



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Summary record of the 3rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 10 June 2015, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Vice-President) (Brazil)

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Round table 1: Mainstreaming disability in the reduction of poverty and inequality



In the absence of Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea), Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Abdallah** Mohamed (Sudan) said that the Sudan had adopted measures to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had created councils for persons with disabilities in the 18 provinces of the country. Fifty per cent of the council members were persons with disabilities. Domestic law had been harmonized with the Convention, and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been consulted in connection with a draft law on persons with disabilities. Strategies to mainstream disability issues were being developed in cooperation with all ministries and departments, in accordance with their respective mandates. Other official institutions were also supporting the rights of persons with disabilities, including various Government commissions, civil society organizations of persons with disabilities and relevant international organizations.

2. The Sudan was willing to share its experience and cooperate with other Member States and benefit from their experiences, whether bilaterally or through regional organizations or the United Nations system. The Government recognized the deficiencies of its statistical database on disabilities, the low level of societal awareness of the issue of disability and the lack of capacity-building in that area. Those factors made it imperative to secure cooperation at the regional and international level for disability programmes.

3. The Sudan valued the efforts made in the drafting of the sustainable development goals and in integrating references to persons with disabilities into those goals and their indicators and financing and implementation mechanisms. The Sudan supported the proposal for the explicit inclusion of references to persons with disabilities in the goals relating to poverty and health.

4. **Ms. Sandoval** (Nicaragua) said that the Nicaraguan Government was restoring the rights of persons with disabilities in many areas, including equality and equity, health care, education, employment and access to public transport and public,

private and community buildings. In 2009-2010 the Government had carried out a study in cooperation with the Government of Cuba to identify all persons with disabilities in the country and determine their type of disability. The result had been a series of programmes and activities, including the donation of wheelchairs to persons with disabilities as well as the elderly; televised sign language classes; and family-oriented awareness-raising programmes on issues related to children and persons with disabilities.

5. An act on the rights of persons with disabilities had been adopted, and a national council with its own secretariat had been established within the Ministry of Health to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, and a citizens' council of persons with disabilities had been set up to carry out its work. A policy was also in place to promote access to inclusive education in public schools through integrated classrooms to enable children with disabilities to interact naturally with their classmates of the same age.

6. The post-2015 development agenda should be inclusive, and global poverty and inequality reduction initiatives should include a disability perspective. No internationally agreed development goal could be achieved unless the rights, needs and perspectives of one billion persons with disabilities were taken into account.

7. **Ms. Sibiya** (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe was in the process of aligning disability-related legislation with its constitution and with the Convention. Furthermore, her Government had conducted a national disability survey in 2013 in order to obtain adequate data to inform future policy development. Persons with disabilities had been included as researchers at all stages of the survey. A comprehensive survey report would be released in July 2015. According to the people-driven constitution of Zimbabwe, sign language was one of the 16 official languages and a sign language bill was currently being prepared.

8. Under existing legislation, private voluntary organizations for persons with disabilities could complement Government efforts to provide rights-based services to persons with disabilities. The Government had also developed a five-year mental health strategy to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. Education was a fundamental human right and a means to reduce poverty and inequality and her Government had therefore

developed policies to help learners with disabilities by revising curricula and providing relevant technology and infrastructure. A teacher's handbook on inclusive education had been developed and resource units had been established in mainstream schools to cater for learners with hearing, visual and physical impairments, intellectual disabilities and multiple impairments. Her Government continued to raise awareness of disability through initiatives such as an annual disability exhibition coordinated by a special adviser on disability and rehabilitation in the Office of the President and Cabinet, which was intended to showcase the creativity of persons with disabilities. The National Arts Council and the National Gallery of Zimbabwe also ensured the full participation of persons with disabilities in arts festivals, carnivals, and music and dance events.

9. Drafting of the initial report on efforts by Zimbabwe to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities was at an advanced stage. In compliance with the African Union Constitutive Act, Zimbabwe had been elected Chair of a specialized technical committee devoted to establishing an African Union disability infrastructure. Her Government had also hosted a round-table conference on the mainstreaming of disability.

10. **Ms. Zhanatova** (Kazakhstan) said that her Government had recently ratified the Convention, thereby strengthening its commitment to the equality of persons with disabilities. Kazakhstan had long been committed to changing the social paradigm of disability. The priority had moved from the timely payment of social benefits to the enhancement of accessibility and inclusiveness. The National Action Plan on Disability included strategies to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in health, education, labour and all other aspects of life, with particular emphasis on the involvement of persons with disabilities in Government social programmes through civil society advisers in all 16 regions of the country. A key area of public policy was Government measures to promote job creation for persons with disabilities, and from 2018 the Government would provide phased subsidies for employers to create jobs for persons with disabilities. The law on amendments to legal codes was intended to bring her country's national mechanisms and legislation into line with international standards, with a particular emphasis on accessibility, freedom of choice, social integration and the labour market.

11. **Ms. Warmington** (United Kingdom) said that the Convention was an important statement of the rights that all persons with disabilities must be able to exercise if they were to live independent lives as equal members of society. The United Kingdom was committed to removing barriers and enabling persons with disabilities to maximize their potential, as reflected in her Government's approach to international development cooperation. Disability was both a cause and a consequence of poverty and the eradication of extreme poverty required a rights-based approach.

12. In 2014, the United Kingdom had hosted the international Disability Data Conference that had helped to build a consensus on the need to provide comparable disaggregated data, and had published an ambitious disability framework to better embed disability inclusion in all Government policies. That framework was underpinned by the social model of disability and had been developed through engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities in the United Kingdom and the global South.

13. The post-2015 development agenda should leave no one behind and all future goals and targets should be considered achieved only if achieved for all groups in society, including persons with disabilities. The new framework should keep people at the centre of development efforts and ensure that the data needed to measure the size of the challenge and the progress in tackling it was collected in an inclusive manner and was disaggregated, inter alia, by disability. It would not be possible to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 without setting ambitious goals in the area of disability.

14. **Ms. Muriuki** (Kenya) said that the Government of Kenya had launched reform processes in order to harmonise all national laws and policies with the Convention, and various agencies were responsible for its implementation. Article 54 of the Constitution of Kenya was devoted to the rights of persons with disabilities. A transformative procurement policy reserved 30 per cent of Government procurement tenders for persons with disabilities, young people and women, as a means of cushioning them from poverty.

15. Equity was a recurrent principle in social, economic and political programmes. Her Government had introduced an indicator on disability mainstreaming in public sector performance-based contracting as a means of raising awareness among Government employees. Other Government priorities

included increasing the accessibility of the built environment and of information, and ensuring that persons with disabilities accounted for 5 per cent of the workforce. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities had a targeted fund that provided persons with disabilities with the equipment to set up their own businesses. In addition, a cash transfer programme provided social security for persons who could not support themselves or their dependants. The Government also granted tax exemptions on assistive devices and enrolled persons with disabilities in the National Health Insurance Fund free of charge.

16. At the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the President of Kenya had said that where poverty was high and adaptive capabilities stubbornly low, women, children and persons with disabilities were at even greater risk. Kenya therefore endorsed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Inclusive development required the empowerment of all and Kenya recognized disability as a cross-cutting issue. Kenya had made progress towards implementing the provisions of the Convention and its initial report would be submitted for consideration by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in August 2015. In particular, Kenya had made progress with statistics and data collection, including through the 2009 national census. The zero draft of the outcome document of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 was an aspirational document that provided a good basis for the inclusion of the world's largest minority, the one billion persons with disabilities.

17. **Mr. Galdos** (Peru) said that his country promoted a culture of respect for differences and the acceptance of persons with disabilities. The needs of persons with disabilities should be taken into account in poverty eradication initiatives. In that context, his Government was promoting public policies geared towards eliminating barriers to the exercise of fundamental rights and the full social, economic, cultural and political inclusion of persons with disabilities. Peru was also bringing its legislation into line with the principles of the Convention with a view to establishing a legal framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Economic growth required resources to be devoted to vulnerable groups in general, and persons with disabilities in particular, through employment, education and health-care programmes. His

Government was also committed to boosting the self-esteem and empowerment of all persons, including persons with disabilities, and was accordingly introducing reforms to provide persons with disabilities with preventive health services and rehabilitation. The accessibility of urban environments, transport and communications was also essential as a means of maximizing the potential of persons with disabilities, and the international community should step up its efforts to incorporate a disability perspective into the post-2015 development agenda.

18. **Mr. Toledano Landero** (Mexico) said that his country had a national cross-cutting programme for the development and inclusion of persons with disabilities. It involved all sectors of the population and all three branches of Government, as well as 32 public bodies that were required to comply with the Convention. Following dialogue with the Committee and the receipt of its recommendations, his Government had set up an ad hoc working group to implement those recommendations under the oversight of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Council for the Development and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The group also included representatives of relevant federal institutions; state legislative authorities and state governments; the National Human Rights Commission; and civil society organizations. The Senate had recently ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Over one million persons with a visual disability in Mexico would thus benefit from greater access to written published works.

19. At the international level, Mexico noted the significant progress made in integrating the disability perspective in the work of the United Nations system. In 2016, which would mark 10 years since the adoption of the Convention, Mexico wished to promote a strategy, together with other States and stakeholders, to support universal ratification of the Convention. The strategy would be based on support and cooperation to identify the obstacles to ratification. The ultimate goal was to remove the barriers facing persons with disabilities, who continued to be a particularly vulnerable sector of the population.

20. **Ms. Hagrass** (Egypt) said that despite the early ratification of the Convention by Egypt, implementation had been slower than desired, leading to unprecedented demonstrations against the previous

regime by persons with disabilities in 2010. In 2011, they had also been among the first to take part in the 25 January revolution, which had resulted in political, social and economic advances in Egypt. One of the first gains had been a ministerial decree for the foundation of the National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA).

21. In 2013, during the second wave of the revolution, issues affecting persons with disabilities had been given higher priority on the new Government's agenda with the adoption of an inclusive development strategy and the right accorded to NCDA to nominate a representative to the new Constitution Committee. As a result of a twin-track, participatory approach involving organizations of persons with disabilities, activists and other stakeholders, the 2014 Constitution included eight articles covering the rights of persons with disabilities. The breakthrough rights obtained in the Constitution ensured the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in education and employment and their right to be elected through a quota system.

22. **Mr. Attia** (Egypt) said that NCDA was currently drafting a new disability law in line with the Convention and the Constitution. Egypt was fully aware that to meet the challenges of the post-2015 development agenda, it was vital to address the poverty and unmet needs of persons with disabilities. Consequently, special attention should be given to devising a new national disability strategy based on the Convention. It would also be necessary to dedicate sufficient resources for a capacity-building strategy, collect accurate statistics about persons with disabilities, remove barriers and promote accessibility in all contexts. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation and partnerships, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation must be strengthened, and the full participation of persons with disabilities in all development processes must be ensured.

23. The Council was concerned that the proposed goals 1 and 3 of the post-2015 development agenda did not include the crucial issue of disability. It therefore urged Governments to remedy that oversight. Egypt reiterated its commitment to mainstreaming disability issues in national sustainable development strategies.

24. **Ms. Makakole** (Lesotho) said that despite the work of the United Nations in establishing an international normative framework on disability and its

focus on inclusive development, exemplified by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that had shaped national and international social policy, disability had been excluded both from those Goals and from their targets and indicators. Disability had thus been largely invisible and rarely included in related national policies or programmes. However, in recent years, there had been increasing recognition that no development path could exclude persons with disabilities from economic, social and political life. Implementing that developmental vision required national policies that fostered equality and changes in the public perception of disability by removing discriminatory social practices and stereotypes. Lesotho had adopted legislative and policy frameworks that specifically prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities and protected their rights.

25. The drafting of the post-2015 development agenda must be viewed as an opportunity to reverse the injustices of the past. Further mainstreaming of disability in the global development agenda was needed. That could be achieved only through a policy shift — from addressing mainly the objectives of equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities as a target group, to a focus on measures that contributed to accessibility for all. Persons with disabilities had the right to help to define the global development agenda; without their full engagement, efforts to secure a sustainable future would be poorer in substance and lacking in direction. In that regard, there was a growing need for strengthened cooperation and the design of relevant programmes and policies. Additionally, sufficient resources should be allocated to facilitate the implementation and success of such cooperation. Lesotho therefore called upon development partners to provide technical, administrative and financial assistance for the establishment of monitoring policies and practices to further inclusion.

26. The global community was on the cusp of a new development era, on track to achieve a new set of ambitious goals and targets. Rooting out inequality and ensuring the human rights, dignity and well-being of each individual were essential to ensuring the benefits of sustainable development. The new agenda must not leave anyone behind as transformative steps were taken to shift the world onto a sustainable path.

27. **Ms. Landry** (Observer for the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights) said

that, as public bodies with a legal or constitutional human rights mandate and acting independently of States, national human rights institutions had long championed the rights of persons with disabilities and were ideally suited to help transform the words of the Convention into practical action at the domestic level. While the adoption of the MDGs had been indeed a significant achievement, missing therefrom had been an acknowledgement of the specific development needs of a particularly vulnerable group: the one billion people in the world with disabilities. As was all too common, persons with disabilities had been invisible. However, the world had changed since then, and it was currently acknowledged that persons with disabilities had the same human rights as everyone else. Key among those rights was the right of all persons with disabilities to develop to their full potential in community with their fellow citizens.

28. The International Coordinating Committee welcomed the proposed sustainable development goals, which were bold and fairly comprehensive and would reflect human rights standards better than their predecessors. With increased civil society participation, the monitoring and review framework outlined in the zero draft of the post-2015 agenda would create an important channel of engagement for persons with disabilities. The International Coordinating Committee encouraged States to maintain high expectations of the new development goals. The motto “Nothing about us without us” had inspired the drafting of the Convention. The commendable efforts of the international community of persons with disabilities to ensure that they were not invisible in the sustainable goals had seen encouraging results.

29. Through their everyday work on the ground, national human rights institutions had observed that disability and poverty too often went hand-in-hand as a result of a lack of employment opportunities and inadequately-met needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace. The effects of multiple forms of discrimination heightened the vulnerability for many disadvantaged groups whose specific needs must be recognized and addressed. Furthermore, access to justice for persons with disabilities had been identified as one of the most severely infringed rights of that group. In line with article 13 of the Convention, and as identified in the new development goals, States should adopt measures to guarantee that right for persons with disabilities.

30. The International Coordinating Committee and its members were firmly committed to working with national Governments, civil society and the community of persons with disabilities to help ensure that, in 2030, they could celebrate real progress for all the citizens of the world, including those with disabilities. To that end, she reiterated her organization’s view, as stated during the intergovernmental negotiations on follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda, that the current economic crisis should not be used as an excuse for restricting social rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities.

31. **Mr. Marroquin** (Observer for Fundación Teleton Mexico) said that the Conference offered an opportunity to hope, to work together and to be heard, but above all, the right and the obligation to build an inclusive world for all. While modern society had long ago learned that rights were inherent to human nature and did not depend on any individual’s generosity, they remained a fragile human construct, upheld only through considerable effort. Yet, throughout history, humanity had fought for the right to freedom, dignity, justice and equality in all its forms. The Conference was an opportunity to guarantee a world in which the highest ideals were respected.

32. It was important to safeguard the spirit and purpose of the Convention by ensuring that domestic laws and regulations were consistent therewith. For more than 18 years, his organization had worked tirelessly to protect the rights of the child, working to build a future of respect, equality and inclusiveness. Representing more than 35,000 Mexican children with disabilities, accounting for 14.3 per cent of children with motor disabilities, it supported and applied the human rights-based focus of the Convention.

33. **Ms. Stener** (Norway) said that the Norwegian Government’s domestic and foreign policies were based on human rights for all. Norway welcomed the pledge made in the draft outcome document of the post-2015 development agenda to leave no one behind, because fundamental development goals were unattainable without the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

34. As one of the proponents for the inclusion of explicit references to persons with disabilities in the proposed development goal on education, Norway would host a summit on education for development in July with a view to boosting relevant global efforts to

reach the sustainable development goals. An international group of experts had been appointed to provide input on education for children and youth with disabilities. In addition to quality education for all, it was also essential to have reliable data to advance disability-inclusive development. In that regard, the Norwegian authorities had launched in June 2015 a new website to present statistics and analyses illustrating the living conditions of persons with disabilities in Norway.

35. Norway recognized that persons with disabilities enjoyed legal capacity on an equal basis with others, without discrimination. The existence of a disability could not in itself justify any limitations to that right. Her Government was therefore concerned by the scope of article 12 of the Convention, which allowed for withdrawal of legal capacity. Her delegation understood that such withdrawal was possible when necessary, as a last resort and subject to strict safeguards. The principle of self-determination must be interpreted in the light of, and weighed against, other human rights, such as the right to life and the right to health. A balanced and subtle approach and thorough debate were needed to address those important questions.

36. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that incorporating the specific needs of persons with disabilities would enhance the 17 goals and 169 targets proposed by Member States for the sustainable development agenda. The situation of persons with special needs, who accounted for just over 5 per cent of the population, was a core concern of decision makers and institutional stakeholders in Morocco. Consequently, the legal framework to protect that vulnerable group had been strengthened. The new Constitution, in particular, stipulated that the State was responsible for drafting and implementing policies covering individuals and groups with special needs. Furthermore, the longstanding commitment of King Mohammed VI to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, a reflection of his adherence to the Islamic tenets of mutual assistance and solidarity, was illustrated by his decision to ratify the Convention and its optional protocol.

37. Consequently, the number of national projects and social centres to assist persons with disabilities had increased, with many of them launched under the country's national human development initiative. The national day for persons with disabilities continued to

provide an opportunity to take stock of the situation of special-needs persons nationwide and had prompted far-reaching reform of relevant public policy by the Ministry of Solidarity, Women, the Family and Development. The adoption in 2014 of a draft law on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities by the Council of Ministers had bolstered that policy. The Head of Government led an inter-ministerial committee established to follow up on the implementation of relevant policies and programmes and to coordinate Government action to implement public policy relating to disability. Furthermore, other actions undertaken included a joint programme with the World Bank on accessibility for persons with disabilities.

38. In the area of scientific research, Morocco had organized its first international conference on autism, bringing together hundreds of international and national experts, Government representatives and associations. To ensure their right to education, the relevant Ministry assisted with the schooling of children with severe disabilities in special education centres established by associations specialized in that field. As a result of that partnership with civil society, 2,344 children had attended school in 68 special centres in 2014.

39. Persons with special needs were entitled to health care, education and inclusion in society and the workplace; they did not need charity or social welfare. The promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities was still at the heart of public policy in many countries, but there was a long way to go to improve their living conditions. His delegation therefore underscored the need to encourage greater sharing of experiences with public disability policy not only among State and non-State actors nationwide, but also between countries. It would also be useful to assess the progress made and the obstacles to their full enjoyment of their rights.

40. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that empowerment, education and employment were vital, because poverty and illiteracy exacerbated inequality among vulnerable groups. The new Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran had just adopted a new comprehensive legal instrument for persons with disabilities aimed at reducing inequality and poverty nationwide. While the new Act covered a wide variety of issues and services including accessibility, quality rehabilitation and medical services, insurance coverage,

sports, traditional services and prevention policies, there was a focus on higher education and vocational training to increase the employability of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the State offered incentives, such as customs duty exemptions, to entrepreneurs that provided training and cutting-edge technology to empower persons with disabilities with the skills required for the job market.

41. In the drafting of disability policy, special attention had been given to women with disabilities, who were more vulnerable to discrimination and job market and other abuses. The initial national report of the Islamic Republic of Iran, submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2013, had highlighted the many measures taken for the empowerment of women with disabilities. Those included further development of special education, cultural, and sport centres for women, support for vocational training for schoolgirls with special needs and advocacy for training for girls in high schools. He recounted the inspirational and successful journey of the first Iranian Paralympic champion, who had since started a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Iran for the empowerment of persons with disabilities through sport. Much had been achieved by the increasing number of civil society organizations involved in the rights of persons with disabilities that worked in parallel with the Government. Public awareness of the need to protect those rights was also on the rise.

42. It was imperative to include the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development agenda. In addition, stakeholders should also involve persons with mental and neurological disabilities in the drafting of the relevant indicators so that, truly, no one would be left behind.

43. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that his country had been the first country in Central Africa to ratify the Convention, and his Government had since done a great deal to protect and empower persons with disabilities. The National Health Insurance and Social Guarantee Fund provided benefits to all Gabonese, including persons with disabilities, and the criteria for eligibility were non-discriminatory. Technical and material assistance were made available to persons with disabilities, who also received annual financial assistance and benefits. Numerous activities to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities were

organized through a foundation established by the First Lady of Gabon.

44. The National School for Children with Hearing Impairments provided kindergarten and primary education and was preparing to introduce a secondary education cycle. Sign language training was also provided to parents of hearing-impaired children and officials working with them. Similarly, her Government was defining a national accessibility plan, with the participation of persons with disabilities, to increase their access to public buildings, employment, health care, training, new technologies and electoral processes.

Round table 1: Mainstreaming disability in the reduction of poverty and inequality

45. **The President** said that the sustainable development goals would be adopted in September 2015. The zero draft of the outcome document containing the sustainable development goals had been circulated by the co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. It contained a political declaration and a set of goals and targets based on the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in 2013-2014. It also contained a set of means of implementation, pending the outcome of the Addis Ababa Third International Conference on Financing for Development in support of the sustainable development goals. From the perspective of persons with disabilities, the focus should be on the overarching elements of the political declaration and the sustainable development goals themselves, with a view to integrating the three pillars of inclusiveness, economic growth and environmental sustainability into a single concept. The document tried to condense that vision into the words “people, planet and prosperity”, to which two additional “P”s could be added, namely “peace” and “partnerships”. The main message was that people came first. The agenda covered all areas affected by public policies and was universal, global and inclusive. The idea that no one should be left behind permeated all the texts. The idea of non-discrimination was also key to the new agenda. Persons with disabilities were explicitly mentioned in certain goals and targets and should be present throughout the document.

46. The first draft of the political declaration was ready to be discussed. Certain values in the sustainable development goals remained to be defined, but the negotiations should not be reopened, as that could

undermine the political balance between different countries and stakeholders. The emphasis on numerous social goals was welcome, as were the thematic areas, in particular equality of opportunity in education, health care, employment, social protection and the like. Some tweaking would be required, for example to the goal on halving the number of global deaths caused by road traffic accidents by 2030 instead of 2020. Technology, meanwhile, was a difficult issue because in most cases it was market-oriented and privately owned, but there was a public policy dimension when it came to social issues and the discussion of technology should include an aspect related to persons with disabilities. It was important to agree on a mandate that would enable the United Nations development cooperation system to provide assistance or improve access to relevant technologies for persons with disabilities, along the lines of the Treaty of Marrakesh.

47. **Mr. Lamicchane** (Professor, University of Tsukuba, Japan) said that the rights of persons with disabilities should be mainstreamed into the post-2015 development agenda. It had been stated at the recent World Education Forum in Incheon that no education goals should be considered met until the disadvantaged, and especially persons with disabilities, received a quality education. In 2015, minority groups must be included in all the sustainable development goals.

48. Persons with disabilities were one of the most vulnerable groups in natural disasters such as the ones that had recently affected Haiti, Japan and Nepal. Disability had been overlooked in the Millennium Development Goals and that oversight had perhaps hindered the achievement of certain goals. The sustainable development goals should therefore be disability-inclusive, and persons with disabilities should be involved from the beginning and throughout the implementation stage.

49. One remaining challenge was the correlation between disability and poverty. The link was clear but there was still a debate on whether poverty engendered disability or disability engendered poverty. Countries with high incomes had a lower disability prevalence rate. Similarly, countries with lower levels of education were also poorer than countries with higher levels of schooling. Disability and poverty were therefore interrelated. Furthermore, research had shown that men with disabilities were poorer than women without

disabilities, but women with disabilities were poorer than men with disabilities, suggesting that women with disabilities suffered from discrimination within the group of persons with disabilities. However, education was essential, as the rate of return on investment in the education of persons with disabilities had been shown to be two or three times higher than that for the education of persons without disabilities. Even in the Philippines, which was considered one of the top five countries in the world in terms of gender equality, women with disabilities, especially those with physical or hearing impairments, were less likely to be in the labour market, which reflected gender discrimination within the group of persons with disabilities. Education was one way to overcome that problem.

50. When persons with disabilities had access to technology, they had access to opportunities for education and employment, which enabled them to become economically independent and socially included, and helped to reduce poverty. Persons with disabilities should be included in development not only for their own benefit but also for that of their families and society as a whole. There was a need to shift the paradigm from exclusion to inclusion, from discrimination to acceptance, from sympathy to rights, and from charity to investment. Doing so would lead to dynamic growth and a society that all could enjoy. In 2015, persons with disabilities must be fully included in all relevant sustainable development goals.

51. **Ms. Florentín Gómez** (National Secretariat for the Human Rights of People with Disabilities, Paraguay) said that the debate on the sustainable development goals should not be about whether to include persons with disabilities but how about to include them. Governments should therefore demonstrate the political will to design inclusive public policies. The focus should not be on persons with disabilities, but on the Government system that provided goods and services and on whether those goods and services were accessible to all. Public policies should therefore remove barriers to that access.

52. The Convention was one of the instruments that had enabled States to design inclusive public policies. At the regional level, the same could be said of the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. The design of inclusive public policies required States Parties to identify the current situation, and work with persons with disabilities, their families,

local authorities and regional authorities to think globally but act locally. Paraguay was drawing up a national plan based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and it had proved important to determine which targets were achievable in the short, medium and long term. Budgetary resources were also key, but were at times unavailable. The exclusion of persons with disabilities had a high cost whereas inclusion was an investment. When persons with disabilities did not have access to education and health care, the socioeconomic cost was high.

53. Civil society had an important role in assisting with the design of public policies. In Paraguay, the national commission on the rights of persons with disabilities brought together civil society and Government representatives to harmonize laws and practices. The alliance between Government, civil society and international assistance was key to avoiding the repetition of mistakes. Inclusion was not a privilege, it was a right.

54. **Ms. Nummi-Södergren** (MyRight, Sweden) said that it was the right time to tackle the enormous challenge of ending poverty, but that it was vital to learn from both the successes and the failings of the MDGs. The entry into force and widespread ratification of the Convention could be a springboard for disability experts and organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure that the sustainable development goals were implemented nationally and that disability issues would no longer be excluded. Many of the other panellists had pointed out the importance of poverty reduction and equality, but there was much to be learned from — and progress to be made in — gender issues. Gender-based discrimination was still prevalent and all forms of discrimination should be addressed in a disaggregated approach.

55. While social protection was an essential aspect of inclusion, it was much more valuable to a society to ensure that persons with disabilities and their families also participated in social development and economic growth. Education and employment would help them to become productive citizens. It was important to ensure that those aspects were well defined in the sustainable development goals. Special disability indicators should be used and strengthened where available. The Conference had placed a particular emphasis on including the disability aspect in the proposed goal 1 of the new agenda, but it was important to address poverty reduction by undertaking

development work in donor and recipient countries alike in a twin-track approach. Again, the involvement of persons with disabilities, their organizations and families was vital to ensure the effectiveness of the development agenda and the use of appropriate indicators for monitoring.

56. She had been fortunate to be a member of the Swedish delegation involved in negotiations on the sustainable development goals. On the rare occasions that Governments invited civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities to participate in delegations or consultations, those organizations should take advantage of the opportunity to improve mutual understanding and to use their expertise to inform negotiation and decision-making processes as well as national policies. Collaborating to speak with one voice and creating a supportive network would benefit all.

57. The only way to leave no one behind was to continue taking steps forward. Those privileged to participate in the Conference and other events in the lead-up to the Sustainable Development Summit in September must continue their efforts in their respective countries to ensure that disability issues were not forgotten in national contexts. Partnership was a two-way street; civil society organizations must therefore use their networks and all available channels to translate the ideas coming out of international discussions into practical, understandable measures that benefitted the people on the ground.

58. **Ms. Devandas** (Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that despite the rather successful worldwide efforts to fight poverty and reduce inequality over the past fifteen years, the rates of poverty and inequality amongst persons with disabilities continued to be high in comparison with other groups. Research had shown that the same situation existed in countries with low, middle and high incomes. That was explained by the diverse social and environmental barriers that persons with disabilities faced as well as poor access to education and employment, which was compounded for vulnerable groups and persons with psychosocial or multiple disabilities. Poverty was a human rights issue as it was impossible to ensure the enjoyment of human rights or to attain full, effective participation in society for people living below the poverty line.

59. The discussion on poverty and disability warranted a focus on national social protection systems. In their great majority, such systems had not promoted inclusion and social participation for persons with disabilities; many had instead fostered segregation and dependency through plans that promoted institutionalization or even denied persons with disabilities their decision-making capacity. However, article 28 of the Convention was an important step towards building truly inclusive social protection systems. The Convention proposed a new social contract with a more equitable distribution of the benefits of development across society and recognized the role of social and environmental barriers in the exclusion of persons with disabilities.

60. Social assistance must therefore break with traditional paternalistic, patronizing and divisive approaches and become a tool to promote active citizenship, independence and social participation for persons with disabilities. Inclusive social protection meant adequate living conditions for persons with disabilities and their families; access to free inclusive education for children with disabilities; universal health coverage for all persons with disabilities; employment programmes that facilitated their entry into the job market; and the financing of support and assistance systems that ensured their autonomy. That kind of social protection would protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities. That vision was also necessary to achieve tangible results in development and reducing poverty and inequality and to translate the Convention into the transformative policy described by the Minister of Paraguay.

61. With so many persons with disabilities living in poverty and exclusion, society could not afford to exclude them from poverty reduction programmes. The cost of exclusion represented between 3 and 7 per cent of the gross domestic product of States. The new framework of sustainable development goals was therefore a unique opportunity to address the challenge of poverty and inequality for persons with disabilities worldwide. The zero draft was indeed a step in the right direction and persons with disabilities welcomed the specific references to disabilities therein. However, all opportunities must be seized to ensure that the political declaration had solid references to the Convention and to examine whether the new development goals were consistent with the principles

established by the Convention. She called on States to reconsider the need to include a reference to disability in the sustainable development goals on poverty and health. Inclusive technology was also a fundamental issue and she hoped that the commendable leadership shown by Brazil on that issue would bear further fruit and lead to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

62. Beyond specific references to disability, it was important to step up efforts to collect disaggregated data on disability and to include specific disability indicators to measure how post-2015 national efforts would improve the conditions of persons with disabilities. The United Nations system as a whole, international cooperation agencies and, above all, States had an important role to play. All stakeholders must take ownership of the development agenda for persons with disabilities. Much progress had already been made, but greater efforts were needed to make the most of the new development agenda. Statistics units must be actively involved in gathering data to develop appropriate indicators that increased the visibility of persons with disabilities in the implementation, monitoring and follow-up of the sustainable development goals.

63. However, none of those efforts would suffice without greater funding for inclusive development. She drew attention to the upcoming negotiations on financing for development, in which it was hoped that the situation of people with disabilities would be taken into account. It was important for States and international cooperation agencies to address disability and increase the resources allocated to persons with disabilities while ensuring that general poverty-reduction programmes and policies would also benefit. Such a twin-track focus, in which funds were earmarked specifically for persons with disabilities and any development actions also included persons with disabilities, was vital for reaching the sustainable development goals. Persons with disabilities accounted for 15 per cent of the world population; there could be no more excuses for excluding them from the development agenda. No one must be left behind.

64. **Ms. Fefoame** (Ghana) asked for clarification of the practical measures that could be taken on disability issues at country level prior to September.

65. **Mr. Bai Atilla** (Sierra Leone) asked what practical measures could be implemented to improve

education and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, particularly in the light of the special needs of the visually or hearing impaired. Some States, including Sierra Leone, did not have any Braille printing presses.

66. **Mr. de Bustamante** (European Union) asked whether Mr. Lamicchane could provide any examples of measures that had been successful in overcoming the correlation between poverty and disability.

67. **Mr. Bámaca** (Guatemala) asked whether there was any document, in addition to the Convention, that could support the work that was needed at country level, since many Governments did not have a binding legal instrument on education for persons with disabilities.

68. **Ms. Florentín Gómez** (National Secretariat for the Human Rights of People with Disabilities, Paraguay) said that information was key to generating debate and having an impact, particularly through an alliance with civil society, States and international cooperation agencies. Success stories relating to international cooperation in countries was a cross-cutting issue. There had also been several examples of inclusive education which could be drawn on when countries were beginning to implement new programmes. While it was pointless to reinvent the wheel, it was not a simple matter of cutting and pasting what worked in another country — there was a need to think globally but act locally, based on local contexts. It was also important to have statistics to support evidence-based decisions.

69. **Ms. Nummi-Södergren** (MyRight, Sweden) said that participants should take the main issues discussed and conduct advocacy at the country level. While there was a focus on the events of September, what was more important was national planning after the adoption of the new development agenda. In cooperation with the Government, a number of Swedish civil society organizations would hold a seminar to discuss the different roles of stakeholders and how to ensure that plans were effective, from the local context to the national development agenda. It was important to network with NGOs and international actors with expertise in inclusive education and other disability issues and to work extensively in aligning strategies based on the Convention with the sustainable development goals. NGO websites and the wider Internet were also mines of information. Achieving the

goal on education would be difficult — as evidenced by the failure of Millennium Development Goal 2 with regard to children with disabilities. Given the complexity of the issues, it would take time, but building on existing programmes would be a good start.

70. **Mr. Lamicchane** (Professor, University of Tsukuba, Japan) said that education had great economic value, not just to persons with disabilities, but to society as a whole. Evidence-based advocacy must be used when dealing with Governments. An Internet search for “disability and returns to education” or similar topics would yield many scholarly papers on the importance of education for reducing poverty and maximizing labour market participation for persons with disabilities. That evidence could be used to convince Governments that exclusion was costly.

71. On the question of achieving inclusive education, technology was important. Access to technology, including through programmes conducted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) would help in that respect. However, the technological tools for persons with disabilities must be cost-effective, which led to another issue: investment disparity, or intra-household resource allocation. In low-income families where there was one child with disabilities and one without, parents often invested in the latter. One remedy would be to implement conditional cash transfer policies to encourage parents to send children with disabilities to school, thereby increasing access of persons with disabilities to education. His research in Bangladesh on discriminatory attitudes towards access to education had shown that there was a high level of discrimination, possibly reflecting less faith in the value of education for persons with disabilities. However, once parents invested in the education of children with disabilities, the level of discrimination was low. Another issue to be addressed was some sort of subsidy to reduce the financial burden for parents. Furthermore, there were institutional barriers: if schools were inaccessible, persons with disabilities were less likely to attend, regardless of the value placed on education.

72. **Ms. Devandas** (Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), replying to the questions regarding what could be done before September and the adoption of the final lists of indicators, said that one concrete step would be for all those present to lobby their Governments for the inclusion of persons with disabilities during the upcoming intergovernmental

meeting on the zero draft on 22 June 2015 and to encourage States to be open to further improvement of the document, if possible, to bring it into line with the Convention. Furthermore, stakeholders could try to influence the inter-agency group and the group of experts so that specific disability indicators would be developed by March 2016. In the near and longer term, it was important to begin devising the policies that would translate the sustainable development goals into specific actions that would benefit the lives of persons with disabilities. In that regard, her office was ready to provide the requisite technical support to facilitate those processes.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.