflict on children with disabilities and the ways in which a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion needed to be promoted in that context. The key findings included lack of data; the disproportionate effects of armed conflict on children with disabilities, including higher risks of being recruited and used by armed forces and groups, killed or maimed in hostilities, falling victim to sexual violence and being abducted during armed conflicts; and the denial of humanitarian assistance resulting in reduced access to food, water and sanitation, health care, assistive devices, and mental health and psychological support. The steps that could be taken to redress the situation included strengthening data collection on children with disabilities; consulting persons with disabilities, including children and organizations that represented them, at all levels of policymaking; and conducting awareness-raising initiatives and providing training and other capacity-building efforts on disability inclusion of military personnel, humanitarian actors and child protection staff, among others.

20. The Senior Programme Manager of Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Waqar Shahid Puri, focused on the specific needs of persons with psychosocial disabilities in situations of risk and emergencies. He provided an overview of the pre-existing exclusion and discrimination faced by persons with psychosocial disabilities, such as disproportionate incidence of denial of legal capacity, as well as institutionalization, hospitalization and involuntary treatment. That situation presented unique challenges for persons with psychosocial disabilities in situations

of risk and emergencies. For example, persons with psychosocial disabilities in institutions found it harder to flee or evacuate and were at risk of being abandoned, with those challenges being particularly acute for children with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities, autistic persons, women and girls, and older persons with disabilities. Overall, despite the unique challenges and risks they faced, persons with psychosocial disabilities were largely excluded from disaster preparedness and response policies and efforts, both before and during emergencies. He concluded by urging States parties, stakeholders and communities to transform mental health care from a medical-based model to a human rights-based one anchored in community support systems; to strengthen disability inclusion and community support at all times, including during emergency situations; to reform legal systems with regard to legal capacity and pursue deinstitutionalization in line with the Convention; to include persons with disabilities in data collection; and to end all forms of violence and discrimination against persons with disabilities.

21. During the interactive discussion, statements were made by the representatives of Georgia, Finland, Ukraine, Guyana, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, L'Arche, the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia, Kenya, South Africa, Ecuador, the European Union, the Dominican Republic, People with Disability Australia, Sweden, Malta, Romania, Singapore, Spain, the Pacific Disability Forum, Egypt and Poland. The statements highlighted the need for inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations; the need to promote the empowerment, resilience and independent living of persons with disabilities; the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities in armed conflict; and programmes and initiatives currently implemented at the national and local levels, including in partnership with United Nations agencies.

Round table 3

Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities to decent work and sustainable livelihoods

22. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (iii), was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Evangelos Sekeris, and a civil society representative from the World Federation of the Deafblind, Ezekiel Kumwenda.

23. In his opening remarks, the Vice-President recalled the current global normative framework for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. Under the Convention, States parties were required to take steps, including through legislation, to prohibit discrimination; provide equal opportunity and just and favourable conditions of work; promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, development of cooperatives and business; and provide access to social protection, poverty reduction programmes and other services and forms of support. Since the adoption of the Convention, many initiatives and efforts had been undertaken but progress had been slow and uneven. Although evidence showed that persons with disabilities were equally entitled to decent work and that many persons with disabilities had the willingness and capabilities for engagement in the labour market and pursuit of a decent and sustainable livelihood for themselves and their family members, while contributing economically to society, many continued to face enormous barriers and a lack of opportunities for exercising their rights in that regard. Accelerated efforts needed to be made in order to address the existing gaps.

24. A senior multilateral cooperation specialist of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Yasin Samatar, said that available data continued to support the need to improve employment for persons with disabilities. A total of 7 in 10 persons with disabilities were outside the labour force, compared with 4 in 10 persons without disabilities. The labour market participation rate among persons with disabilities was

generally 30–40 percentage points below that for persons without disabilities and even lower for women with disabilities. At the global level, persons with disabilities were overrepresented among the self-employed. In developing countries, working in the informal economy could mean a lack of social protection. Another particularly concerning finding that applied to all regions was that young persons with disabilities were twice as likely not to be in employment, education or training than young persons without disabilities. In order to improve the situation, both disability-targeted and, more importantly, comprehensive and effective mainstreaming measures included the rights of persons with disabilities were needed. In addressing such challenges, ILO had adopted initiatives such as the ILO Global Business and Disability Network, which had significantly boosted the employment of persons with disabilities within business communities in over 40 countries. ILO also worked to promote disability inclusion in climate action, the care economy, trade, and social protection, where the relevant policy mix needed to be well designed to ensure that disability benefits would be compatible with wage employment.

25. The Director of digital accessibility services at Etch Empathy in Singapore, Josh Tseng, said that, with specific commitments and actions, inclusion had been made possible in the country, although some gaps remained. The Enabling Masterplan 2030 of Singapore outlined the national goal of creating a truly inclusive society in areas spanning from accessible infrastructure to health care, recreation and employment. The Masterplan was aimed at raising the employment rate of Singaporeans with disabilities to 40 per cent by 2030. The employment rate among persons with disabilities between 15 and 64 years of age had risen from 28.2 per cent in 2019 to 32.7 per cent in 2023. One major contributor to that success had been employment programmes such as the Open Door Programme, established in 2014, through which jobseekers with disabilities received free job coaching and job-matching and job-placement support for up to one year. The Programme also provided support to employers for hiring persons with disabilities by offering training grants (covering up to 90 per cent of training costs) and job redesign grants, as well as helping to change the negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities in the workplace. SkillsFuture Singapore and the pilot enabling business hub were initiatives that offered customized courses with subsidies for all Singaporeans, including those with disabilities, and training service providers, and were aimed at helping trainees to remain employable and embrace new career opportunities, including by bringing training and employment opportunities closer to home for persons with disabilities. Recommendations made by Mr. Tseng included raising awareness among employers of the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities; ensuring the accessibility of lifelong educational programmes; empowering persons with disabilities through skills training and access to assistive technologies; and creating opportunities for career mobility, progression and satisfaction. There was still a long journey ahead, and he called for concerted efforts from Governments, businesses and persons with disabilities and their organizations to promote disability-inclusive employment.

26. An ambassador for Down Syndrome Australia, Michael Cox, said that nearly 75 per cent of workers with intellectual disabilities were currently employed in workplaces that hired only persons with disabilities. People in such segregated employment were often paid less than those in non-segregated employment, with wages that were often below the minimum level. Very few managed to transition to employment in the open labour market, even though strong evidence suggested that persons with intellectual disabilities could work in open-market employment. He noted that, by improving pathways to open employment and providing the right support and information, a transformation of the employment sector was possible. To achieve that transformation, persons with disabilities needed to be paid a fair and proper wage for their work; employers needed to be provided with information and training to ensure that persons with intellectual disabilities were included in the

workplace; the transition from school to open employment should be better supported; an “open employment first” approach needed to be promoted in providing disability support; and, as had recently been achieved by the Disability Royal Commission of Australia, efforts needed to be redoubled to help providers of segregated employment to transition from segregated employment towards open employment.

27. The recipient of the Human Rights Watch Marca Bristo Fellowship for Leadership in Disability Rights and a woman with an intellectual disability, Mariana Lozano Medina from Colombia, shared her personal testimony to showcase how support for persons with disabilities could enable the meaningful participation of those persons in society, including in the labour market. Referring to general comment No. 8 (2022) of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she said that effective implementation of quota schemes to increase the rate of employment of persons with disabilities in both the public and private sectors was essential but often lacking at the national level. Quota schemes alone were often insufficient for dismantling the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and should therefore be paired with other non-discrimination and equality measures in order to avoid tokenism and segregation in the workplace. She concluded with a set of recommendations, focusing on implementing quality inclusive education that adapted to the needs of students with disabilities at all levels and increased opportunities for higher education for young people with disabilities; promoting employment, in particular formal and decent work, with support; regularly collecting statistics and data on the employment of persons with disabilities; and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and official reporting on the situation of employment of persons with disabilities.

28. During the interactive discussion, statements were made by the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guyana, Türkiye, Canada, Georgia, Australia, the European Union, Panama and Jamaica, among others. The statements focused on the sharing of good practices for addressing the challenges facing persons with disabilities in relation to employment. The good practices included national strategies, action plans and other initiatives whose aim is to diversify and strengthen employment models in order to increase employment opportunities, provide the necessary services and support for both employers and employees with disabilities and, through financial, taxation and other measures, reform the employment sector to improve both public and private employers’ performance in hiring and retaining workers with disabilities.

Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention

29. The President of the Conference opened the dialogue by reiterating the overarching theme of the current session, “Rethinking disability inclusion in the current international juncture and ahead of the Summit of the Future”, and the historic opportunity ahead for resetting global priorities and action for meeting the development needs and aspirations of the people of the planet, by tackling gaps in global governance, reaffirming existing commitments to sustainable development and moving towards a truly multilateral system, while ensuring that the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities were included and shaped all decision-making processes of the Summit of the Future.

30. The Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Edem Wosornu, focused on inclusive humanitarian responses. Noting the dire global trends in humanitarian needs in 2024

caused by conflicts, climate emergencies and other drivers, she highlighted the need for stable and adequate funding for disability-inclusive humanitarian action as an essential means for ensuring effective and sustainable responses during situations of risk and emergencies. With regard to the Convention, she noted that, under its strategic plan for the period 2023–2026, the Office had committed to several actions to make humanitarian work more participatory, inclusive, gender-responsive and principled. The Office had been making efforts to achieve disability-inclusive humanitarian action through improved accessibility, inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community and protection of privacy, among other key aspects.

31. The Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, John Wilmoth, outlined the Department's various initiatives in support of the implementation of the Convention. The Department continued to serve as the secretariat for the Conference and to lead the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention. With regard to research contributions, he noted that the forthcoming flagship publication *Disability and Development Report 2024* would include an assessment of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities and, against the backdrop of that evidence, include good practices and recommended actions for ensuring that the Goals could be achieved by 2030. Within the Department, the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy continued to be a priority, with progress having been achieved both through mainstreaming actions and targeted interventions. The Department also provided support to Member States at the country level through its capacity-building initiatives, including through a project promoting the social inclusion of children and young people with autism through sport in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Panama.

32. A senior human rights officer of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Rio Hada, looking ahead to the Summit of the Future and the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 2025, underscored the necessity of redoubling efforts and commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities. Acknowledging the tremendous progress made since the adoption of the Convention almost 20 years ago, he said that challenges and human rights abuses against persons with disabilities persisted. It was therefore imperative that the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations clearly addressed those challenges, including through the transformation of care and support systems for current and future generations of persons with disabilities and by placing persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at the centre of decision-making.

33. The Global Disability Adviser and lead social specialist of the World Bank, Charlotte Vuyiswa McClain-Nhlapo, presented the recent work of the World Bank in advancing disability inclusion in key areas such as education, digital development, data collection, gender, post-disaster reconstruction, transport, private sector investments and social protection. Noting that the Convention underpinned several aspects of the work of the World Bank, she recalled that the Bank had confirmed its commitment to disability inclusion at the Global Disability Summit held in 2022. Within those frameworks and commitments, the Bank had provided support to States parties at the country level, including programmes aimed at strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing accessibility and fostering digital inclusion in Uzbekistan, and the provision of technical support to Romania to develop the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2022–2027. In addition, the Bank, in partnership with Microsoft, the German Agency for International Cooperation and the disability data initiative at Fordham University in the United States of America, was establishing a disability data hub to allow for access and use of disability data across human development indicators and sectors, which would be launched in April 2025.

34. The Head of Governance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sarah Lister, referring to the critical juncture confronting the international community, noted that the planetary crisis, combined with stagnation or reversal of progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, disproportionately affected persons with disabilities. Relating the sub-themes of the current session to the work of UNDP, she offered several recommendations in preparation for the Summit of the Future. From assistive technology to digital public infrastructure, inclusive design needed to be a pillar of both the development and governance of technologies. Regarding disaster risk reduction, the participation of persons with disabilities, in all their diversity, and their representative organizations was paramount to achieving disability inclusion. Finally, she noted that labour markets and workplaces should be enabling and inclusive environments, and to that end cooperation was required between Governments, the private sector and persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

35. Mr. Samatar, of ILO, said that disability inclusion was a cornerstone of decent work and noted the commitment of ILO to the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. Recalling the ILO Director General's goal for ILO to become an employer of choice for persons with disabilities, he provided examples of actions taken in that regard. The creation of networks within ILO, such as the Disability Champions Network, had been vital for promoting a culture of sharing, learning and leading on disability inclusion within the workplace. Initiatives relating to training and sensitization among staff on disability inclusion had been another essential element for creating an inclusive workplace. Underscoring the benefits of adopting an organization-wide disability inclusion strategy, he noted that ILO was in the process of drafting a new strategy in that regard to cover the period 2024–2027.

36. The manager of the technical secretariat of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ola Abualghaib, recalled the context of emerging development trends, including the climate emergency, rising humanitarian needs and the care agenda, and upcoming key policy milestones on the global development agenda, including the Summit of the Future, the Second World Summit for Social Development and discussions leading to the post-2030 development agenda. Despite the persistence of critical gaps, funding trended downward and there was a continued lack of investment in disability inclusion. The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a unique funding mechanism that brought together United Nations entities, Governments and organizations of persons with disabilities dedicated to implementing the Convention at the country level. Reflecting on the overarching theme of the session, she said that ensuring that disability inclusion was genuinely mainstreamed across the development agenda required increased and sustained investment in disability inclusion in the long term; investment of time to lay the foundation for effective implementation of the Convention and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and technical assistance at the national and local level that was context specific, guided by the leadership of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

37. The Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum, Setareki Seru Macanawai, said that, as an Indigenous person with a disability from a small island developing State, he was well aware of the multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination that persons with disabilities experienced, which amplified the stigma, marginalization and exclusion to which they were subjected. Noting that recent estimates indicated that 1.3 billion people, or 16 per cent of the world's population, lived with a disability, he underlined the importance of targeted funding, disaggregated data and frameworks that allowed for meaningful participation of persons with disabilities that matched the commitments made by States parties,

development partners and other stakeholders to implementing the Convention. In conclusion, he stressed the need to consider the significance of disability equity when rethinking disability inclusion, in particular in the context of the upcoming Summit of the Future.

38. During the interactive discussion, statements were made by the representatives of Guinea, Honduras, Mexico, Kenya, Namibia and DoTheDream Youth Development Initiative, a non-governmental organization, in which questions were posed to the panel and issues were raised concerning the update to the *Disability and Development Report* of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; International Albinism Awareness Day; and the importance of evaluating progress made since the adoption of the Convention and the ongoing challenges regarding intersectional discrimination faced by persons with disabilities, economic inclusion, data collection and the development of technologies, including artificial intelligence.

Closure of the session

39. Under agenda item 7, statements were made by the representatives of Georgia, Greece, Panama and Sri Lanka, in their capacity as Vice-Presidents of the Conference. Reflecting on the work of the Bureau over the past two years, they expressed their gratitude to the President of the Conference and praised the efforts of the Secretariat, as well as all United Nations departments and colleagues who had contributed to the success of the Conference. They acknowledged the considerable progress achieved since the adoption of the Convention, while recognizing the need to redouble efforts to deliver on the commitments of the Convention and leave no person with disabilities behind. In conclusion, the Vice-Presidents called upon States parties to strengthen their resolve and continue to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.

40. In his closing remarks, the President of the Conference stated that the current session had demonstrated that the Conference constituted the most important international event on disability. Another milestone had been achieved when, for the first time on the international stage, the topic of technological innovation and transfer had been discussed from a disability rights perspective, during the round-table discussions. The current session had set an example for future sessions of the Conference in continuing to tackle the most pressing issues, with the goal of bolstering the collective efforts to realize the rights of persons with disabilities under the Convention.

41. The President extended his thanks to the Vice-Presidents for their close cooperation throughout the session in planning and chairing different meetings of the Conference. He also expressed his sincere appreciation to States parties and civil society for their active participation and important contributions. In addition, he expressed his appreciation to the Secretariat and partners across and beyond the United Nations system who had provided International Sign interpretation, closed captioning, accessible documentation and many other services and support that collectively had helped to make the Conference a success.

42. Lastly, the President said that it had been an honour to serve as President of the Conference for the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions. He announced the incoming Bureau, with Sri Lanka holding the presidency, and wished the Bureau the best of luck and success in the forthcoming sessions in 2025 and 2026.

43. The President closed the session at 6 p.m. on 13 June 2024.

Annex III

Non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at its seventeenth session

1. Onaizah Association for Development and Human Services (Ta'heel)
 2. 100% Handinamique
 3. Gyeonggi Center for Disability Services
 4. Include Me TOO
 5. Ontario Tech University
 6. Chilean Foundation for Disability
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