



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Concluding observations on the initial report of Maldives*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Maldives¹ at its 801st and 802nd meetings,² held on 20 August 2025. It adopted the present concluding observations at its 807th meeting, held on 25 August 2025.
2. The Committee welcomes the initial report of Maldives, which was prepared in accordance with the Committee's reporting guidelines, and thanks the State Party for its written replies³ to the list of issues prepared by the Committee.⁴
3. The Committee appreciates the fruitful and sincere dialogue held with the State Party's delegation, which included representatives of the relevant government ministries.

II. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the legislative, administrative and policy measures taken by the State Party to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and to implement the Convention since its ratification in 2010, in particular the following:
 - (a) The adoption of Act No. 08/2010, on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and the provision of financial assistance (Disability Act), in 2010;
 - (b) The adoption of the Gender Equality Act (Act No. 18/2016) and the Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–2026, in 2016 and 2022, respectively;
 - (c) The establishment of the Department of Inclusive Education, in 2018;
 - (d) The introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme, in 2012;
 - (e) The adoption of the Child Rights Protection Act (Act No. 9/91), in 2019;
 - (f) The adoption of the first Inclusive Education Policy, in 2013.

III. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

A. General principles and obligations (arts. 1–4)

5. The Committee notes with concern:

* Adopted by the Committee at its thirty-third session (11–26 August 2025).

¹ [CRPD/C/MDV/1](#).

² See [CRPD/C/SR.801](#) and [CRPD/C/SR.802](#).

³ [CRPD/C/MDV/RQ/1](#).

⁴ [CRPD/C/MDV/Q/1](#).



(a) The lack of harmonization of national legislation with the Convention and the prevalence of the medical model of disability in the State Party;

(b) The use, in laws and in policies, of derogatory concepts and terminology concerning persons with disabilities that emphasize impairments, reflect medical and paternalistic approaches to disability and reinforce the stigmatization of persons with disabilities;

(c) The lack of a comprehensive national affirmative action policy on disability, as well as insufficient resources and monitoring and inadequate coordination and collaboration among ministries and with donors, development partners, regional partners and civil society organizations to effectively implement the Convention;

(d) The lack of awareness among policymakers, judges, prosecutors, teachers, and healthcare and other professionals working with persons with disabilities about the rights recognized in the Convention;

(e) The lack of harmonization among the different registration systems for persons with disabilities;

(f) The fact that the State Party has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

6. The Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:

(a) **Expedite efforts to review all relevant legislation and policies in order to harmonize them with the provisions of the Convention;**

(b) **Amend or repeal legislation that includes derogatory concepts and terminology concerning persons with disabilities and ensure that national legislation recognizes the human rights model of disability and the evolving concept of disability to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in society;**

(c) **Adopt a comprehensive national affirmative action policy on disability, allocate a percentage of each ministry's budget to establish a dedicated disability budget, and strengthen monitoring and consolidate coordination and collaboration among ministries and with donors, development partners, regional partners and civil society organizations, to implement the Convention;**

(d) **Build capacity on the human rights model of disability among government officials at all levels, judges, prosecutors and healthcare and other professionals working with persons with disabilities;**

(e) **Harmonize existing registration systems and provide guidance for persons with disabilities on registration;**

(f) **Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention.**

7. The Committee is concerned that there are insufficient measures and resources to ensure close consultation with and the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, including in the outer islands, in all ministerial decision-making processes affecting them.

8. The Committee recalls its general comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, and recommends that the State Party strengthen measures and resources to ensure that persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, are closely consulted and actively involved in decision-making processes affecting them, including in the design, implementation and review of national legislation and policies.

B. Specific rights (arts. 5–30)

Equality and non-discrimination (art. 5)

9. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party's Constitution and the Disability Act prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities. However, it is concerned about the limited scope of application and enforcement of existing provisions.

10. **The Committee recalls its general comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination and targets 10.2 and 10.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, expedite the ongoing review of the Disability Act and ensure that the anti-discrimination framework encompasses the prohibition of all forms of disability-based discrimination, including the denial of reasonable accommodation and intersectional discrimination, and provides persons with disabilities who are victims of discrimination with legal remedies, redress and support. It also recommends that the State Party take policy measures in order to ensure the Act's implementation in practice.**

Women with disabilities (art. 6)

11. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The lack of strategies, policies and programmes and of adequate information, including disaggregated data, on the situation of women with disabilities;

(b) The lack of inclusion of a gender perspective in disability-related legislation and policies, and of a disability perspective in gender-related legislation and policies, which leads to the further marginalization and exclusion from protection of women and girls with disabilities;

(c) Existing patriarchal norms and attitudinal barriers, which prevent women and girls with disabilities from participating in public life and having access to education, employment, social protection and healthcare, in particular sexual and reproductive health services.

12. **The Committee recalls its general comment No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities and targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Develop and adopt strategies, policies and programmes, in particular in the fields of education, employment, health and social protection, that promote the autonomy and full participation in society of women with disabilities, and adopt measures aimed at achieving the empowerment and full inclusion of women with disabilities in all spheres of life, in particular in all public decision-making processes;**

(b) **Mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities into all gender legislation and policies, in particular the Gender Equality Act and the Gender Equality Action Plan, mainstream a gender perspective into disability legislation, policies and programmes, and ensure close consultation with and the active involvement of women and girls with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the design and implementation of gender- and disability-related policies and programmes;**

(c) **Develop and implement awareness-raising campaigns and educational programmes with regard to women with disabilities throughout society, including among families, to promote respect for their rights and dignity, combat stereotypes, prejudice and harmful practices and ensure their access to social services and healthcare, in particular sexual and reproductive health services, and strengthen redress mechanisms to ensure that they are disability-inclusive and accessible for women with disabilities.**

Children with disabilities (art. 7)

13. The Committee is concerned about the limited implementation and enforcement of the existing legal framework for the protection of the rights of children with disabilities, in particular the insufficient early identification and intervention measures, barriers to access to education, inadequate family support and risk of removal of children from their families. It is also concerned about the lack of provisions on the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and the lack of mechanisms to consult with children with disabilities and enable them to express their views in all matters concerning them.

14. **Recalling its joint statement, issued in 2022, with the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strengthen the implementation of the Child Rights Protection Act and other relevant legislation to ensure early screening and intervention mechanisms, which should be well documented and monitored, from infancy through to adolescence, involving healthcare, education and social services, including referral pathways;**

(b) **Establish a mechanism that respects the evolving capacities of children with disabilities to ensure that they can form their views and express them freely in all matters affecting them, and that these views are given due weight in accordance with the children's age and maturity;**

(c) **Provide training to healthcare, social services and education professionals on the rights of children with disabilities and provide support to families of children with disabilities to ensure their adequate protection and respect for their best interests.**

Awareness-raising (art. 8)

15. The Committee is concerned about the high prevalence of stigmatization, prejudice, stereotyping, harmful attitudes and negative beliefs about the causes of disability, which have a detrimental impact on the lives of children and adults with disabilities throughout the State Party.

16. **The Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:**

(a) **Develop and resource an awareness-raising action plan, with time frames and measurable outcomes, about the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, combat stigmatization, promote positive images in the media, and investigate and prosecute harassment of and discrimination against persons with disabilities, at the family, community and island council levels;**

(b) **Provide training on the rights of persons with disabilities across all government ministries, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies and the media.**

Accessibility (art. 9)

17. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) Persons with disabilities face barriers to access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, including information and communications technology, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, particularly in the outer islands, adversely affecting the participation and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of community life;

(b) There is no established mechanism for the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in the development of accessibility legislation and standards, or complaint procedures for violations of such legislation available to persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations.

18. **Recalling its general comment No. 2 (2014) on accessibility and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 9 and targets 11.2 and 11.7, the Committee**

recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:

(a) Adopt and implement an action plan and strategy to identify existing barriers, in the private and public sectors, to access by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others and provide the human, technical and financial resources necessary to remove those barriers to ensure the accessibility of, inter alia, buildings, transportation, information and communications, including information and communications technology, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in the capital and in the outer islands, and include monitoring and reporting on the progress of implementation;

(b) Develop comprehensive legislation enforcing accessibility standards and codes, with clear obligations and checks for the public and private sectors and robust enforcement mechanisms, including penalties and remedial actions, that cover the built environment, all modes of transport, including maritime, and digital technologies;

(c) Establish formal mechanisms for the participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the processes for the development of accessibility legislation and standards and of complaint mechanisms for violations of accessibility laws and the right to equal access;

(d) Develop and implement disability-inclusive procurement policies and ensure that funding contracts and donor partnerships are disability-inclusive and contain provisions for compliance with accessibility requirements in keeping with the principle of universal design.

Right to life (art. 10)

19. The Committee is gravely concerned that:

(a) The death penalty remains lawful in the State Party and continues to be imposed on persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and women with disabilities who are victims of domestic and sexual violence; it is particularly concerned about the information provided by the delegation that the State Party intends to lift the moratorium on the enforcement of the death penalty;

(b) Persons with disabilities who are on death row face harsh and degrading conditions, isolation, lack of access to sanitation, various services, reasonable and gender-specific accommodation, rehabilitation and intellectual activities;

(c) The rate of suicide is increasing among the population and attempted suicide is criminalized, which prevents persons with disabilities from seeking mental health support.

20. Recalling the relevant recommendation of the Human Rights Committee,⁵ the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Maintain the moratorium on the enforcement of the death penalty with a view to abolishing the death penalty and consider ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;

(b) Release, without delay, all the persons with disabilities currently on death row and, in the meantime, guarantee adequate support services, including psychosocial support and reasonable accommodation;

(c) Provide training to the judiciary to avoid the imposition of the death penalty on persons with disabilities, in particular persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, train police and prison staff to respect the rights of persons with disabilities who are on death row, and ensure the provision of reasonable and gender-specific accommodation to these persons;

⁵ CCPR/C/MDV/CO/2, para. 28.

(d) **Make publicly available information on the situation of persons sentenced to death, disaggregated by impairment, including on the accommodation provided to them.**

Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (art. 11)

21. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The lack of effective implementation of the Disability Act and specific integration of all groups of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, into emergency planning and response, in particular in the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2024–2030 and the National Disaster Management Plan;

(b) The limited availability of information on evacuation, emergency and risk management systems in accessible formats, and the insufficient training on disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities.

22. **Recalling the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and the Committee’s guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, the Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including by:**

(a) **Strengthening the legislative and policy framework on disaster risk reduction and emergency response, in particular the Disaster Management Act and the climate change policy framework, to ensure that they are disability-inclusive;**

(b) **Ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to humanitarian aid on an equal basis with others, including through adequate funding, and that related information and communications, including on protocols for evacuation in situations of risk, humanitarian emergencies and disasters and on evacuation centres, emergency relief assistance, early warning systems, community needs assessments, assistive devices and decision-making processes, are accessible for persons with disabilities.**

Equal recognition before the law (art. 12)

23. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The absence of supported decision-making mechanisms for persons with disabilities to exercise their legal capacity on an equal basis with others;

(b) The fact that the Mental Health Bill does not explicitly provide for supported decision-making.

24. **The Committee recommends that, in line with its general comment No. 1 (2014) on equal recognition before the law, the State Party:**

(a) **Review national legislation to ensure that persons with disabilities, in particular persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, are not deprived of their legal capacity and are recognized as persons before the law on an equal basis with others, and replace substitute decision-making systems, including guardianship, with supported decision-making systems that ensure the provision of individualized support and respect the autonomy, will and preferences of persons with disabilities;**

(b) **Incorporate provisions in the Mental Health Bill to establish supported decision-making;**

(c) **Develop awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building programmes, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, for all stakeholders, including the families of persons with disabilities, community members, healthcare professionals, public officials, the media, the judiciary and members of parliament, on recognition of the legal capacity of persons with disabilities and supported decision-making.**

Access to justice (art. 13)

25. The Committee is concerned about barriers faced by persons with disabilities in access to justice on an equal basis with others, including legislation denying the legal capacity of persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, the physical inaccessibility of police stations and courthouses, the lack of free legal aid and age- and gender-appropriate procedural accommodation, the lack of accessible information and communications in court proceedings, the insufficient knowledge, training and awareness among legal aid lawyers, police officers and the judiciary on working with and representing persons with disabilities, as well as the lack of knowledge among persons with disabilities about their rights and about formal procedures for claiming their entitlements and obtaining remedies. It is also concerned about the lack of access by persons with disabilities to legal professions.

26. **The Committee recalls the International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities, prepared in 2020 by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, and target 16.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Expedite the ongoing review of the Penal Code, in particular section 62, in order to bring it into line with the Convention;**

(b) **Adopt and implement effective mechanisms to ensure procedural, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive accommodation in judicial and administrative proceedings for persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and persons with physical and sensory impairments, and measures to provide information in accessible formats and sign language interpretation, and ensure the physical accessibility of police stations, courthouses and all judicial and administrative facilities;**

(c) **Strengthen capacity-building programmes for the judiciary and justice-sector professionals, such as prosecutors and law enforcement officials, including police officers and prison personnel, on the provisions of the Convention and on ensuring access to justice for persons with disabilities, including through procedural accommodation;**

(d) **Take measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can enter legal professions on an equal basis with others, and ensure individualized support to that end.**

Liberty and security of person (art. 14)

27. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The delay in the adoption of a mental health law in line with the Convention and the persistence of forced institutionalization and substitute decision-making systems, particularly in criminal justice;

(b) There is a lack of specific measures, in line with the Convention, to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities in the criminal justice system.

28. **Recalling its guidelines on the right to liberty and security of persons with disabilities and its guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Expedite the adoption of the Mental Health Bill, ensuring that it is in line with the Convention, to guarantee the right to liberty of all persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities;**

(b) **Ensure that persons with disabilities, including those who acquired an impairment while in prison, benefit from due process guarantees on an equal basis with others.**

Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 15)

29. The Committee is concerned about reports of the use of restrictive practices, coercion and forced treatment against persons with disabilities and about the lack of complaint

mechanisms to report these practices and obtain redress, in particular for persons with disabilities who are still in institutions or deprived of their liberty.

30. **Recalling its guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, the Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:**

(a) **Monitor, investigate, document and remedy any allegations of the use of restrictive practices, coercion or forced treatment against persons with disabilities, in particular at the Home for People with Special Needs in Guraidhoo and in schools, in medical facilities, in the home and in interactions with the police;**

(b) **Establish effective legal complaint mechanisms and procedures, with sufficient financial, human and technical resources, that are accessible to all persons with disabilities, and investigate and punish perpetrators of practices that may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against persons with disabilities, including in police custody, imposing penalties that are proportional to the conduct.**

Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (art. 16)

31. The Committee is concerned about the exploitation, violence and abuse experienced by persons with disabilities, in particular reports of gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities and the practice of *ruqya*, and about the lack of accessible shelters and complaint mechanisms available in the outer islands.

32. **Recalling its statement of 25 November 2021 on the elimination of gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities and targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Take all necessary steps to raise awareness about measures for the protection of persons with disabilities from exploitation, violence and abuse, including acts committed under the practice of *ruqya*, adopt a comprehensive strategy to prevent exploitation, violence and abuse against persons with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities, including older women with disabilities, persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and persons with disabilities who are confined to their family homes, and ensure that persons with disabilities have information about how to avoid, recognize and report cases and have access to independent complaint mechanisms and appropriate remedies, such as redress and adequate compensation, including rehabilitation;**

(b) **Ensure that the action plans related to the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and other relevant legislation and policies guarantee that the mechanisms for reporting, preventing and protecting from exploitation, violence and abuse, including domestic violence, are accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities;**

(c) **Provide training to the families and caregivers of persons with disabilities, religious communities, healthcare professionals and law enforcement officers to enable them to recognize all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse and to better communicate and work with persons with disabilities who are victims of violence.**

Protecting the integrity of the person (art. 17)

33. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The prevalence of forced treatment of persons with disabilities, in particular persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities;

(b) The lack of criminalization of the practice of female genital mutilation;

(c) The absence of an independent mechanism to monitor and prevent cases of coercion, forced treatment, forced sterilization and forced abortion and of mechanisms for the submission of complaints, follow-up of cases, the punishment of perpetrators and redress for victims.

34. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt and implement legislative and policy measures to ensure, in all situations, the protection of the integrity of persons with disabilities, in particular persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, and to ensure that medical interventions on and treatment of persons with disabilities are carried out only with their free and informed consent;**

(b) **Amend the Penal Code to explicitly prohibit forced sterilization and female genital mutilation, in particular of women and girls with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, thoroughly investigate allegations of forced sterilization, female genital mutilation and forced abortion and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and that appropriate redress is provided to the victims and survivors;**

(c) **Establish an independent monitoring body to investigate cases of medical coercion, forced treatment and violation of bodily autonomy, ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to effective remedies and accountability mechanisms.**

Liberty of movement and nationality (art. 18)

35. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The fact that, despite the existing legal provisions on birth registration for all, persons with disabilities face barriers to obtaining civil documentation, which leads to lack of access to services;

(b) The situation of migrants with disabilities with regard to their access to support services and reasonable accommodation.

36. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Remove barriers for persons with disabilities, including those living in the outer islands, to their enjoyment of the right to nationality and citizenship with the aim of enabling them to exercise all the rights enshrined in the Convention;**

(b) **Adopt all necessary measures to ensure that migrants with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities, are granted adequate support services, including gender-sensitive and age-appropriate accommodation, and that immigration regulations, both for foreign residents in Maldives and for nationals travelling to third countries, are accessible, including through the provision of sign language and interpretation services.**

Living independently and being included in the community (art. 19)

37. The Committee is concerned about the limited possibilities for persons with disabilities to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live, in particular due to the lack of in-home residential and other community support services, including personal assistance, especially in the outer islands, which leaves persons with disabilities dependant on their families for their care and without the possibility of enjoying their right to live independently.

38. The Committee recalls its general comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community and its guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, and recommends that the State Party:

(a) **In close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, develop national strategies and guidelines on community-based inclusive development across all the islands, with an established time frame and the allocation of sufficient resources, and ensure the availability of community-based services so that persons with disabilities can live independently and participate in the community;**

(b) **Raise awareness to promote understanding of the right of persons with disabilities to choice and self-determination with regard to their living arrangements and their right not to be obliged to live in a particular living arrangement, and of the value of inclusion in, as opposed to segregation from, the community;**

(c) **Transform mainstream services in the community, including education, employment, healthcare and leisure, cultural and social activities, to be disability-inclusive and accessible and provide personal assistance;**

(d) **Support families of persons with disabilities, including financially, in adapting and improving the accessibility of their homes and obtaining access to assistive technologies.**

Personal mobility (art. 20)

39. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The challenges that persons with disabilities face in obtaining, using and maintaining mobility aids, assistive devices and assistive technologies and services due to the fact that the National Social Protection Agency only partially subsidizes the cost, the limited range of assistive devices available through current support schemes and the lack of orientation and mobility practitioners, as well as teachers, to train persons with motor impairments and blind persons and persons with visual impairments in the use of their assistive technologies;

(b) The barriers that persons with disabilities face with regard to obtaining a driver's licence;

(c) The absence of locally manufactured assistive aids and devices, which results in a heavy reliance on expensive overseas procurement and external donations for mobility equipment, thereby creating significant barriers for persons with disabilities in access to the essential support and services needed to ensure their mobility and independence, and the fact that imported assistive devices for persons with disabilities are expensive and are not exempt from taxes and additional duties.

40. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt a national strategy to ensure individualized access for persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, particularly in the outer islands, to quality affordable mobility aids, assistive devices and technologies, personal assistance and intermediary services, including provision for training in the use of the devices and technologies and for the arrangement of repair and maintenance, taking into account the Priority Assistive Products List of the World Health Organization;**

(b) **Take measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to a driver's license by introducing and enforcing reasonable accommodation in the driver testing and licencing process;**

(c) **Ensure the affordability of vehicles and assistive devices, including by applying incentive measures and tax and customs exemptions for the purchase of assistive equipment and devices for persons with disabilities with all types of disabilities.**

Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information (art. 21)

41. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) Despite the fact that articles 27 and 29 of the Constitution guarantee the rights to freedom of speech and expression, to freedom of thought and conscience and to access to information for all individuals, persons with disabilities, particularly persons who are deaf, blind or deafblind and persons with intellectual disabilities, face significant barriers in access to public information and communications, through television programmes, websites and other media services, such as the national digital identity portal, eFaas;

(b) There is no comprehensive regulatory framework to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to seek, receive and impart information in accessible formats and limited awareness among public officials of the State Party's obligations under article 21 of the Convention;

(c) There is a lack of sign language specialists to train persons with disabilities throughout the State Party in the use of sign language.

42. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive, time-bound national strategy with measurable targets to effectively enforce constitutional provisions to ensure that all public information, including information disseminated via websites, broadcast and print media and digital platforms such as eFaas, is accessible to persons with disabilities, and establish a mechanism, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, to monitor implementation of the strategy;**

(b) **Develop and implement legislative and policy measures to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to access to public information and communications through accessible means, modes and formats, such as Braille, interpretation for deafblind persons, sign language, Easy Read, plain language, audio description, captioning and subtitles, and raise awareness among public officials about the State Party's obligations under article 21 of the Convention;**

(c) **Design a sign language development strategy and establish a pool of qualified sign language interpreters and specialists to teach sign language, including in the outer islands.**

Respect for privacy (art. 22)

43. The Committee is concerned that existing legislation does not fully ensure confidentiality or the protection of the privacy of persons with disabilities, particularly for those who lodge complaints and are at increased risk of retaliation.

44. The Committee recommends that the State Party strengthen its legislation on data protection in relation to persons with disabilities, particularly persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, and especially those who lodge complaints, to ensure their privacy by safeguarding information, such as personal medical records held by institutions and within mental health systems and services.

Respect for home and the family (art. 23)

45. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The fact that persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, continue to face persistent barriers in exercising their rights to marriage, family, parenthood and relationships due to stereotypes, stigmatization and misconceptions and that, in many cases, family members make decisions related to healthcare and family planning on behalf of persons with disabilities and confine them to the home;

(b) The lack of adequate support for parents with disabilities in exercising their parental rights, for parents of children with disabilities and for households with members with disabilities, who face multiple barriers, including discrimination by association, social isolation, limited societal support, economic hardship and disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, and the marginalization of families of persons with disabilities living in the outer islands, where access to essential services and support is extremely limited.

46. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Raise social awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities with respect to sexual expression, choice of relationships, family and parenthood, and remove all obstacles preventing persons with disabilities, in particular women with disabilities and persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, from exercising these rights on an equal basis with others;**

(b) **Adopt programmes and policies to provide to persons with disabilities, in particular those living in the outer islands, family planning education in accessible formats and age-appropriate information on sexual and reproductive rights;**

(c) **Adopt legislative and policy measures to ensure support for families of children with disabilities and for parents with disabilities, in particular those living in the outer islands, to enable them to raise their children in the family setting.**

Education (art. 24)

47. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) The Inclusive Education Policy does not cover all types of disabilities or provide for reasonable accommodation, individualized assessment mechanisms or accessible formats of information and communications;

(b) Despite the adoption of the Inclusive Education Policy, many children with disabilities do not attend school and do not receive support for access to inclusive education due to barriers such as discriminatory attitudes towards children with disabilities that prevent them from enrolling in school, bullying, resistance on the part of teachers, the school community and families, and inaccessibility of school premises and recreational areas, including playgrounds;

(c) There is insufficient training for teachers and non-teaching staff in the right to inclusive education, proficiency in Braille and sign language and accessible modes of teaching;

(d) Students with disabilities face barriers in access to higher education.

48. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education and target 4.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:

(a) Review existing legislation and policies in the field of education, including the Inclusive Education Policy, to harmonize them with the Convention and ensure the monitoring of their implementation;

(b) Develop and implement a strategy, with clear targets, indicators and time frames, for the effective implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy, including through the provision of adequate budgetary, technical and personal resources, to ensure that all students with disabilities are provided with reasonable accommodation and individualized support at all levels of education, and ensure that schools do not deny admission to children with disabilities on the basis of a lack of the necessary facilities;

(c) Strengthen training and awareness-raising on the rights of children with disabilities, including their right to inclusive education, among children with disabilities themselves, their parents and relatives, teachers, members of local communities and society as a whole, establish and enforce clear anti-bullying policies in all educational settings, including mandatory training for teachers and staff on disability rights and inclusive education, and ensure that all reports of bullying or mistreatment of students with disabilities are promptly and effectively investigated and addressed to prevent recurrence of such incidents;

(d) Provide learning support to students with disabilities on the basis of their individual requirements, including classroom support, accessible learning environments and teaching methods and learning materials in alternative and accessible modes, means and formats of communication, such as inclusive digital access, Easy Read, communication aids and assistive technology, and ensure that there are enough teachers proficient in sign language, especially in the outer islands;

(e) Take concrete measures to ensure that all schools and learning centres, including those in the outer islands, are physically accessible to students with disabilities and ensure that accessibility is integrated into organizational policies, not as a temporary solution but as a fundamental and permanent requirement, to enable the full participation of students with disabilities in all aspects of school life, including extracurricular activities;

(f) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the root causes of inequality of access to higher education for students with disabilities compared to other students, and develop and implement an inclusive policy that ensures equitable access by addressing specific barriers, including those related to university entrance examinations, admission

procedures, accessibility and the provision of reasonable accommodation throughout academic studies.

Health (art. 25)

49. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The limited access for persons with disabilities to healthcare services, in particular in the outer islands;

(b) The lack of access for persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities and persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, to sexual and reproductive health services;

(c) The lack of availability of medicines and qualified healthcare personnel, including for rehabilitation, and the lack of training of healthcare professionals in the rights of persons with disabilities.

50. Taking into account the links between article 25 of the Convention and targets 3.7 and 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Ensure that persons with disabilities have access to affordable, accessible and quality health services on an equal basis with others;**

(b) **Provide persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities, with access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and services, including awareness-raising on HIV/AIDS, and ensure supported decision-making for women with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities so that they can reaffirm their sexual and reproductive autonomy and self-determination;**

(c) **Develop compulsory training for healthcare professionals on the rights of persons with disabilities, including with regard to their skills, free and informed consent, support measures and means and methods of information and communications, provide health information in accessible digital formats and in Braille, sign language and Easy Read for persons with disabilities, particularly persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and women and girls with disabilities, and ensure the physical accessibility of healthcare facilities and equipment.**

Habilitation and rehabilitation (art. 26)

51. The Committee is concerned about the lack of rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities and of therapeutic services, such as speech therapy, psychotherapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy, particularly in the outer islands. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of staff and resources for the community-based rehabilitation programme.

52. Recalling the link between article 26 of the Convention and target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party take measures to secure access for persons with disabilities to comprehensive and cross-sectoral habilitation and rehabilitation services, programmes and technologies, in their community, including in the outer islands. It also recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Ensure that healthcare institutions, educational facilities, vocational training programmes and other social services are equipped and adequately resourced to provide accommodation and rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities;**

(b) **Establish decentralized units of the Disability Management and Rehabilitation Centre in the outer islands and provide financial support to families who must travel to Male to access specialized services.**

Work and employment (art. 27)

53. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) Despite the recognition, in the Constitution and the Disability Act, of the right of persons with disabilities to employment, non-discrimination on the basis of impairment and self-determination with regard to their professional development, there is a lack of affirmative measures and of monitoring and complaint mechanisms to guarantee the enjoyment and exercise of these rights by persons with disabilities;

(b) Barriers to employment persist for persons with disabilities, including low levels of education, poor skills training, discrimination in recruitment processes and employment conditions, and lack of reasonable accommodation in the workplace;

(c) Measures are lacking to create incentives for the private sector to recruit persons with disabilities and for entrepreneurial initiatives by persons with disabilities, despite relevant provisions in the Disability Act.

54. Recalling its general comment No. 8 (2022) on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment, and in line with target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Ensure access for persons with disabilities to vocational training and to jobs in the public and private sectors through quotas or tax incentives, ensure the provision of reasonable accommodation and support in the workplace, among other measures, and establish monitoring and complaint mechanisms with a view to guaranteeing the participation of persons with disabilities in the open labour market on an equal basis with others;**

(b) **Ensure that persons with disabilities have access to work and employment in the open labour market and are included in private and public work environments on an equal basis with others, and introduce entrepreneurial programmes and development schemes to create opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship;**

(c) **Raise awareness of the full range of incentives available to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, to combat discrimination in hiring processes and conditions of employment and to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in the workplace;**

(d) **Strengthen the implementation of the Disability Act and the regulation on the employment of persons with disabilities in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and ensure that persons with disabilities effectively participate in the Sustainable and Integrated Labour Services project.**

Adequate standard of living and social protection (art. 28)

55. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The disproportionately high risk of poverty among persons with disabilities and the insufficient support for disability-related expenses to ensure an adequate standard of living;

(b) The lack of accessibility of the online platform of the National Disability Registry, meaning that persons with disabilities living outside of Male are prevented from registering independently.

56. Recalling the links between article 28 of the Convention and targets 1.3 and 10.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to empower and to promote the economic inclusion of all persons, irrespective of disability status, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) **Increase the budget allocated to social programmes and the amount of benefits to reduce poverty among persons with disabilities, in particular in the outer islands, and amend the relevant national legislation to ensure the compatibility of financial disability benefits with employment;**

(b) **Guarantee the accessibility of the National Disability Registry portal, including compatibility with screen readers, multilingual options and offline application methods, and conduct a national awareness campaign to inform persons**

with disabilities and their families about the Registry, application procedures, eligibility criteria and associated rights.

Participation in political and public life (art. 29)

57. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The fact that, although the right of persons with disabilities to political participation is recognized in the Constitution and the Electoral Law, the participation of persons with disabilities, particularly persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and women with disabilities, is extremely low;

(b) The insufficient accessibility of voting material and polling stations;

(c) The limited participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in local councils.

58. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Promote the participation of persons with disabilities, in particular persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and women with disabilities, in political and public life and public administration and create an environment conducive to them holding public office and performing public functions at all levels, by providing assistive devices and personal assistance;**

(b) **Strengthen accessibility measures for elections, including tactile guides for ballots, Easy Read materials, sign language interpretation and alternative voting methods, such as postal voting or mobile voting stations;**

(c) **Provide persons with disabilities with reasonable accommodation and support, such as sign language and materials accessible in digital formats, Braille and Easy Read, to guarantee their effective participation, through their representative organizations, in the design and implementation of local development plans undertaken by local councils;**

(d) **In close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, launch educational programmes on electoral rights and the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, adopt specific policies to encourage and enable persons with disabilities to be politically active, run for election and participate in all decision-making spaces, and collect information on persons with disabilities who run for election.**

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (art. 30)

59. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) Recreational, cultural and sports spaces are not accessible to all persons with disabilities across all the islands;

(b) Sports activities remain segregated for persons with disabilities;

(c) There is a lack of books in accessible formats, such as audiobooks and books in Braille and Easy Read, and that the few materials in accessible formats are available only at the national library in Male;

(d) The State Party has not yet ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

60. **The Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:**

(a) **Ensure that all public buildings, including cultural, recreational, leisure and sports facilities, are accessible and provide for other accommodations, including assistive devices, to facilitate the independent enjoyment by persons with disabilities of**

their right to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports on an equal basis with others;

(b) **Promote the training of professionals to ensure that schools on all the islands have staff trained in inclusive sports practices, and the participation of children and adolescents with disabilities in recreational and professional sports activities;**

(c) **Ensure the availability of books in accessible formats, such as audiobooks and books in Braille and Easy Read, throughout the State Party, in particular in the outer islands;**

(d) **Consider ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled and implementing it in national law.**

C. Specific obligations (arts. 31–33)

Statistics and data collection (art. 31)

61. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State Party incorporated the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning in its last census. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The lack of coordination and consistency of disaggregated data and statistics on the situation of children and adults with disabilities in the State Party, including in the outer islands, to assist with policy development and review;

(b) The fact that data and statistics on children and adults with disabilities are inaccessible to and poorly disseminated among government ministries, development partners and persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

62. **The Committee recommends that the State Party adhere to the Convention in its efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 17, in particular target 17.18, on increasing significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographical location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. In particular, the State Party should:**

(a) **Closely consult and actively involve persons with disabilities, in particular women with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in its efforts to increase the collection of data and statistics on disability;**

(b) **Ensure that data-collection measures, censuses and surveys are disability-inclusive and incorporate the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning, and provide training and capacity-building to statistical officers;**

(c) **Compile accessible data on disability from all data sources and statistics for dissemination among ministries, development partners and persons with disability and their representative organizations, and ensure that such data is available in Braille, sign language, Easy Read and accessible digital formats, including for persons with disabilities in the outer islands.**

International cooperation (art. 32)

63. The Committee is concerned about the lack of long-term efforts and strategies to seek out and engage cooperation partners in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities and about the low priority given to the planning, programming and financing of programmes and activities relating to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities within the framework of international cooperation. It is also concerned about the insufficient consultation and inclusion of organizations of persons with disabilities, in particular organizations of women with disabilities, as partners in development cooperation, in the design and implementation of international agreements and programmes.

64. The Committee recommends that the State Party, in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, work with donors to ensure that investment and partnerships focus on specific critical gaps for persons with disabilities and that all donor investment includes disability-specific indicators and disability-inclusive design and delivery. It also recommends that the State Party take measures to strengthen its cooperation for the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

National implementation and monitoring (art. 33)

65. The Committee notes with concern that the Human Rights Commission of Maldives is accredited with B status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions due to a lack of plurality, diversity, adequate funding and independence.

66. The Committee recommends that the State Party address the concerns raised by the Global Alliance’s Subcommittee on Accreditation, strengthen the Human Rights Commission of Maldives to be able to effectively and independently discharge its mandate in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and seek the advice and support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to that end.

67. The Committee is concerned that the National Disability Council, as the coordinating body for the implementation of the Convention across all ministries, lacks adequate resources to implement its mandate and enhance its visibility among State bodies.

68. The Committee recommends that the State Party provide the National Disability Council with sufficient human, financial and technical resources to carry out its mandate, ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are mainstreamed into all policies and programmes.

IV. Follow-up

Dissemination of information

69. The Committee emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. With regard to urgent measures that must be taken, the Committee would like to draw the State Party’s attention to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 12, on women with disabilities, 16, on awareness-raising, and 48, on education.

70. The Committee requests the State Party to implement the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. It recommends that the State Party transmit the concluding observations for consideration and action to members of the Government and parliament, officials in relevant ministries and members of relevant professional groups, such as education, medical and legal professionals, as well as to local authorities and the media, using modern social communication strategies.

71. The Committee strongly encourages the State Party to involve civil society organizations, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities, in the preparation of its periodic report.

72. The Committee requests the State Party to disseminate the present concluding observations widely, including to non-governmental organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities, and to persons with disabilities themselves and members of their families, in national and minority languages, including sign language, and in accessible formats, including Easy Read, and to make them available on the government website on human rights.

Next periodic report

73. The combined second to sixth periodic reports are in principle due on 5 May 2032, under the simplified reporting procedure. The Committee will establish and communicate the exact due date of the combined periodic reports of the State Party in line with a future clear and regularized schedule for reporting by States Parties⁶ and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting for the State Party. The combined periodic reports should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 79/165, para. 6.