



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Thirty-second session

Summary record (partial)* of the 763rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 6 March 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Kim Mi Yeon

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

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

Consideration of reports submitted by Parties to the Convention under article 35

(continued)

Initial report of Tuvalu, considered in the absence of a delegation (continued)
([CRPD/C/TUV/1](#); [CRPD/C/TUV/Q/1](#))

1. **The Chair** said that the questions put by members the previous day ([CRPD/C/SR.761](#)) had been relayed to the State Party, which had been requested to submit replies prior to the adoption of the Committee's concluding observations on 10 March 2025. She recalled that the State Party had requested the postponement of the consideration of its initial report ([CRPD/C/TUV/1](#)), but that the request could not be accommodated, since it had been submitted at the last minute and did not cite compelling reasons for postponement. She invited Committee members to continue to raise questions relating to the articles of the Convention.

Articles 21–30

2. **Ms. Kayess** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that she wished to know what obstacles persons with disabilities, in particular those with motor or visual impairments, faced in gaining access to quality and affordable mobility and assistive technologies in Tuvalu. She wondered what measures the Government was taking to build capacity in the local community to enable the repair and maintenance of assistive devices and to address the prohibitive cost of importing such devices, which were reportedly not exempted from tax or other duties.

3. She would like to know what was being done to increase the use of Tuvaluan Sign Language; provide sufficient teachers proficient in the language and enable deaf children to start and stay in school; establish mechanisms, partnerships and other initiatives to expand access to sign language across Tuvalu; recognize Tuvaluan Sign Language as an official language; and develop a pool of qualified sign language interpreters. She would welcome information on the measures being taken to adopt a national inclusive education strategy and policy, address negative attitudes towards children with disabilities in mainstream schools and enable all children with disabilities to attend school, with access to whatever support they might need. In a similar vein, she would be interested to know how the Government planned to build capacity among the teaching community and attract and develop teachers specialized in inclusive education pedagogy, with a view to creating a sustainable, inclusive education system for children with disabilities.

4. In the light of reports that persons with psychosocial disabilities could be detained by the police simply for wandering the streets, she would be curious to know what mental health services were available and accessible to persons with disabilities in the community. She would appreciate information on access to community-based allied health services to support persons with disabilities to be able to work and participate in the community and children with disabilities to stay in school. It would be helpful to have an account of the specific measures being taken to build the capacity of allied health services and improve access to such services in the community, including in the outer islands of Tuvalu. Information on the programmes and other initiatives in place to ensure that persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities, had access to sexual and reproductive health services and to HIV/AIDS awareness-raising in the modes and means of communication of their choosing would also be appreciated.

5. She would be grateful to know what support the Government was providing to the Fusi Alofa Association – the national organization of persons with disabilities – to facilitate and scale up the implementation of livelihoods programmes for persons with disabilities across Tuvalu; what steps were being taken to increase employment opportunities for, and representation of, persons with disabilities in the public sector, such as through specific strategies, affirmative action programmes and internships; and whether any initiatives, including scholarships, had been established with regional partners, such as Australia, Fiji and New Zealand, to enable young persons with disabilities to gain access to vocational training.

6. She would welcome information on the extent to which persons with disabilities were involved in efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and an explanation of the State Party's poverty alleviation programmes, with particular regard to its Disability Support Scheme, which was reportedly available only to certain persons with disabilities who were under 70 years of age.

7. Regarding participation in political and public life, she wished to know whether the State Party planned to repeal section 15 of the Falekaupule Act, pursuant to which persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities could be barred from voting on the basis that they were considered to be of "unsound mind", which was contrary to the Convention. It would be helpful to know what was being done to recognize the legal capacity of persons with disabilities to cast their vote by secret ballot and to increase the representation of women with disabilities in elected office.

8. Lastly, she wondered whether the State Party could provide information on the measures being taken, and the resources allocated in the State budget, to ensure the effective participation of persons with disabilities in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport, including by making information available in accessible formats and ensuring that recreation and leisure facilities were physically accessible.

9. **Mr. Makni** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know what the Government was doing to support civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities in Tuvalu and to take the lead on efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular with regard to ensuring that the education system was accessible to and inclusive of children and adults with disabilities. He wondered what measures were being taken to build capacity in the health sector to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities and to ensure that social protection measures were extended to cover all persons with disabilities in Tuvalu.

10. **Ms. Placencia Porrero** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to learn more about efforts being made by the State Party to ascertain the current health needs of persons with disabilities and to develop targeted measures to address those needs. According to information received, in the light of the lack of provision for inclusive mainstream education, many children with disabilities were being homeschooled. She wondered what support, guidance and information were provided to their families to aid them in educating their children.

11. She would be interested to know how the constitutional provision barring persons who had been certified "insane" or otherwise deemed to be of "unsound mind" from registering to vote in parliamentary elections could be considered compatible with the universal right to vote and stand for election and what measures were being taken to address the issue.

12. Lastly, she would appreciate more information about the findings of the study carried out by the State Party to determine levels of participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport, in particular the extent to which persons with disabilities were involved in sporting and cultural activities, including in decision-making roles, and any awareness-raising carried out with regard to the support available for persons with disabilities to take an active part in such activities.

13. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that she wished to know whether the Government had carried out an assessment to identify the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, in particular persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, in exercising their right to marry and form a family and, if so, what the results of the assessment had been and what actions had been taken, if any, to give effect to that right. She would also like to know what measures were in place to provide adequate support and resources to parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities so that they could fully exercise their parental rights and fulfil their duties to their children.

14. Lastly, she wondered whether the Government had developed a plan, with specific time frames, to phase out so-called special classes in mainstream schools for children with disabilities and ensure that all children were taught in inclusive mainstream education, including by providing individualized support and reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities, as required.

15. **Mr. Corporán Lorenzo** said that, given the importance of tourism to the State Party, he wondered whether the Government might consider turning Tuvalu into a destination for accessible tourism – a rapidly growing sector – which could, in turn, serve as an engine to promote universal accessibility and development on the islands. He would like to know whether the Government had envisaged any initiatives for that purpose, such as to promote accessibility awards, certifications and subsidies for the private sector or to seek best practices and technical support, including from States with expertise in that area.

16. **Ms. Jacobs** said that, since ensuring access to education was one way to break the cycle of poverty in which many persons with disabilities were trapped, she wondered what measures were in place to enable children with disabilities to transition easily from primary to secondary and tertiary education.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

17. **Ms. Kayess** said it was disappointing that the State Party had not taken up the option of participating in the review of its initial report via video link and that its request for a postponement had been received after the constructive dialogue had begun. The news that the State Party was reportedly sending a delegation to participate in the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, and in the Pacific technical cooperation session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in Fiji, did not reflect well on the Government's commitment to implementing the Convention and promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in Tuvalu. While the inability of the General Assembly to commit fully to strengthening and modernizing the State Party review process, including through regional reviews, had an admittedly disproportionate impact on small island developing States such as Tuvalu, the Government should nevertheless expend all necessary effort and resources to engage with the Committee.

18. The Committee wished to express its appreciation for the commitment and invaluable contributions of the Fusi Alofa Association and the Pacific Disability Forum, which had provided useful information on policy and on the situation of persons with disabilities in Tuvalu, including those living in the outer islands.

19. The Committee had identified four critical areas for urgent action by the Government, in cooperation with civil society, namely: implementation of the recommendations arising from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific review of Tuvaluan laws and policies; development of a standalone law on disability to give full effect to the provisions of the Convention; issuance of a monograph on the situation of persons with disabilities in Tuvalu, on the basis of data from the national census, with a focus on access to employment, education and healthcare; and establishment of disability services and support, including for the provision of assistive devices, sign language capacity-building and community-based mental health support, through multilateral donor partnerships and budgetary measures.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.55 a.m.