



# 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

### Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 June 2024, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Ladeb. . . . . (Tunisia)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention** *(continued)*

**(a) General debate** *(continued)*

1. **Mr. Allen** (Observer for Validity Foundation – Mental Disability Advocacy Centre) said that more inclusive and fair societies were possible by working at the grass-roots level and by using the Convention as a legal tool to enhance equality, inclusion and justice. He called on all States parties to support independent legal advocacy conducted by organizations of persons with disabilities, which represented those who had suffered violations of their rights to inclusion in the community and to inclusive education. By supporting such advocacy, States parties would help to ensure accountability and advance concrete measures in justice systems to implement the Convention.

2. **Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan) said that his Government's efforts to promote an inclusive society included a review in March 2024 of the policy on implementing the law on eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities, based on discussions held by a commission on the policy, whose members were mostly persons with disabilities. That policy provided that the Government would establish a national office that would offer information on regulations and refer persons with disabilities and businesses to relevant consultation services. The amended law on eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities, which obligated all businesses to provide reasonable accommodations, had entered into force in April 2024. Japan had also nominated a candidate to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His Government emphasized the need to take into account the perspective of persons with disabilities in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and was contributing to the production of the executive summary of the *Disability and Development Report 2024* produced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in an accessible format. That report was one of the few resources that comprehensively addressed the Goals from a disability perspective, describing progress made and highlighting concrete measures to accelerate their realization by, for and with persons with disabilities.

3. **Mr. Kondratev** (Russian Federation) said that since his Government's ratification of the Convention in 2012, legal requirements had been put in place at the federal, regional and municipal levels to ensure accessibility in the areas of education, health, employment, culture, transport, urban planning, information and communications technology, and sport. At the end of 2023, a law on comprehensive rehabilitation and inclusion of persons with disabilities had been adopted. That law, which had come into force in March 2024, had established service standards and guarantees for rehabilitation services in all regions of the country, making comprehensive rehabilitation a genuine inter-agency endeavour. The law on social protection for persons with disabilities had also been amended to include provisions on assisted living.

4. **Mr. Thapa** (Nepal) said that the Constitution of Nepal guaranteed the right of persons with disabilities to participate in society, and the fundamental right of every person to live with dignity, equality and social justice. In that regard, his Government had taken transformative measures, including enacting a quota to ensure the participation of persons with disability in the civil service and adopting a law on the rights of persons with disabilities with a view to guaranteeing their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and protecting them from discrimination in the workplace. Social security allowances were also provided to enhance their community and cultural life, movement and social protections. Remaining challenges

in Nepal included a paucity of disability friendly physical structures in remote areas, which prevented access to education, health and employment. Nepal was committed to ensuring the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in developing policy and in the social, cultural and economic spheres.

5. **Mr. Leucă** (Republic of Moldova) said that the discussions during the Summit of the Future should aim to strengthen the human rights pillar of the United Nations, of which inclusion was an important aspect. His Government had made progress in improving the social inclusion of persons with disabilities by reactivating a national council for the rights of persons with disabilities; signing a memorandum of understanding with international organizations for the provision of financial support to such persons; and substantively increasing social allowances, pensions and compensation for transport services. Persons with disabilities enjoyed all the rights established in the Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova. Measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons, including persons with disabilities, in humanitarian emergencies had been established and were implemented regardless of citizenship status, including on behalf of persons displaced from Ukraine. He reiterated his Government's willingness to cooperate with other States to implement the Convention.

6. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that, since the unlawful military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities had been curtailed. The military junta's atrocities and indiscriminate attacks throughout the country had caused persons to become disabled, and, to date, sufficient assistance had not reached vulnerable groups. Owing to the coup, Myanmar was far behind in terms of developing technology and innovation, providing education and employment, and promoting sustainable livelihoods for persons with disabilities. Despite those challenges, the National Unity Government and ethnic resistance organizations had spared no effort to provide assistance to persons with disabilities, such as prosthetics for victims of landmines, and were working to remove landmines planted by the junta to prevent further civilian casualties. The assistance of development partners in the latter effort was appreciated. The people of Myanmar, including persons with disabilities, were resilient and would work together to end the military dictatorship and build a federal democratic union. His delegation appealed to the international community to offer effective support to save lives and ensure the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar.

7. **Mr. Calcott** (Observer for Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion) said that Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion had partnered with Mob 4 Mob, a non-governmental organization of Indigenous persons with disabilities, to empower such persons to understand their rights under the Convention. The two organizations had curated an exhibition of artwork made by Indigenous persons with disabilities reflecting on the articles of the Convention. The exhibition, which could be viewed digitally, included art made by a young Indigenous man with Down's syndrome, whose work was exhibited in the Australian embassy in Geneva. Another piece represented 50,000-year-old fossilized footprints found in Lake Mungo in Australia, which showed that an Indigenous person with one leg had participated equally in a hunt – a major community event – using a walking stick. That was evidence that a culture of inclusion had existed in the country before colonization. The aim now was to ensure that all persons with disabilities would again have the right to participate in society.

8. **Mr. Young** (United Kingdom) said that his Government had sought to address barriers faced by persons with disabilities through initiatives to facilitate greater employment opportunities and comprehensive reforms to the health and disability benefits system. In February 2024, the Government had published a disability action plan setting out practical actions aimed at improving the daily lives of persons with

disabilities, while a recently published website offered guidance on how persons with disabilities and carers could best prepare for emergency situations.

9. The United Kingdom continued to champion disability rights and inclusion on the global stage in collaboration with the International Disability Alliance. It had also initiated the Global Disability Summit movement; the next Summit, to be hosted by Germany and Jordan in Berlin in April 2025, would present an important opportunity to sustain momentum to meet the nearly 1,000 commitments made as a result of the movement. His Government was also looking ahead to the Summit of the Future. The resulting Pact for the Future, which would set out the actions needed to tackle global challenges, must address the needs of persons with disabilities.

10. **Mr. Šimonović** (Croatia) said that his Government's efforts to implement the Convention included adopting a law in 2023 that had established personal assistance service as a State-provided social service, thus ensuring its sustainability and financial continuity. As a result, the number of people entitled to personal assistants in Croatia had increased by 11,000, significantly enhancing their social inclusion, preventing institutionalization and providing children with special needs with education support. The right to work was a fundamental constitutional right in Croatia. The Government had recently allocated 135 million euros to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, resulting in approximately 3,000 individuals being employed annually. Labour market measures provided for larger and longer-lasting subsidies for persons with disabilities, financing for education, training and workplace adaptation, and 75 per cent of the mandatory health insurance contributions for employees. Croatia was also the first European Union member State to implement the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card, which simplified procedures for persons with disabilities to exercise their mobility across Europe. Croatia remained committed to promoting the full exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities in partnership with civil society through dialogue and mutual trust.

11. **Ms. Dabo N'diaye** (Mali) said that her Government had established a health insurance scheme for persons with disabilities, which covered screening and treatment services, and a specific budget line was dedicated to care for older persons with disabilities. Specialized educational institutions for persons with intellectual, physical and auditory disabilities were available, accessible and free of charge in Mali, and accessibility standards had been established for public buildings. The Government sought to facilitate access to information and communication by offering training for sign language interpreters and providing interpretation for broadcasts of major news events. Subsidies and tax exemptions were granted to organizations of persons with disabilities. The Government also guaranteed access to housing and implemented a quota to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the civil service.

12. **Mr. Vorshilov** (Mongolia) said that the Mongolian law on the rights of persons with disabilities upheld fundamental human rights principles and was in line with the Convention. A national council had been established in 2016 to coordinate cross-sectoral activities and ensure consistent monitoring of disability rights. In 2018, a general directorate for the development of persons with disabilities had been established as a government implementing agency. Efforts to adopt an inclusive approach included the development of a draft law on reducing barriers and improving accessibility. Mongolia had also participated in the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in October 2022, where participants had reviewed the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and had set new strategic goals for the next decade. The Government

was developing a comprehensive plan to implement the 35 recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following its consideration of the second and third reports of Mongolia in August 2023.

13. **Mr. Phengthongsawat** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government had incorporated the Convention into national legislation and had adopted a law on persons with disabilities in 2018. In addition, the current national social and economic development plan, which was aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, included a national social protection strategy as an integral component. To ensure such policies were effectively implemented, the Government had established a national committee for persons with disabilities and focal points representing various ministries. A national advocacy campaign had been conducted to offer support to persons with disabilities, including information on regulations; healthcare, rehabilitation and vocational training services; and employment opportunities and livelihood development. In addition, the Government had launched an initiative to improve its reporting on its implementation of the Convention. There were also plans to mainstream disability issues into policies relating to health, education and other social sectors. Challenges to such efforts included limited human and financial resources.

14. **Mr. Olavarrieta** (Observer for Fundación Cultural Baur) said that the Fundación Cultural Baur sought to implement sustainable actions and innovative solutions to include young people in the process of transforming education in line with the Convention, particularly in view of the fact that education and training greatly increased the employment prospects of persons with disabilities. In that regard, his organization had contributed towards the establishment of a committee within the Board of the International Model United Nations to consider matters relating to chapter IV of the Pact for the Future, which concerned youth and future generations, including their education. Given that hundreds of thousands of students worldwide, from the primary to the university level, participated in the Model United Nations activities, he encouraged the dissemination of the Pact for the Future.

15. **Ms. Lee Chun Hee** (Republic of Korea) said that her Government had established a comprehensive plan for persons with disabilities for the period 2023–2027, which was in line with the law on the welfare of persons with disabilities, with the aim of enhancing their quality of life and protecting their rights. In that regard, a pilot programme to establish a budget system that allowed persons with disabilities to choose the services they received according to their needs and preferences would soon be introduced. A lifelong care support system for persons with developmental disabilities was also being established in hospitals, behaviour development centres and emergency care centres, and through pilot projects aimed at offering 24-hour care for those with the most severe developmental disabilities. The Government planned to expand the number of disability friendly healthcare institutions. A law on the prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities, which mandated the accessibility of digital tools, such as mobile apps and kiosks, had been adopted and was being implemented. The Government prioritized the experiences and voices of persons with disabilities in its decision-making and policy implementation and would continue to collaborate with non-governmental organizations and academia.

16. **Mr. Al Mahrouqi** (Oman) said that the Constitution of Oman provided for meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. A recently completed draft law on persons with disabilities sought to incorporate the Convention into national law, while several ministries, including the Ministry of Health, were renewing efforts to implement regulations relating to persons with disabilities, many of which had been suspended during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Government had sought to identify persons with disabilities throughout the country in need of

education and training. Accessible transportation initiatives had included the participation of civil society and other partners.

17. **Ms. Alalawat** (Bahrain) said that her Government had established a number of programmes, including in the areas of education, employment and health, to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It had also hosted the General Assembly of the International Paralympic Committee. Physiotherapy, temporary housing and professional development services had been made available, while the national strategy for persons with disabilities for 2023 to 2027 offered a vision and framework for action to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Government coordinated with civil society and the private sector in its efforts to ensure equality for persons with disabilities and empower their families and service providers.

18. **Mr. Agbonon** (Togo) said that, in order to ensure equal access to the judicial and administrative systems, his Government offered legal assistance to vulnerable detainees, including persons with disabilities, and judges and judicial officers underwent training on the Convention, inclusive development and international humanitarian law. Other measures to promote inclusion included live sign language interpretation of national news programmes, the development of a manual on integrating children with disabilities into general education classrooms and the prioritizing of disability issues in national development plans. Foster families of children with disabilities received double the standard benefit given to other foster families. Ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to vote was a particular challenge, in particular making polling stations accessible and providing voting materials in Braille format.

19. **Ms. Yapi Bah** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her Government had taken legislative and institutional measures that had guaranteed persons with disabilities access to basic social services in the areas of health, leisure, culture and education, as well as in their professional integration. It had also established a quota for the hiring of persons with disabilities in the Labour Code.

20. **Mr. Dang** Hoang Giang (Viet Nam) said that in Viet Nam, nearly 7 million people, or 7 per cent of the population, were living with disabilities. Promoting and protecting their rights was a priority for the Government, which had established a robust legal framework aligned with the Convention. That included a law on persons with disabilities, an empowerment and integration policy and national action plan aimed at prioritizing equal participation, accessible services and opportunities, and promoting inclusion in education, employment, healthcare and social welfare. There were 225 specialized vocational centres for persons with disabilities in the country, which provided vocational counselling and job placement services. More than 1 million persons with disabilities also received monthly social benefits.

21. **Mr. Diome** (Senegal) said that the national law on disability and social inclusion in Senegal was implemented through a national action plan on disability for 2023 to 2027 that included a number of government projects and programmes. In addition, the Government had established a social protection system whereby persons with disabilities were issued a card that facilitated access to a range of services; some 75,000 people were using the card. The country's emergency relief plan covered managing disability in risk situation. In addition, the right of persons with disabilities to decent work and sustainable livelihoods was promoted through an entrepreneurship programme, a law that established a quota mandating that 15 per cent of jobs should be accessible to person with disabilities and a fund to support their economic activity. His Government would welcome any form of technical and financial cooperation with Member States, United Nations system organizations and other relevant partners.

22. **Ms. Indu** (Solomon Islands) said that it was the first time the Solomon Islands was participating in the Conference as a State party, as it had ratified the Convention

in June 2023. Over 10 per cent of the population of the country experienced disability in some form, and that figure was likely to increase in view of the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases. The plight of persons with disabilities was exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, the geographical spread of the islands that made up the national territory and competing priorities for limited resources. The Government had recently established a national disability-inclusive development policy for 2022 to 2030, which covered the areas of public health, human rights, economic opportunities and education. The national rehabilitation strategic plan for 2021–2031 and mental health policy also set out the integral care and services offered to persons with disabilities. The implementation of those policies required a whole-of-government approach and the support of stakeholders, including persons with disabilities. The Government welcomed partnerships that could enhance its efforts to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities, in particular initiatives to increase the number of schools with specialized trainers to improve accessibility. There were currently only three specialized schools in the country that provided training for children with disabilities.

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

*Segment 1: Organizations and entities of the United Nations system*

23. **The President** said that any effort to achieve sustainable development, peace and security would be incomplete and inadequate without the contributions of persons with disabilities, a diverse global community of 1.3 billion people. The urgent call to rethink global systems of governance at the Summit of the Future must be accompanied by a call to rethink disability inclusion. While the adoption of the Convention had signalled a paradigm shift, its promise was still to be fulfilled, as persons with disabilities continued to be viewed as passive recipients rather than as active rights-holders and agents of development in law, policy and practice. All stakeholders – within the United Nations system and from the State level to the local level – must ensure the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of decision-making at the Summit.

24. **Ms. Wosornu** (Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), panellist, said that 300 million people worldwide, a large percentage of whom were persons with disabilities, were currently in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. The most marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, bore the brunt of the current humanitarian challenges, facing access constraints and greater risks of exploitation and violence, including sexual violence.

25. Humanitarian responses must be inclusive in order to be effective and sustainable. The Convention provided a comprehensive framework for ensuring that the rights and needs of persons with disabilities were fully addressed in all aspects of life, including humanitarian crises. The Office's strategic plan for the period 2023–2026 included a commitment to make humanitarian work more participatory, inclusive, gender responsive and principled. Thanks to its generous donors, the Office had been able to assist over 7.4 million persons with disabilities through humanitarian funds in 2023.

26. To improve the implementation of the Convention in humanitarian settings, all facilities, services and information should, in line with article 9 of the Convention, be made accessible to persons with disabilities during emergencies; humanitarian actions should, in line with article 19, facilitate the full integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all community activities and thus prevent their isolation or marginalization during crises; and the humanitarian system should, in line with

article 22, ensure the safe, ethical and effective management of the personal data of persons with disabilities. The Office had issued related inter-agency operational guidance on data responsibility.

27. The effective implementation of the Convention in humanitarian settings required concerted efforts by all stakeholders. More must be done by Governments to include persons with disabilities in national preparedness and response plans. Humanitarian organizations must continue to adopt inclusive and accessible practices and to train their staff on the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Donors must prioritize sufficient funding for inclusive humanitarian programmes and hold their partners accountable for providing inclusive services and responses. Persons with disabilities must be included in those efforts as key stakeholders and decision makers.

28. **Mr. Wilmoth** (Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), panellist, said that, in addition to serving as the secretariat for the Conference, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had continued its leading role in the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention. The Department had carried out studies on the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/154](#), and on promoting and mainstreaming easy-to-understand communication for accessibility for persons with disabilities, pursuant to Assembly resolution [77/240](#). Both studies had been conducted in consultation with United Nations agencies, representative organizations of persons with disabilities and other relevant stakeholders. The findings had been included in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto ([A/78/331](#)).

29. Earlier that week, an advance version of the *Disability and Development Report 2024* had been released, which provided an update on the progress made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. The update would promote greater understanding of the socioeconomic circumstances of persons with disabilities worldwide and the challenges and barriers that they faced in their daily lives. Although it had been prepared by the Department, the report was the outcome of a collective effort involving United Nations entities, country experts and civil society, including organizations of persons with disabilities.

30. The Department had collaborated with partners to organize events on disability inclusion. For example, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December 2023, it had organized a panel discussion on the major gaps in the realization of inclusive and sustainable development by, for and with persons with disabilities. For the fifty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission, in 2024, the Department had coordinated the production of the joint report of the Secretary-General, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and international agencies on disability statistics ([E/CN.3/2024/24](#)).

31. The implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy had remained a priority for the Department. It had carried out various initiatives aimed at improving accessibility to United Nations meetings for delegates and observers with disabilities. For events such as the Conference, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Internet Governance Forum, the Department had solicited information from participants about their needs, made seating accommodations accordingly and provided closed captioning and sign language interpretation. It had consulted representative organizations of persons with disabilities throughout the planning of events and across all operations.

32. The Department had continued to build national capacities for the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities. In 2022, it had launched a project in Cuba, the



Dominican Republic and Panama to promote the social inclusion of children and young people with autism through engagement in sport. Under the project, more than 70 coaches thus far had been trained to provide sports activities for children and young people with autism, and more than 90 children and young people with autism had participated in such activities.

33. **Mr. Hada** (Chief of the Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York), panellist, said that, in 2023, when commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, more than 30 States had pledged to strengthen their efforts to support disability rights, including by amending relevant laws, promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market and protecting their rights in armed conflict. In the light of the forthcoming Summit of the Future and the Second World Summit for Social Development to be held in 2025, such commitments should be translated into action that truly ensured the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

34. Although tremendous progress had been made in the almost 20 years since the adoption of the Convention, many barriers continued to obstruct the full realization of the rights of all persons with disabilities. The support and care systems needed by persons with disabilities were severely lacking. Where such systems did exist, many persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities, faced shocking abuse and practices such as forced sterilization, treatment against their will and institutionalization. Conflicts and disasters were having particularly severe and long-lasting effects on persons with disabilities.

35. The outcome document entitled “A Pact for the Future” to be adopted at the Summit of the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations would hopefully set out a vision for overcoming those challenges. The current care and support systems for persons with disabilities needed to be transformed into systems that were based on human rights and thus promoted the autonomy of persons with disabilities, enabling them to act with agency and live independently. Such systems were preconditions for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in communities on an equal basis with others.

36. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must remain an integral part of all decision-making processes. In Tunisia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had been working with the Government and civil society to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making, including through the introduction of sign language and Braille for deaf persons. In Mongolia, OHCHR had helped the Government to develop a housing programme aimed at improving inclusion, accessibility and quality of life for persons with disabilities and their families. In many other countries, OHCHR had been working with Governments, United Nations partners, civil society, national human rights institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities on legislative and policy reforms, capacity-building and the ratification of, reporting on and follow-up to the Convention.

37. **Ms. McClain-Nhlapo** (Global Disability Adviser and Lead Social Specialist at the World Bank), panellist, said that the World Bank addressed disability inclusion through its environmental and social framework and its work on social inclusion. At the Global Disability Summit in 2022, the World Bank had updated its 10 commitments to disability inclusion, which encompassed key areas such as education, digital development, data collection, gender, post-disaster reconstruction, transport, private sector investments and social protection. At the twentieth replenishment of the International Development Association, the World Bank had made a stand-alone commitment to expand access to core services for persons with disabilities through

projects in the education, health, social protection, water, urban, digital development and transport sectors.

38. In Uzbekistan, the World Bank had provided support for the implementation of the Convention through activities aimed at strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing accessibility and fostering digital inclusion. Such activities had included a comprehensive review and revision of national laws to ensure their compatibility with the Convention and an audit of the accessibility of public infrastructure in Tashkent. To build local expertise and ensure the sustainability of efforts to implement the Convention, extensive training programmes had been provided for over 500 stakeholders, covering the principles of universal design and accessibility and practical measures for the implementation of policies and practices that were in line with the Convention.

39. In 2019, the World Bank had provided technical support to the Government of Romania in developing, with the involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, a national strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities for the period 2022–2027. The World Bank had also contributed to the development of a national authority for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, which would monitor progress in the implementation of the strategy.

40. The World Bank was partnering with Microsoft, the German Agency for International Cooperation and the Disability Data Initiative at Fordham University to establish a disability data hub for collating and cataloguing disability data for use across human development indicators and sectors. The hub would be publicly launched by the World Bank at the Global Disability Summit to be held in April 2025.

41. In 2019, the World Bank, in collaboration with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, had launched an initiative aimed at fostering inclusive education for children with disabilities across the world. The initiative had since been implemented in 18 countries. The initiative’s community of practice on disability inclusive education, which had close to 50,000 members, was a platform for sharing best practices, fostering collaboration and driving innovation in the field of inclusive education.

42. **Ms. Lister** (Head of Governance at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), panellist, said that, at the Summit of the Future, a new international consensus would be sought on how to create a better present and future that left no one behind. The meaningful involvement and representation of persons with disabilities should be ensured in the discussions and negotiations on the Summit’s outcome document, entitled “A Pact for the Future”.

43. With a view to accelerating efforts under the themes of the Conference, UNDP had three recommendations. First, technological development and its governance should be inclusive by design. UNDP had helped the national authorities of Bermuda to launch a national disability register as an accessible smartphone application that collected data on and from persons with disabilities with a view to making the delivery of public goods and services more inclusive. Together with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology, UNDP had launched an initiative on digital public infrastructure safeguards to strengthen multi-stakeholder international cooperation for safer and more inclusive digital public infrastructure.

44. Second, national and local strategies and plans for disaster risk reduction and recovery should be designed and implemented with, by and for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. In Viet Nam, UNDP was working with local organizations of persons with disabilities to promote gender-responsive and disability-inclusive budgeting in disaster risk reduction efforts to tackle the

inequalities faced by women and girls with disabilities before, during and after disasters. The Programme's experiences in Viet Nam and other countries had been detailed in its recently published policy brief entitled "A resilient future for all: advancing disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction and recovery for building resilience and leaving no one behind".

45. Third, to create inclusive and equitable job markets, laws and policies should be reviewed and updated to ensure access to education, training and social protection for persons with disabilities. In Ukraine, UNDP was providing grants for public-private partnership initiatives to improve the socioeconomic reintegration and employability of persons with disabilities. In the Dominican Republic, the Programme was working with the Ministry of Labour and the National Disability Council to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through training, awareness-raising campaigns and multi-stakeholder partnerships. UNDP was striving to become an inclusive employer through its new diversity, equity and inclusion strategy.

46. **Mr. Samatar** (Senior Multilateral Cooperation Specialist at the International Labour Organization (ILO)), panellist, said that, over the past five years, ILO had made significant strides in advancing disability inclusion through its active participation in the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. The Strategy's framework and rigorous annual reporting requirements provided ILO with the robust structure needed to realize its vision of comprehensive disability inclusion.

47. Before beginning to implement the Strategy, ILO had recognized the need to first build a culture of sharing, learning and leading on disability inclusion. To that end, ILO had designated staff to serve as custodians of indicators of the Strategy and had established a network of disability champions, who were ILO staff responsible for promoting accessibility and inclusion in their offices and departments.

48. Building disability awareness among ILO staff was key to achieving the goal of becoming a fully inclusive organization. ILO had thus developed an online course on disability inclusion that was mandatory for staff. ILO had also helped to develop a five-week course for United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy focal points.

49. The disability inclusion work carried out by ILO had been bolstered by the adoption of its disability inclusion policy and strategy for the period 2020–2023. ILO was currently drafting a new strategy to cover the next three years. In preparation, it had conducted a disability inclusion survey and commissioned an independent evaluation of the first strategy, both of which had produced useful insights on areas that required further improvement.

50. **Ms. Abu Al Ghaib** (Manager of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), panellist, said that the fund of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the only fund available to support countries in implementing their commitments under the Convention. Although millions of persons with disabilities were still struggling to obtain access to basic services, change was possible. Disability was increasingly being covered in policies. Discussions on care and support systems were taking place within countries and globally. The Partnership would continue to support Governments in ensuring that disability was addressed in discussions on climate change.

51. Through its ongoing programmes in 65 countries, the Partnership had seen that Governments were opening more doors for discussions on disability inclusion, organizations of persons with disabilities were being recognized as equal partners in national reform processes, and changes to national policies, laws and were being made. However, more data on best practices at the national level, more investments

and more coordination were needed. Disability-focused discussions were not enough; disability should also be addressed in mainstream discussions.

52. **Mr. Macanawai** (Civil Society Representative, Pacific Disability Forum), panellist, said that, as a person with a disability who was also a person from an Indigenous community in a small island developing State in the global South, he was aware of how the multiple and intersecting identities of persons with disabilities all too often exacerbated the discrimination, stigmatization, marginalization and exclusion that they faced.

53. During the Conference, participants had learned that technological advancements had the power to significantly enhance the lives, inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. They had also been reminded that persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected before, during and after situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and were vulnerable to the effects of conflict, climate change and health emergencies. Member States and relevant stakeholders had described their efforts to implement the Convention. Such efforts must be matched with targeted funding, disability-disaggregated data and frameworks that allowed the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

54. The overarching theme of the Conference was “Rethinking disability inclusion in the current international juncture and ahead of the Summit of the Future”. However, disability inclusion alone would not be enough; the significance of disability equity must also be considered. Inclusion would give persons with disabilities a seat at the table, but it was equity that would ensure their full, effective and meaningful participation.

55. The concerns of persons with disabilities that had been raised during the Conference must be given the attention that they deserved at the Summit of the Future. Working in siloes would only perpetuate the marginalization of persons with disabilities, leaving them further behind. The inclusion of and equity for persons with disabilities could not be achieved without breaking that cycle.

56. **Mr. Diaby** (Guinea) said that the *World Report on Disability 2011* had been influential in promoting a shift from a medical model to a social model in the approach to disability. His delegation wished to know when the *Disability and Development Report 2024* would be made available.

57. **Ms. Rivera Reyes** (Honduras) said that, in line with article 33 of the Convention, her Government was establishing a mechanism to ensure compliance with international recommendations, including the recommendation to integrate disability inclusion into risk management and contingency plans. Her delegation would welcome good examples of when the integration of disability inclusion into such plans had led to the saving of lives of persons with disabilities.

58. **Mr. Laresgoiti** (Mexico) said that the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and other United Nations entities and initiatives had played an essential role in promoting and assisting in the implementation of the Convention. States should deepen their collaboration with those entities and support those initiatives. He asked what strategies and measures could be implemented to effectively address the diverse contexts that amplified the barriers faced by people with disabilities, especially those with intersecting identities who were subjected to multiple forms of discrimination; and what best practices had been identified for optimizing the implementation of local policies in line with the Convention and for expanding the Convention’s scope to encompass the most marginalized communities.

59. **Mr. Mwaura** (Kenya) said that, ahead of the eighteenth session of the Conference, States parties should reflect on the progress made in the 18 years since the adoption of the Convention. Before its adoption, persons with disabilities had not been as well represented in Governments and other institutions, including international development organizations. At future sessions of the Conference, States parties should consider the issues of data, the fourth industrial revolution and artificial intelligence and explore ways to leverage new technologies to enable persons with disabilities to overcome the barriers that they faced in society.

60. **Ms. Manombe-Ncube** (Namibia) said that the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities was key for economic growth. Regrettably, persons with disabilities continued to face discrimination in and exclusion from employment, training and education. Despite being encouraged to apply for jobs, persons with disabilities often failed interviews owing to the persistence of negative attitudes towards them and the perception that they were unable to contribute meaningfully to the economy. She wondered what could be done to find tangible solutions to eliminate such exclusion.

61. **Mr. Olumadewa** (Observer for the Do the Dream Youth Development Initiative) said that the United Nations, the World Bank and other stakeholders should promote inclusive laws, build the capacities of persons with disabilities, take into consideration their perspectives and support their potential to contribute to sustainable economies through innovation. Creating a cycle of prosperity for persons with disabilities would lead to advancements and an improved economy.

62. **Mr. Wilmoth** (Officer-in-Charge of the Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the full version of the *Disability and Development Report 2024* would be made available later that year. The initial findings had been shared at an event earlier that week, and an extensive executive summary had already been published online.

63. **Mr. Hada** (Chief of the Equality, Development and Rule of Law Section, Office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York) said that disability-disaggregated data could help States to develop evidence-based policies to support disability inclusion and the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention. The process of data collection should be based on human rights principles to ensure that no harm was done to the right to privacy and to prevent further stigmatization. OHCHR had developed guidance and tools for human rights-based data collection and monitoring. OHCHR had also recently issued practical guidance on establishing and strengthening independent monitoring frameworks in accordance with article 33 of the Convention.

64. **Ms. McClain-Nhlapo** (Global Disability Adviser and Lead Social Specialist at the World Bank) said that recognizing the intersecting identities of persons with disabilities was a critical area where there was room for improvement. At the World Bank, she had been working closely with the Senior Adviser for Indigenous Peoples and the Global Adviser on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to ensure that the issues of Indigenous persons with disabilities and of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons with disabilities were addressed in their work.

65. **Ms. Lister** (Head of Governance at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that UNDP had several good examples of inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies. In Bahamas, it had developed a mobile application that provided accessible national disaster alerts and access to other social services for persons with disabilities. In Indonesia, it had been using digital technologies to enhance disaster risk assessments with a focus on inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

66. UNDP had been supporting the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities in a number of countries. In Ghana, for example, it had been providing persons with disabilities with sustainable agricultural opportunities, food security and irrigation systems.

67. Ahead of the review of Sustainable Development Goal 16 at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, focus should be placed on making institutions more inclusive, accountable and responsive as one way of accelerating the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

68. **Mr. Buffler** (Chief of Policy Advice and Planning at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that humanitarian organizations had been implementing the provisions of the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action since its adoption in 2016. As a result, persons with disabilities had become more visible in the collection and analysis of data to inform humanitarian responses, leading to programmes that saved lives. In Ukraine, for example, programmes had been adapted to better serve persons with disabilities who faced difficulties in moving away from the front line and ensure that assistance reached them.

69. **Mr. Samatar** (Senior Multilateral Cooperation Specialist at the International Labour Organisation (ILO)) said that, as part of its ongoing efforts to include persons with disabilities in the world of work, ILO was aiming to integrate disability inclusion into sectors such as education, employment, social protection and vocational training. It was working with Governments, employers, workers' organizations and civil society to create comprehensive strategies to ensure that persons with disabilities had equal opportunities for decent work. Through its initiative to improve prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, ILO was helping humanitarian and development actors to build strong partnerships and improve their coordination and efficiency in service of displaced persons and host communities, including persons with disabilities.

70. **Ms. Abu Al Ghaib** (Manager of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that, to ensure that the rights and needs of underrepresented groups were addressed in national policy reforms, consultations should be held with representatives of those groups at as early a stage as possible. They should also be included in the implementation and monitoring stages. While disability-specific policies were needed, the issue of disability should also be addressed in mainstream discussions.

71. **Mr. Macanawai** (Civil Society Representative, Pacific Disability Forum) said that consideration should be given to the preconditions for disability inclusion that would need to be accommodated and possibly even funded. Engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations should not be a box-ticking exercise; rather, it should be genuine and meaningful.

#### **Agenda item 6: Decisions by the Conference of States Parties**

72. **The President** drew the attention of the Conference to the fact that a document containing the text of three draft decisions had been circulated to all delegations. Consensus had been sought by 10 May 2024. Since no objection had been received, he invited States parties to endorse those proposals.

*Draft 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*

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

*Draft 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*

73. *Draft decisions 1, 2 and 3 were adopted.*

#### **Agenda item 7: Closure of the session**

74. **Ms. Lotkipanidze** (Georgia), speaking as Vice-President, said that the current international juncture was marked by a complex global crisis with far-reaching and profound implications for all aspects of sustainable development. In such a challenging context, the rights, voices and contributions of persons with disabilities in all their diversity must be protected, promoted and strengthened. As the seventeenth session of the Conference drew to a close, it was time to take stock of all the initiatives and innovative ideas that had been proposed and to begin to translate them into action to ensure that, at its eighteenth session in 2025, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would deliver on its promise to create equal opportunities for persons with disabilities at all levels.

75. **Ms. Alexandridou** (Greece), speaking as Acting Vice-President, said that the annual Conference was one of the most important international events for discussing issues relating to the Convention. Having been ratified by 191 countries thus far, the Convention had the highest number of signatories of any convention. Considerable progress had been achieved since its adoption. She was confident that the remaining gaps in its implementation would be addressed given the determination and commitment of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

76. She wished to thank the President of the National Accessibility Authority of Greece for participating in the first round table of the Conference, contributing his expertise in the application of artificial intelligence to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. With the Summit of the Future approaching, the role of digital technologies had become more relevant than ever.

77. **Ms. Thompson Ramirez** (Panama), speaking as Vice-President, said that the theme and sub-themes of the Conference had established a solid foundation for the development of national policies and strategies in line with the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had explored those themes in the broader international context, emphasizing the need for cooperation, preparations for the future and the continuity of the achievements made and ongoing efforts in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. The overall theme of the Conference had guided the Committee's discussions and efforts towards building a more inclusive world through innovative solutions that would transform the lives of persons with disabilities.

78. Panama would continue its efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, both nationally and multilaterally. To that end, her Government had developed its first national plan on universal accessibility, covering the period 2022–2032, and had conducted a second national survey on disability.

79. The significant remaining challenges must be overcome in the coming years to enable persons with disabilities to become active agents and contribute to the transformations that were needed for them to live a life of dignity and independence and to participate fully in all aspects of society.

80. **Mr. Gunaratna** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Vice-President, said that there was no doubt that much progress had been made since the adoption of the Convention, which had been ratified by 191 States parties, making it almost universal. The large interest in the Conference even at the levels of Heads of State and ministers indicated the priority that Governments gave to the rights of persons with disabilities. The participation of a large number of stakeholders was a further indicator of the global interest in the matter.

81. In the eight Millennium Development Goals and their targets and indicators, adopted in 2000, disability had been alluded to only once, in relation to the risk of disability from giving birth in unhygienic conditions. With the adoption of the Convention in 2006, the discourse on disabilities had been given the necessary framework. The annual Conference had ensured that the rights of persons with disabilities were reflected in global discussions in multiple forums. Every State party must take the key messages emanating from the Conference back to their countries, where tangible actions could make a real difference in changing perceptions of disability.

82. **Ms. Jabou Bessadok** (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Conference was the most inspiring event that she had witnessed at the United Nations. She had never seen so many talented, skilled and inspiring people together in one place. They had taught her that nothing was impossible.

83. **The President** said that, during the seventeenth session of the Conference, the topic of technological innovation and technological transfer had been discussed from the perspective of disability rights for the first time on the international stage. At the first round table, participants had sought to identify strategies to reinforce global cooperation in making mechanisms for the development and transfer of technology inclusive, ethical and accessible.

84. As had been highlighted during the second round table, persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, and protecting their rights under the Convention was fundamental for developing effective policies and measures to combat the rising threats of conflict, climate change and health emergencies.

85. In the third round table, a diverse range of experts from the United Nations system and organizations representing persons with disabilities had discussed the gaps and challenges in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities to decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

86. The Conference had once again laid the groundwork for States parties to continue to tackle the most pressing issues, with the goal of bolstering collective efforts to achieve the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities guaranteed in the Convention in all aspects of life, particularly at the current critical juncture, fraught with multiple, intersecting challenges that were threatening the hard-won progress achieved thus far.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*

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