



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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

Summary record of the 797th meeting*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 18 August 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Kim Mi Yeon

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* No summary record was issued for the 796th meeting.

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

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 35 of the Convention *(continued)*

Initial report of Kiribati (CRPD/C/KIR/1; CRPD/C/KIR/Q/1 and CRPD/C/KIR/RQ/1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Kiribati joined the meeting via video link.*
2. **A representative of Kiribati**, speaking in a pre-recorded video message, said that since ratifying the Convention in 2013, her country had made steady progress in advancing disability rights and inclusion, most recently within the framework of the Kiribati National Disability Policy 2018–2025.
3. Under the Inclusive Education Policy, teachers had been trained on disability issues, accessible learning materials had been developed and inclusive teaching practices had been promoted. The special school in South Tarawa offered individualized learning and training plans, assistive technologies, skilled staff and a safe environment, which had led to measurable improvements in academic outcomes for children with disabilities. Vocational training and employment programmes had created opportunities for persons with disabilities, and the Employment and Industrial Relations Code of 2015 prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of disability.
4. The Building Act of 2024 mandated accessibility standards in public buildings, and the accessibility of public spaces, transport and services had been improved through ramps, accessible toilets, sign language interpretation and Braille signage. To support individuals unable to work owing to their disabilities, the Government had introduced a disability support allowance. Access to healthcare had been expanded through the Tungaru Rehabilitation Service, which provided specialist care and assistive devices, and disability considerations had been included in the Noncommunicable Diseases Programme.
5. The State valued its partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities, particularly Te Toa Matoa, whose advocacy had driven legislative and policy change, community support and outreach, disability awareness and the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making. While much progress had been made, challenges remained, including resource constraints, infrastructure limitations and social stigma. The Government of Kiribati remained steadfast in its commitment to uphold the rights, protect the dignity and ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Articles 1–9 and 31–33

6. **Ms. Kayess** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that the Committee was pleased to note that the State Party had established a framework for promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. However, there seemed to be a disconnect between commitments made to implement the Convention and practical action taken to that end. She would be grateful for clarification of the barriers to carrying out such action, including the proposed harmonization of the Constitution and national legislation with the Convention, among other things to make disability a prohibited ground of discrimination, and information on the budget earmarked for disability inclusion measures.
7. **A representative of Kiribati** said that there were plans to begin work on the proposed amendment of the Constitution once financial resources became available, with the aim of commencing the process in the subsequent session of Parliament.
8. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Government had made progress in reviewing legislation and promoting organizational cultures in line with the Convention. A legislative review had been conducted by the Disability Inclusion Division of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs, but there were still barriers to implementing the review's policy recommendations. Those barriers included high staff turnover, which had hampered progress towards the adoption of the disability inclusion act.

9. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wished to know whether the State Party had plans to establish a formal, government-wide mechanism to ensure close consultation with and the active involvement in public life of persons with disabilities, including those living on the outer islands, through their representative organizations.

10. **A representative of Kiribati** said that there had been significant improvement in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in policy- and decision-making. Various initiatives had been undertaken to encourage the engagement of persons with disabilities, including model inclusivity reviews with the participation of working groups directly involving persons with disabilities. In every policy review, including on the outer islands, organizations of persons with disabilities were consulted. The Government was looking into introducing training on the Convention for front-line service providers to boost awareness of the importance of including persons with disabilities in policy reviews. Currently, the main obstacle to consultation on the outer islands was transportation. Most transport used there was not accessible to persons with disabilities. However, the Government planned to seek funding for accessible local transportation that could accommodate persons with disabilities.

11. **Ms. Kayess** said that she would be interested to learn how the State Party ensured the provision of reasonable accommodation in line with the Convention and whether it intended to establish an anti-discrimination legal framework, including a mechanism allowing persons with disabilities to submit complaints about and seek redress for discrimination.

12. **A representative of Kiribati** said that efforts to eliminate discriminatory terminology and enact inclusive education legislation had been instrumental in advancing inclusive education. The current legal framework ensured that students with special educational needs were protected from discrimination and exclusion in school and provided for reasonable accommodation.

13. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs was competent to receive complaints about discrimination by telephone or in person. The Ministry was in the process of further developing the complaints framework to strengthen accessibility and effectiveness, with planned measures including the establishment of a dedicated toll-free hotline, to ensure that all complaints were directed promptly to the competent authorities, and the development of an online complaints portal. In addition, training programmes were being developed to equip staff with the necessary skills to manage complaints effectively and to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of persons with different types of disabilities.

14. **Ms. Kayess** said that she would like to understand how issues specific to women and girls with disabilities were included in national gender policies such as the Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy and the Eliminating Sexual and Gender-based Violence Policy and National Action Plan, what support organizations of women with disabilities were given to enable them to engage in the design and implementation of those policies and how the staff members of the Ministry's Gender Division acquired the expertise to identify and respond to the specific concerns of women and girls with disabilities.

15. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the formulation of the Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy, in which the existence of particularly vulnerable population groups such as persons with disabilities was recognized, had been guided by the Convention. Although initiatives to promote the participation of disadvantaged women, including widows and women with disabilities, in income-generating activities had been made a priority of the Policy's economic empowerment component, data collection had been insufficient, and as a result it was not known how many women with disabilities had benefited from those initiatives. Data collection would be strengthened under the next iteration of the policy.

16. Under the Eliminating Sexual and Gender-based Violence Policy – a revised policy still in draft form that would be in place until 2032 – activities organized with a view to preventing violence against women and girls, including those with disabilities, would be incorporated into school curricula. The idea was to help ensure that younger generations were familiar with their rights and knew where to turn for help. The Policy would be implemented with input from the Kiribati National Council for Persons with Disabilities. Provision was also made for involving young men in a behavioural change programme, supporting the steps taken by government ministries to mainstream efforts to combat gender-based violence and

giving front-line service providers the training that would help them work with survivors of gender-based violence and abuse, including those with disabilities.

17. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wondered what was done to ensure that consideration was given to children with disabilities in the design and implementation of the State Party's youth policies.

18. **A representative of Kiribati** said that all children, including children with disabilities, were included in the Government's child policies and legislation.

19. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wished to know whether there were any plans – within the framework of the National Disability Policy and Action Plan, for example – to strengthen awareness-raising efforts on the rights of persons with disabilities. It would be particularly helpful to learn whether the resources set aside for such efforts were sufficient and whether those efforts were made in partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities, churches and other faith-based groups and local communities, including on the outer islands.

20. **A representative of Kiribati** said that plans had been made to set up a working group, in which organizations of persons with disabilities would be represented, to review the Kiribati National Disability Policy and Action Plan. Plans had also been made to provide training and capacity-building for church leaders and the leaders of relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Disability Inclusion Division would work closely with the division responsible for registering NGOs to ensure that disability perspectives were mainstreamed.

21. **Ms. Kayess** said that it would be helpful to learn what the State Party was doing to make its transport services, including maritime transport services, and public buildings and spaces accessible to persons with disabilities. In particular, she wondered what work was done with donors and development partners to ensure disability-inclusive infrastructure development and whether there were any mechanisms for the enforcement of the Building Code.

22. **A representative of Kiribati**, noting that the 2024 Building Code was being implemented, said that standard designs for public buildings had been amended to make them more accessible to persons with disabilities. In addition, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy conducted accessibility assessments of existing infrastructure and made recommendations for improvements.

23. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wished to know what happened if the Building Code was not followed.

24. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Building Code contained a section on compliance.

25. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wondered whether there were any plans to draw on available data to analyse in greater depth the situation of persons with disabilities and the measures and budget allocations that were required to ensure that disability rights were mainstreamed.

26. **A representative of Kiribati** said that work to ensure that the action plans of all government ministries were disability inclusive was ongoing. The Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs had, for its part, set aside additional funds for disability matters. The Ministry had also taken steps to ensure that its divisions drew up disability-inclusive budgets and procedures. Although the authorities had regrettably little expertise in data collection, they were committed to ensuring that provision was made for disability matters in ministerial budgets.

27. **Ms. Kayess** said that it would be helpful to learn how the State Party planned to deal with the limitations of the data on disability that were collected, including on the percentage of the population that had disabilities, and whether its statisticians had the necessary familiarity with the Convention and the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning.

28. **A representative of Kiribati**, noting that a data collection exercise was scheduled for the coming months, said that plans had been made to give the officials responsible for the

household survey that was to be conducted as part of that exercise training on the Washington Group set of questions and other relevant topics.

29. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wished to know how the State Party was ensuring that the needs of persons with disabilities were being included in the plans that were being made to relocate the population in the event that climate change made the country uninhabitable. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether organizations of persons with disabilities had been closely consulted on and actively involved in those plans, whether agreements for climate migration to countries other than Fiji, where land had been purchased, were being negotiated and, if so, whether steps were being taken to ensure that the agreements did not discriminate against persons with disabilities.

30. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the plans that were being made were in fact to encourage the country's people to build resilience and stay put. A group of experts in which all relevant NGOs and government agencies were represented had developed a disaster risk management plan. All stakeholders were being consulted to ensure that no one was left out of plans, policies and legislation related to disasters caused by sea-level rise or erosion.

31. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wondered whether the authorities actively sought donor partnerships that could provide investment and technical assistance to address critical gaps in providing support and services to persons with disabilities, developing accessible infrastructure and protecting rights. In that connection, it would be interesting to know whether anything had been done to seek support for the development of programmes for the distribution and repair, at no cost, of assistive devices, for capacity-building for sign language interpreters on all the islands, for ensuring the accessibility of buildings and transport and for the development of an anti-discrimination framework.

32. **A representative of Kiribati** said that donor funds had been secured for initiatives – for capacity-building for training in sign language, for example – that would improve the lives of persons with disabilities. Plans to develop an anti-discrimination framework had been made as part of the review of the National Disability Policy.

33. **Ms. Kayess** said that it would be helpful to learn exactly when the review was expected to conclude. She would welcome an update on the outcome of discussions with the State Party's partners on the recommendation to establish a national human rights institution and more information about the disability committee that, according to the replies to the list of issues, tracked the efforts that were made to implement the Convention. It would be interesting to know, for example, who its members were and how it interacted with the Disability Inclusion Division and organizations of persons with disabilities.

34. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Government was still in the process of reviewing the possibility of setting up a national human rights institution. The Pacific Community had recently conducted training sessions on the purpose of such institutions and on the institution of the Ombudsman for members of the parliament and government officials.

35. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Kiribati National Council for Persons with Disabilities had been absorbed into the National Human Rights Task Force. Despite a shortage of available funding, the Disability Inclusion Division was committed to assisting efforts to re-establish the Council.

36. **Ms. Kayess** said that she wished to know to what extent the Kiribati National Council for Persons with Disabilities was distinct from the aforementioned disability committee and whether its make-up had changed when it had been absorbed into the National Human Rights Task Force.

37. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the National Human Rights Task Force, which had been established within the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs in 2012, was responsible for implementing the Convention and the other United Nations human rights conventions to which Kiribati was a Party, including by meeting reporting obligations.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

38. **Ms. Fefoame** said that she wished to know what formal mechanisms the State Party would put in place to ensure that women and girls with disabilities were systematically included in policymaking regarding not only issues dealt with by the Ministry of Women,

Youth, Sport and Social Affairs, but all matters. She would appreciate further clarification about the extent to which children with disabilities were able to benefit from registration and early intervention services, particularly on the outer islands and in rural areas.

39. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that she would welcome clarification on the extent to which organizations of persons with disabilities had been involved in reviewing the legislation on psychiatric treatment, whether that legislation had been amended as envisaged and whether it was in line with the Convention. Given that the State Party had reported that the early pregnancy rate was higher among girls with disabilities than among girls without a disability, she wondered what measures, including the provision of sexual and reproductive health education, it had taken to prevent pregnancies among girls with disabilities.

40. **Ms. Jacobs** said that she wished to know whether the State Party intended to become a Party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention and, if so, within what time frame.

41. **Mr. Nwanoro** said that he would appreciate details of the efforts made by the State Party to raise awareness of persons with disabilities and foster respect for their rights and dignity throughout society, including information on the kinds of media that were used.

42. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Government was committed to ensuring equal and timely access to justice for all, including the inhabitants of the outer islands, by using mobile courts and gradually expanding the use of virtual hearings where connectivity was available, appointing locally trained magistrates and police officers and using community-based dispute resolution mechanisms supported by the Ministry of Justice. Language rights were ensured by using trained local interpreters, and legal literacy was strengthened by conducting island-based awareness-raising campaigns in collaboration with civil society and island councils.

43. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy was intended to ensure that all persons enjoyed human rights, opportunities and access to services on an equal footing so that all could reach their full potential in economic, political, cultural and social life. It provided for the progressive implementation of a gender mainstreaming approach with the key objectives of achieving gender equality, improving women's economic empowerment, supporting stronger, informed families, improving women's political representation and leadership and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence.

44. **A representative of Kiribati** said that one of the objectives of the National Health Strategic Plan for the period 2024–2027 was to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce preventable mortality, morbidity and disability related to noncommunicable diseases and mental health, in part by increasing the number of mental health awareness programmes conducted. The objectives of the mental health bill, which had been drafted in 2022 with the aim of bringing mental health services into line with the Convention, included protecting and promoting respect for the human rights of persons with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities and ensuring their equality before the law; facilitating the use of supported decision-making in mental healthcare services; protecting persons with disabilities from poor, inhumane and degrading treatment; facilitating the provision of quality mental healthcare, support and treatment within families and the community on a voluntary basis; facilitating the provision of care that, as far as possible, was consistent with the views and preferences of the person being treated; promoting the participation of persons with mental health conditions in all areas of society on an equal footing with others; ensuring that mental healthcare was integrated into general healthcare at all levels; ensuring the availability of adequate human resources, appropriate facilities and sufficient funding for the provision of mental healthcare; assisting NGOs and other agencies in respecting the traditional, cultural and religious values of Kiribati; providing access to pharmaceutical and other treatment options for mental health conditions based on internationally accepted standards; promoting a positive change in attitude toward mental health conditions through effective awareness-raising activities; supporting research into the prevention and treatment of mental health conditions; ensuring that all police and correctional officers responsible for the care and custody of persons with mental health conditions received a high standard of relevant training; and supporting efforts to eliminate the use of restraints in care settings.

45. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that she wished to know whether the State Party had any specific regulations to ensure that accessibility features were taken into consideration in public procurement and whether the State Party had taken any measures to ensure that public websites were accessible to persons with disabilities.

46. **Ms. Boresli** said that she would like to know how many persons with disabilities and organizations representing them had taken part in the various training sessions organized by the Government, including some in partnership with regional and international partners, to raise awareness of the Convention and what strategy the State Party would pursue in the future to raise awareness of the Convention at the community level. She wondered what measures it had taken to combat stigmatization, stereotyping and harmful practices related to disability, including discrimination against persons with disabilities based on age and gender, and what mechanisms had been put in place to ensure the effectiveness of those measures.

47. **Mr. Corporán Lorenzo** said that he wished to know whether, as part of its strategic planning, the State Party had taken account of the potential barriers and trauma persons with disabilities might experience in the event of relocation.

48. **A representative of Kiribati** said that current infrastructure regulations – which were in the process of being amended – ensured that all public procurement for infrastructure was monitored by the Quality Control and Inspection Unit, which took into consideration the need to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

49. **A representative of Kiribati** said that, while significant progress had been made in raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and combating stigmatization and stereotypes related to them, some cultural practices continued to present challenges. One example was the requirement, followed in rural areas and the outer islands in particular, that the roof of the *maneaba*, a traditional meeting house, should extend close to the ground so that those entering it were obliged to bow as a mark of respect. As such buildings were not permanent, efforts were being made to ensure that they were built to be accessible to persons with disabilities. The Government continued to search for ways of making positive changes to cultural practices to ensure the recognition and inclusion of persons with disabilities throughout the country.

Articles 10–20

50. **Mr. Tamon** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate information on the progress made by the Government in reviewing the Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management to assess its inclusiveness of persons with disabilities and whether persons with disabilities were able to participate in all of the strategies contained in the plan. He wondered what measures had been taken to ensure the safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, for example by providing accessible shelters and communication channels, and to what extent the Government had sought out international cooperation in that area.

51. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Kiribati Police Service was working with a variety of stakeholders to mainstream disability inclusion across climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction programmes. In 2023, a team had visited six islands to hold consultations on disaster risk reduction and organize emergency simulation exercises, which had been well received by the communities concerned. As part of those activities, the team had engaged with representatives of island councils, older persons, young people, women and persons with disabilities.

52. **Mr. Tamon** said that he would like to know what steps had been taken to establish supported decision-making mechanisms for persons with disabilities, guarantee the participation of persons with disabilities in relevant legislative processes and develop safeguards to ensure that they enjoyed equal recognition before the law. He was keen to hear what had been done to protect the right of persons with disabilities to own and inherit property.

53. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the property rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to inherit property in the event of the death of their parent or next of kin, were protected under existing laws.

54. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Ministry of Women, Youth, Sport and Social Affairs was reviewing its policies to guarantee the involvement of persons with disabilities in any decisions affecting them. Persons with disabilities would be invited to participate in both local and national decision-making processes through their representative organizations.

55. **Mr. Tamon** asked what had been done to ensure that the justice system was accessible for persons with disabilities, in particular with regard to the physical accessibility of courthouses and the use of alternative means of communication throughout the judicial process.

56. **A representative of Kiribati** said that an audit had revealed that most of the older buildings in the country required renovation in order to bring them into line with accessibility standards. Provisions establishing the requirement for all buildings to be accessible for persons with disabilities had been incorporated into the Building Code.

57. **A representative of Kiribati** said that efforts had been made to increase the use of accessible means of communication in various sectors. Staff from the judiciary and other public services would soon have the opportunity to participate in a sign language training programme financed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.

58. **Mr. Tamon** said that he wished to know whether steps had been taken to repeal the provisions of the Criminal Code according to which persons deemed to be of “unsound mind” could be declared unfit to stand trial, to bring the State Party’s mental health laws into line with current standards, and to end the use of restraint and isolation in care institutions.

59. **A representative of Kiribati** said that a new mental health bill was due to be examined by the parliament in November 2025. One of the purposes of the bill was to reduce the use of restraint and isolation in involuntary care settings. Three training sessions on best practices and effective communication had been run for staff in medical, mental health and correctional facilities, with a view to promoting the use of alternatives to restraint and isolation measures. It was hoped that a further three sessions would be held later in the year.

60. **Mr. Tamon** asked whether the State Party had taken steps to amend the legal provisions under which individuals could be institutionalized solely on the grounds that they had a disability.

61. **A representative of Kiribati** said that persons with psychosocial disabilities who felt that they were unable to take care of themselves could voluntarily admit themselves to a mental health facility for treatment. Persons with disabilities were admitted to such facilities against their will only if they posed a threat to themselves or their community or if they had a mental health condition that would worsen without treatment. Such persons typically remained in the mental health facility for three months, with the aim being to stabilize their condition to the point that they were safe to be released to receive further care in the community. Such community-based care was provided for in the new mental health bill and would be delivered by mental health outreach teams serving South Tarawa and the outer islands.

62. **Mr. Tamon** said that he would welcome an update on whether the Family Peace Act had been amended to enhance the protection of women and girls with disabilities and, if so, what measures had been taken to give effect to the amended provisions in practice.

63. **A representative of Kiribati** said that information on the specific steps taken to guarantee the protection of women with disabilities would be provided in writing.

64. **A representative of Kiribati** said that the Government was continuously working to establish inclusive mechanisms for the protection of all victims of crime. The Family Peace Act provided for a number of pathways for addressing all forms of violence against children, including those with disabilities.

65. **Mr. Tamon** said that he would be curious to know what had been done to prevent individuals from being detained or subjected to any form of non-consensual treatment on the basis of a psychiatric diagnosis. Information on any steps taken to promote the transition from institutional to community-based care would be welcome, as would an indication of whether any independent mechanisms had been established to monitor and protect the rights

of persons with disabilities to receive equal treatment and have their autonomy respected in medical settings.

66. **A representative of Kiribati** said that inpatient mental health treatment orders were issued when an individual had reduced decision-making capacity owing to a mental health condition, refused to receive treatment on a voluntary basis or required support that could not be safely provided within the community. In such cases, consent was obtained from the patient's family.

67. **A representative of Kiribati** said that patients who had been released from mental health facilities were usually monitored by their families, who were responsible for ensuring that the patients attended an outpatient follow-up clinic two weeks after their release. Patients who were unable to attend the clinic would receive home visits by a team responsible for assessing whether their condition had improved or whether their treatment needed to be adjusted.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.