



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
25 July 2019

Original: English

Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Twelfth session

New York, 11–13 June 2019

Report of the twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

I. Introduction

1. The twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 13 June 2019.
2. Six meetings were held at the twelfth session of the Conference. On 11 June, the 1st and 2nd meetings were convened to consider the agenda items on the opening of the Conference, the election of officers, the adoption of the agenda, the organization of work and the general debate. Three round tables were held at the 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings, on 12 and 13 June. At its 6th meeting, on 13 June, the Conference considered agenda item 5 (c) (interactive dialogue with the United Nations system on the implementation of the Convention), item 6 (decisions by the Conference of States Parties) and item 7 (closing of the meeting).
3. The text of the decisions adopted by the Conference is contained in annex I. The President's summary of the session is contained in annex II and the list of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference is contained in annex III.

II. Opening of the Conference

4. The Conference was opened by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs in his capacity as the temporary President of the Conference.
5. At its 1st meeting, the Conference adopted the provisional agenda ([CRPD/CSP/2019/1](#)) and agreed on the organization of work for the session.



III. Election of officers

6. Under agenda item 2, the following were elected by acclamation as members of the Bureau: the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations, Luis Gallegos, as the President of the Conference; and First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, Helena Jauhiainen, the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations, Katalin Annamária Bogyay, the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations, Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, Sr., and Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations, Yasmin Ali, as the Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

7. Opening statements were made by the President of the Conference; the Secretary-General; a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Monthian Buntan; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities Catalina Devandas Aguilar; the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes; and the Chair of the International Disability Alliance, Ana Lucía Arellano, representing civil society.

8. Pursuant to rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure, and under the agenda item 4, 15 new non-governmental organizations were accredited to the Conference (see annex III).

IV. Matters related to the implementation of the Convention: general debate

9. Under agenda item 5 (a), a long list of speakers for the general debate was exhausted, with a record number of statements made by 101 Member States and 1 regional integration organization,¹ 7 country groups² and 29 institutions and organizations observing the Conference, including 2 international organizations,³ the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, 2 national human rights

¹ Statements were delivered, in chronological order, by Argentina, Ecuador, Singapore, New Zealand, Canada, Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Portugal, Paraguay, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Norway, the Russian Federation, Germany, Namibia, Honduras, Poland, India, Ukraine, Albania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Jordan, Ireland, Ghana, Malta, the State of Palestine, Liberia, Hungary, Israel, Andorra, Japan, Iceland, Saudi Arabia, China, Chile, Uruguay, the European Union, Switzerland, Nigeria, Panama, Finland, Australia, Cambodia, Sweden, Malaysia, the Dominican Republic, Bulgaria, the Republic of Korea, Czechia, Mexico, Samoa, South Africa, Italy, the Philippines, San Marino, Senegal, Zambia, Algeria, Qatar, El Salvador, Morocco, Viet Nam, Belgium, Sri Lanka, the Republic of Moldova, Costa Rica, Slovenia, Jamaica, Iraq, Luxembourg, Guatemala, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Indonesia, Armenia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Peru, Austria, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Nepal, Turkey, Lithuania, France, Thailand, Malawi, Spain, Uganda, Nicaragua, the Bahamas, Lesotho, Togo, Colombia, Bahrain, Libya, Equatorial Guinea and Kyrgyzstan.

² Member States of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities, the League of Arab States, Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia, the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Group of Friends of Older Persons and the Pacific Islands Forum Group.

³ The International Telecommunication Union and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

institutions⁴ and 24 non-governmental organizations.⁵ The technical issues that affected some initial speakers were addressed.

V. Round-table discussions

10. On 12 and 13 June, the Conference held three round tables, at its 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings. At each round table, presentations were given by a panel of speakers, followed by interactive discussions.

Round table 1: technology, digitalization and information and communications technologies for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities

11. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (i), was co-chaired by the Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Pekka Puustinen, and the Director of Global Policy, Influencing and Research of Action on Disability and Development International, Mosharraf Hossain. Presentations were given by four panellists: a Disability Inclusion Adviser at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Tytti Matsinen (participating through a video connection); a senior expert and disability focal point in the European Commission, Inmaculada Placencia; Vice-President of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technologies, James Thurston; and Senior Fellow and Programme Director, Asia-Pacific, of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technologies, Nirmita Narasimhan.

Round table 2: social inclusion and the right to the highest attainable standard of health

12. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (ii), was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Katalin Annamária Bogay, and the Chair of Dementia Alliance International, Kate Swaffer, representing civil society. Presentations were given by the following five panellists: a Professor in the Department of Social Welfare, Daegu University, Republic of Korea, Han-jin Jo; an Adviser on Disability and Rehabilitation of the World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar; the President of People First of Canada, Kory Earle; and a board member of Transforming Communities for Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities, Asia-Pacific, Jenny Rosa Damayanti.

⁴ The Australian Human Rights Commission and the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia.

⁵ The International Disability Alliance, Inclusion International, the European Disability Forum, the International Disability and Development Consortium, the World Federation of the Deaf, the Christian Blind Mission, the Pacific Disability Forum, Disabled Peoples' International, the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, People with Disability Australia, Standing Voice, The Leprosy Mission International, Special Olympics International, ENOSH – The Israeli Mental Health Association, Rehabilitation International, the National Association of Members of Public Prosecutor's Defence of the Rights of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities, the European Network on Independent Living, the Canadian Association of the Deaf-Association des Sourds du Canada, the Speech Pathology Association of Australia, Queensland Advocacy, Incorporated, Associazione Sport e Società – Progetto Filippide per l'autismo e le malattie rare and Voice of Specially Abled People, Inc. A joint statement was made by the Centre for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry and the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

Round table 3: inclusion of persons with disabilities in society through participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

13. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (iii), was co-chaired by the Minister for Social and Family Development of Singapore, Sam Tan, and a civil society representative from Transforming Communities for Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities, Asia-Pacific, Bhargavi Venkatasubramaniam. Presentations were given by five panellists: Vice-President of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, Yong Jia; Chair of the Arab Union for the Blind, and Disability and Family Development Consultant at the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs of Qatar, Khalid Ali Al Naimi; the Technical Secretary of the "Toda Una Vida" plan of Ecuador, Isabel Maldonado Vasco; the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility of Canada, Carla Qualtrough; and a member of Autogestores SPSD and Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome Down, Peru, Jaime Cruz.

VI. Interactive dialogue with the United Nations system on the implementation of the Convention

14. Agenda item 5 (c) was addressed at the 6th meeting, which was chaired by the President of the Conference. Presentations were given by seven panellists: the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat; the Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; a Senior Programme Officer and focal point for information and communications technology accessibility at the International Telecommunication Union; an Adviser on Disability and Rehabilitation of the World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization; A Senior Liaison Officer of the Liaison Office in New York of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and the Director of the International Labour Organization office in New York, jointly with the Officer-in-Charge for Governance of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support of the United Nations Development Programme, as the Co-Chairs of the sub-working group of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

15. Presentations were also given by representatives of other bodies and mandate holders: a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Monthian Buntan; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar; the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes; and a civil society representative from Inclusion International, Luis Gabriel Villarreal Peralta.

VII. Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

16. At its 6th meeting, under agenda item 6, the Conference unanimously adopted three decisions proposed by its Bureau (see annex I).

VIII. Closing of the Conference

17. At the closing of the Conference, the President of the General Assembly delivered a statement.

18. Statements were also made by the representatives of Finland, Hungary, Liberia and Singapore, in their capacity as Vice-Presidents of the Conference.
19. The President of the Conference, in his closing statement, expressed his appreciation to all States parties and to the Secretariat for their cooperation and strong support in making the twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties a success.
20. The Conference was adjourned at 6 p.m. on 13 June 2019.

Annex I

Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

At its twelfth session, the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted the following decisions:

Decision 1: Venue and timing of the thirteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recalling General Assembly resolution [61/106](#) and taking into consideration rule 1, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the rules of procedure of the Conference, decides that its thirteenth session will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 10 to 12 June 2020.

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

The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities notes the provision of resources and support for the twelfth session of the Conference and reiterates its recommendation to the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate support to the thirteenth and future sessions of the Conference.

Decision 3: Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities decides to request the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Conference on its twelfth session to all States parties and observers.

Annex II

President's summary of the twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Opening of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

1. In his opening statement, the President of the Conference, Luis Gallegos, reported that the session was attended by over 1,500 participants from around 180 States parties and observers, as well as over 100 non-governmental organizations and dozens of United Nations entities. The President underlined that strengthening inclusion, solidarity and equality must be a priority, as well as building societies free from discrimination and without the barriers that limited the enjoyment of rights for persons with disabilities. He stressed that the multilateral sphere, such as the Conference of States Parties, was an active and coherent space to advance this goal.

2. The Secretary-General underlined that disability inclusion was a fundamental human right and was central to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Realizing the rights of persons with disabilities was a matter of justice, as well as a common-sense investment in a common future. Recognizing that there was still a long way to go in changing mindsets, laws and policies to ensure the rights, opportunities and dignity of persons with disabilities around the world, he urged all actors – in particular States parties – to be more ambitious in implementing their commitments. Stressing that the United Nations must lead by example, he noted that the Organization had issued its first-ever flagship report on disability and development in 2018 and had commissioned a comprehensive review of the performance of the United Nations system on disability inclusion. He announced the official launch of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the aim of which was to improve the performance of the United Nations on disability inclusion across the board, along with an accountability framework to monitor progress. The Secretary-General counted on the strong support of Member States and persons with disabilities and their organizations in the realization of the Strategy.

3. A member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Monthian Buntan, highlighted examples of concerted action leading to recent changes. He noted that, ahead of the election of the members of the Committee in 2018, the Committee had issued an open letter urging States parties to ensure the inclusion of more women experts. He also noted that although gender parity had not been attained, six women had been elected as members of the Committee in 2018. He commended the Secretary-General for his commitment to ensuring accessibility and the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities through the newly launched United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. He reported that, in September 2018, the Committee had adopted its general comment No. 7 on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. Finally, he expressed his concern about cash flow difficulties at the United Nations and the risk of cancellation of sessions for 6 of the 10 treaty bodies for financial reasons, which could seriously undermine the system of protections that States had put in place over decades. He also called for the Conference to include a budget line for regular engagement with the Chair of the Committee at future sessions.

4. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, underlined that the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development

Goals offered a framework to improve the lives of everyone, including persons with disabilities. She congratulated the Secretary-General for his leadership and commitment to disability inclusion, notably through the launch of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, and called upon States to politically and financially support the implementation of the Strategy. Finally, she reiterated the importance of ensuring consultation with and active participation of persons with disabilities in the relevant processes of implementation of the Strategy.

5. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, stressed that accessibility was one of the most cross-cutting issues in relation to development and the rights of persons with disabilities. She noted the importance of building “smart cities” based on technological accessibility and the universal design of communications, information, products and services. She underlined the importance of business in implementing the 2030 Agenda, noting that States could and must be partners with the private sector. The Special Envoy called upon the high-level political forum on sustainable development to increase its oversight of disability inclusion and accessibility in reviewing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. She also stated that the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, to be convened on 23 September 2019, would have the theme “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world,” and called upon the General Assembly to consider the inclusion of disability in the outcome document of the meeting.

6. The Chair of the International Disability Alliance, Ana Lucía Arellano, representing civil society, underlined the significant progress achieved over the past 12 months, including the Global Disability Summit, held in London in July 2018, the creation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the inclusion of persons with disabilities for the first time in the deliberations of the Security Council in December 2018. However, she also noted setbacks and obstacles, notably reports from non-governmental organizations at the national level that disability services were being cut and that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was still not inclusive. She shared key messages from the civil society forum on the Convention held on 10 June 2019, including calls to increase consultation with persons with disabilities in decision-making processes and to increase investment in organizations of persons with disabilities and in the capacity-building of all stakeholders to implement the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities, as well as the grave concern expressed that institutionalization continued to occur for some children with disabilities.

Round-table discussions

Round table 1: technology, digitalization and information and communications technologies for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities

7. The Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Pekka Puustinen, and the Director of Global Policy, Influencing and Research of Action on Disability and Development International, Mosharraf Hossain, co-chaired the first round-table discussion.

8. A Disability Inclusion Adviser at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Tytti Matsinen, noted improved access to technological devices for persons with disabilities owing to enhanced accessibility and lower sales prices. However, persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls, who had lower educational attainment and fewer income-generating opportunities, still faced economic barriers that limited their acquisition of information and communications technology (ICT) and assistive technologies. She underlined that many persons with disabilities (for instance, those

who were visually impaired) faced difficulties in accessing mobile devices and services. However, solutions such as interactive voice response-based or braille-based financial mobile services were available and were being developed. She stressed that social protection could subsidize and enhance access and that the United Nations had a role to play in promoting high international and national standards of e-accessibility. She also recommended that Governments, along with private actors, should collect data to identify needs and gaps, while the private sector should embrace universal design and the international community should work to support such endeavours for accessibility and inclusion.

9. A senior expert and disability focal point in the European Commission, Inmaculada Placencia, noted the need to build ecosystems that maximized opportunities to ensure ICT accessibility and equal access for persons with disabilities. She stressed that it was fundamental to balance the specificity of accessibility requirements and the necessary flexibility for innovation. She explained that an enabling ecosystem required legal and policy measures with clear requirements and enforcement provisions. She provided the example of the European Union, which, among other legislation, had adopted the European Electronic Communications Code and the European Accessibility Act regulating the accessibility of key ICT products and services and setting functional requirements. She emphasized that, while legislation was essential, legal measures must be accompanied by other ICT accessibility policies and coherent accessibility standards if they were truly to have an impact. She noted that accessibility remained rare in new ICT fields and deserved increased attention. Finally, she stressed that accessibility required joint and continued efforts for its maintenance and that investing in digital skills, together with training on the accessibility of ICT, would enhance functioning and inclusive ecosystems.

10. Vice-President of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technologies, James Thurston, underlined that technology could and must support the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities. He noted that all sectors were increasingly deploying technology, but the benefits of global digital transformation were not reaching everyone. He cited, for instance, the fact that only 40 per cent of countries had accessible government websites and that smart cities were not using ICT accessibility standards. Similarly, he reported that many persons with disabilities did not have equal access to justice, as courts did not use accessible technology. He stressed that the growing deployment of technology was not necessarily meant to enlarge the digital divide. He noted that policy approaches for public procurement, such as section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act in the United States of America and the relevant European procurement directives in the European Union, could facilitate the uptake and penetration of accessible technology.

11. Policy Fellow at LIRNEasia and Senior Fellow and Programme Director, Asia-Pacific, of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communications Technologies, Nirmita Narasimhan, stated that the digital accessibility rights evaluation index framework of the Global Initiative assessed the implementation of digital accessibility policies and programmes in 121 countries, in particular national commitments, capacity to implement and actual implementation and outcomes. She noted that, overall, scores for the capacity to implement were lower than commitment scores, and stressed that there was a major gap in the inclusion of ICT in definitions of accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the universal service obligation. She also noted a number of barriers, such as a lack of engagement of persons with disabilities in policymaking, insufficient standardization and availability of accessibility training and limited implementation of policies in place to address ICT accessibility. While success in achieving ICT accessibility was still low, countries did, however, make efforts to implement ICT accessibility policies once they were

adopted. She stressed that legislation, regulations and policies of States reflecting the provisions of the Convention were essential. Finally, she noted that capacity to implement could be greatly enhanced by the participation of persons with disabilities in policymaking and monitoring, training in accessibility and the adoption of international accessibility standards.

Round table 2: social inclusion and the right to the highest attainable standard of health

12. The round table was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Katalin Annamária Bogay, and the Chair of Dementia Alliance International, Kate Swaffer.

13. A Professor in the Department of Social Welfare of Daegu University, Republic of Korea, Han-jin Jo, explained that the Act on Guarantee of Right to Health and Access to Medical Services for Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Korea had been enacted in 2017 to bridge the gaps in health outcomes and access to health care between persons with and without disabilities. He noted that article 9 of the Act stipulated guaranteed access to and use of medical institutions by persons with disabilities and required that health-care personnel other than health professionals (such as medical technicians and pharmacists) be educated on the right to health of persons with disabilities. He warned that, although the clear majority of persons with psychosocial disabilities did not commit crimes, they had become stigmatized as a result of media reports and too often were targets of public hate. He called for the press to stop broadcasting messages biased against those with psychosocial disabilities. He stressed that persons with disabilities and disability organizations had important roles to play in educating health-care personnel, as well as the media and the public. Finally, he raised the issue of persons with psychosocial disabilities entering into life insurance contracts and noted that this matter required further discussion in the Republic of Korea, as well as other countries.

14. An Adviser on Disability and Rehabilitation of the World Health Organization (WHO)/Pan American Health Organization highlighted that the strategy of WHO for achieving health for all was through universal health-care coverage. He noted that in a report from 2018 ([A/73/161](#)), the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities underscored the various challenges faced by persons with disabilities in enjoying their right to the highest attainable standard of health, including accessibility, attitudes of health-care providers, barriers in health insurance coverage and the role of social determinants of health. He stressed that the work of WHO on disability was undertaken in accordance with the three objectives of the WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021 and provided concrete examples of activities being carried out, including the development of standards for the provision of non-discriminatory health care, a package of rehabilitation interventions and a model disability survey in collaboration with the World Bank. He also cited QualityRights, an initiative of WHO that sought to translate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into practice by reforming mental health services. He stressed that services such as rehabilitation, assistive technology and mental health services remained underfunded and underprioritized in the health agenda. However, he also commended the current shift of emphasis within the global health community towards health for all and greater consideration of health equity.

15. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, underlined the importance of the shift from the medical model of disability to the model of human rights that began in the 1960s. She stressed that having an impairment was not synonymous with being unhealthy, yet owing to structural factors, persons with disabilities had worse health outcomes than the general population. She noted that, for persons with disabilities to enjoy the highest

attainable standard of health, they faced many barriers that must be overcome: stigmatization and discrimination, lack of literacy in health, barriers to accessing primary and secondary care, low availability and quality of specialized services and different forms of violence and abuse. She underlined that States should review their legal and policy frameworks, advance universal health coverage, improve the accessibility of services, ensure non-discrimination and participation and mobilize resources. She called upon States to incorporate the rights and needs of persons with disabilities into policies and programmes for primary and specialized health care, respecting the human rights of persons with disabilities, and to expand habilitation and rehabilitation services, including assistive devices and technologies, as health was essential for sustainable development. For persons with disabilities, if they could not have access to quality health care, it was very likely that they would not be able to attend school, maintain a job or actively participate in the development of their communities.

16. The President of People First of Canada, Kory Earle, noted that social inclusion meant having a sense of belonging and a role within a community. He stressed that when people were socially included, they were more likely to be healthier and happier. He also noted that many people still struggled to move away from a medical model of disability and that health-care professionals were often not well trained on disability issues. He expressed concern that persons with disabilities often did not receive the health care that they needed, which, in turn, prevented their inclusion in society. He recounted his own story and underlined that inclusion through inclusive education had helped him to find his voice and had given him the self-confidence that empowered him to participate and make contributions as a self-advocate. He mentioned the “core values tool”, a module for health care for persons with intellectual disabilities developed by People First of Canada.

17. The founder and steering committee member of the Indonesian Mental Health Association in Transforming Communities for Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities, Asia-Pacific, Jenny Rosa Damayanti, expressed concern over the lack of free and informed consent of persons with psychosocial disabilities in the mental health-care system. She reported that hundreds of thousands of persons with psychosocial disabilities across Asia were forced into mental hospitals and social care institutions, where they faced non-consensual detention, violence, forced contraception and sterilization and involuntary and uninformed medical treatments. She argued that Governments must reform their mental health policies in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She noted that a mental health certificate was a common requirement for securing a job, acquiring a promotion, screening candidates for public office and academic scholarships and determining citizens’ right to vote. This continued to be a social, professional and economic barrier for persons with psychosocial disabilities, since the required examinations were not covered by health insurance. She warned that, generally, efforts were directed towards medication instead of providing counselling or basic social protection. Such practices, she argued, only benefited the pharmaceutical industry. She urged that people with psychosocial disabilities be included in their communities, be provided opportunities to make informed choices and be given access to modern, specialized and supportive care.

Round table 3: inclusion of persons with disabilities in society through participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

18. The round table was co-chaired by the Minister for Social and Family Development of Singapore, Sam Tan, and Bhargavi Venkatasubramaniam, of Transforming Communities for Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities, Asia-Pacific, representing civil society.

19. Vice-President of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, Yong Jia, underlined that the Government of China attached great importance to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in culture, leisure and sport. He underlined several actions being taken by the Government, including the construction of a centre for rehabilitation that provided services to 100,000 people with disabilities and training centres at the provincial and national levels. He highlighted that, following the 2008 Paralympic Games, the Government had put in place national games for persons with disabilities. He also noted the organization of a cultural week for persons with disabilities, as well as efforts to encourage persons with disabilities to take part in exhibitions, attend cultural events and participate in sport. He stressed that Governments must play a leading role in supporting the participation of persons with disabilities, including through financial investments in the construction of adapted or accessible facilities. He highlighted that obstacles hindering participation might be physical or might be the result of discrimination, prejudice or misconception; all aspects needed to be addressed. Finally, he noted that the participation of persons with disabilities in international exchanges in the arts and sport served to showcase their potential and improve mutual understanding and friendship among people throughout the world.

20. The Chair of the Arab Union for the Blind, Khalid Ali Al Naimi, stressed that Qatar had adopted many measures within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He underlined that non-governmental organizations, with the support of the State, had organized several conferences in Doha. He noted that Qatar had recently adopted the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, and had established the Qatar National Library, which provided services to persons with disabilities. He underlined that Qatar had created specialized cultural centres, including the Qatar Social and Cultural Centre for the Blind and the Qatar Social and Cultural Centre for the Deaf. He highlighted that the Government had developed accessible websites and local satellite channels providing sign language. He underlined that the Qatar sports union for persons with disabilities played an important role in rehabilitation. In addition, he outlined that the Government was putting in place accessible athletic and leisure facilities, promoting access to movie theatres, museums and public spaces and organizing obligatory training on accessibility for employees of tourist attractions and airports. He noted that the Government had cooperated with the National Tourism Council and Qatar Airways to provide safety guidelines for persons with disabilities. He emphasized the importance of cooperation among government entities, civil society, the private sector and academia to realize the rights of persons with disabilities and empower them to participate in cultural life, leisure and sport.

21. The Technical Secretary of the "Toda Una Vida" plan of Ecuador, Isabel Maldonado Vasco, underlined that the Government of Ecuador had opted for a public policy called the "Plan Toda Una Vida" (all one life plan), which was focused on strengthening services associated with the guarantee of fundamental rights to all individuals. She warned that, too often, cultural life and recreational activities were not considered fundamental. She underlined that the national programme called "Casa para Todos" (house for all) sought to strengthen access to adequate and dignified housing and implement a community-strengthening strategy. She stressed that parks and playgrounds were important for community integration, social cohesion and well-being. She noted that housing and public spaces should be built on the basis of the principles of universal design. She underlined the importance of play for children in relation to physical development, cognitive growth and self-esteem and warned that the right to play was often denied to children with disabilities. She explained that the Government was building inclusive parks in every housing project and was working with the Inter-American Development Bank to build 92 accessible parks nationwide.

Finally, she stressed that States must be committed to ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.

22. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility of Canada, Carla Qualtrough, noted that, as a person with a disability, she had learned from her parents that she had the right to be accommodated and had learned from her exposure to Paralympic sport that it was possible to design inclusive systems. She highlighted that the approach of Canada to inclusive systems had evolved in two ways: first, by framing its public policy discourse in terms of human rights, and second, by moving from the mantra of “nothing about us without us” to “nothing without us”. She stressed that these were the foundational principles of the country’s first-ever federal accessibility legislation, the Accessible Canada Act, which was set to receive Royal Assent in June 2019. Stressing that inclusion and access to sport opportunities were critical, she noted that McGill University had created a free application called “Jooay”, which provided information on nearby sport and recreation opportunities that were accessible and adapted to the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities. She underscored the power of sport to change attitudes and advance positive social change. She explained that in Canada, sport was used to advance indigenous reconciliation, support youth at risk, empower veterans and engage refugees and new Canadians in their communities. She said that data were critical to demonstrating the ways that sport could advance broader social development goals. Finally, she stressed that while there had been significant progress, more work needed to be done. In that regard, she looked forward to the upcoming results of implementation of the Kazan Action Plan.

23. Member of Autogestores SPSD and Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome Down, Jaime Cruz, declared the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport, leisure and cultural activities to be a human right. He noted that persons with disabilities could benefit exceptionally from sport, given that many disabilities involved decreased natural muscle tone. Additionally, he noted that inclusion in leisure activities enabled persons with disabilities to use their time meaningfully. However, he noted that while the Government of Peru cooperated with organizations such as Special Olympics International, it had not done enough to fully include persons with disabilities in its national plans for sport and cultural activities and had done even less to promote their inclusion in leisure activities. The advocate reported that although persons with disabilities had access to sport and cultural activities, they were kept separate from those for the general population. He argued that full inclusion entailed the participation of all persons in activities together and that integrated sports, cultural and leisure activities would instil in people, especially children, that persons with disabilities were as capable as anyone else.

Interactive dialogue with the United Nations system on the implementation of the Convention

24. The President of the Conference opened and chaired the interactive dialogue.

25. The Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat noted that the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy had been created through an inter-agency effort, with engagement and cooperation from more than 300 individuals from approximately 60 United Nations entities, staff unions, networks and civil society organizations. The Department had played an active role in the drafting process for the Strategy. She outlined several actions taken by the Department to mainstream the goals and objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the global agenda, including the publication of the United Nations 2018

flagship report on disability and development: realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. The report provided a global analysis based on an unprecedented amount of data, legislation and policies from over 100 countries, including the first global compilation of internationally comparable data based on a short set of questions by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and more than 1.2 million crowd-sourced data points. The Assistant Secretary-General noted that the report identified good practices, recommended urgent actions and traced a road map for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. The Department was in the process of producing accessible versions of the report. She noted that, in response to the request made by the Statistical Commission during its forty-ninth session, in early 2018, the Statistics Division had been compiling, analysing and disseminating data on disability through the United Nations Disability Statistics Database. She noted that the Department would continue to conduct activities to assist developing countries in strengthening the capacity of their national statistical systems. She underlined that, in response to General Assembly resolution [72/162](#), the Department had been working on the report of the Secretary-General on the rights of persons with disabilities that would be submitted later in 2019 to the General Assembly. The Department was also engaged in actions on sport as an enabler of sustainable development for all. The Assistant Secretary-General underlined that the Department continued to respond to requests for technical cooperation, citing the support provided in Namibia using the toolkit on disability for Africa and the support provided to Uzbekistan. Finally, she stressed that the Department stood ready to support all stakeholders in implementing the Strategy.

26. The Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights welcomed the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy in his remarks. He noted the commemoration of International Albinism Awareness Day, the first International Day of Sign Languages in September 2018 and the first-ever open Arria formula meeting on persons with disabilities at the Security Council on 3 December 2018. He stressed that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had contributed to major shifts in approaches, attitudes and policies, and that this was beneficial to everyone, not just to persons with disabilities. On the issue of ICT and assistive devices, he highlighted that it was incumbent on all stakeholders to ensure that they were made available, affordable and accessible to persons with disabilities and to be vigilant in ensuring that new technologies did not contribute to the creation of new barriers. He noted that the Office was leading a European Union-funded project to develop tools, including human rights indicators on the Convention and policy guidelines on realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention. Finally, he noted that the Convention was a common road map, platform and hope for ensuring a world that promoted dignity, celebrated diversity and uplifted the human rights of people everywhere.

27. A Senior Programme Officer and focal point for ICT accessibility at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) underlined the commitment of ITU to connecting the world and ensuring that everyone had affordable access to ICT. She noted that inclusiveness was one of the five strategic goals of ITU in its strategic plan for the period 2020–2023 and highlighted that target 2.9 of the goal explicitly called for enabling, accessible environments for all, including persons with disabilities, in all countries by 2023. She noted that, to achieve this goal, ITU provided advice and support to Member States. She cited several ITU activities in this regard, including raising awareness among 3,000 ITU members and stakeholders on ICT accessibility through thematic, regional and global events, face-to-face executive training, self-paced online training courses on ICT accessibility delivered through the ITU

Academy, video tutorials and a programme on web accessibility entitled “Internet for @ll”.

28. An Adviser on Disability and Rehabilitation of the World Health Organization (WHO)/Pan American Health Organization reiterated the commitment of WHO towards the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and stressed that universal healthcare coverage could not exist if access to health services for all, including persons with disabilities, were not ensured. He reiterated that over 1 billion people, or 15 per cent of the world’s population, had some form of disability, and that half of those people could not afford health care. He noted that efforts led by WHO, in accordance with the WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021, were aimed at removing barriers to health-care services to ensure that people with disabilities benefited from universal coverage. Various actions were currently being taken by WHO, including the development of guidelines on strengthening rehabilitation systems, a package of interventions to facilitate the inclusion of rehabilitation in universal health coverage and technical tools to support Member States to develop national priority lists of assistive products.

29. A Senior Liaison Officer of the Liaison Office in New York of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNESCO had been preparing policies to shape national standards on goods, products and services, including accessibility guidelines and recommendations, curriculums and other mechanisms. UNESCO had been raising awareness of the potential of science and technology, especially of ICT, to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, promoting more robust data collection and statistics on disability, encouraging Governments to take legislative action and advocating for regulations that would ensure the full implementation of relevant policies. UNESCO was working towards mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion through legislation, policy and programmes at all levels. In addition, UNESCO had been helping to build capacity through training, in particular on engagement with the media and on hardware and software development. UNESCO had been focusing on inclusive education and promoting learning through technology and had developed an initial teacher training programme that is designed to improve the ICT competency of teachers, and accessibility guidelines for open and distance learning. Lastly, she noted the adoption of the Kazan Action Plan by the sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, convened by UNESCO in 2017.

30. The Director of the International Labour Organization office in New York delivered a joint statement on behalf of the Officer-in-Charge for Governance of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support of the United Nations Development Programme and the sub-working group of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, detailing the components of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the process of its creation. He noted that the Strategy was the result of a five-month process of consultation and drafting, with inputs from more than 300 individuals from around 60 United Nations entities, inter-agency networks and civil society organizations. He stressed that it was informed by a review of the United Nations system mandated by the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General and the initial findings of the Joint Inspection Unit in a study, in which the Unit found that the consistent and systematic mainstreaming of accessibility and disability inclusion remained limited across all pillars of work and at all levels. He noted that following a pilot and validation process with 21 United Nations entities, the Strategy was adopted in May 2019. He further underlined that the decision of the Executive Committee had prompted the development of a policy, action plan and accountability framework to strengthen

system-wide accessibility and mainstream disability inclusion. He explained that the Strategy took a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion and put forward an accountability framework that entailed annual reporting on implementation against standardized indicators by United Nations entities, country teams and the entire United Nations system, requiring remedial actions to address unmet goals.

31. In the second part of the interactive dialogue, presentations were given by representatives of other mandate holders and a civil society representative.

32. Monthian Buntan, speaking on behalf of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, reported on the implementation of the Convention from the standpoint of the Committee: 178 countries had ratified the Convention to date, and he welcomed the recent ratification by Kyrgyzstan. He stated that the Committee had reviewed 86 national reports. He highlighted several concerns that still hindered the full implementation of the Convention, including the denial of legal capacity and forced treatment, the segregation of children with disabilities in education or in residential institutions, the marginalization of women and girls with disabilities in many countries, and the fact that persons with disabilities continued to be hit most hard by humanitarian emergencies, disasters and risk situations, notwithstanding the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. He stressed that the Committee had adopted seven general comments, established a working group on the future development of a general comment on article 11 of the Convention, on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, and nominated a focal point on disability and new technologies. He expressed the hope that the recommendations from a review of national reports would serve as a lever for States parties to continue their efforts to implement the Convention. Finally, he reiterated the concern expressed in his opening remarks relating to the sustainability of the treaty body system and called for the necessary capacity and regular budget resources to fulfil its mandate.

33. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, expressed her optimism regarding the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and provided an update on her work. To inform the Strategy, her office had conducted a baseline study of the United Nations system, including 40 entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and 40 United Nations country teams, as well as consulting with several coordination departments and with organizations of persons with disabilities. She was confident in the ability of the Strategy to transform the United Nations system to fully support Member States in realizing the implementation of the Convention. She called upon all United Nations entities to initiate the process of reviewing their work to implement the Strategy and the United Nations system to adopt cross-cutting measures to coordinate and monitor progress. She announced that, in 2019, she had prepared two reports, on the right to health and on the deprivation of liberty. Her office had also continued to monitor several international, regional and national processes, as well as promoting the exchange of knowledge and good practices among the United Nations system entities, Member States and civil society.

34. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, focused her intervention on one initiative that she had implemented in the past year, the campaign for the good treatment of girls, boys and adolescents with disabilities in the world. She noted that she had spearheaded the campaign across many regions of the world and would continue to support its roll-out. She noted the 10 principles of the campaign, which had been developed with the help of children with disabilities and their communities. She invited all delegations to embrace and share these principles in relation to the treatment of children and adolescents with disabilities.

35. A self-advocate from Inclusion International in Colombia, Luis Gabriel Villarreal Peralta, stated the importance of ensuring the full inclusion of persons with disabilities through the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He expressed his satisfaction with the Conference, since it enabled Governments, civil society, United Nations agencies, human rights institutions and other stakeholders to discuss the policies, practices and challenges that had arisen in the push for inclusion. However, he noted that there was still work to be done. He encouraged persons with disabilities to unite and engage in civil society movements, including those for youth, women and indigenous people, to foster awareness and an intersectional approach. He stated that he had campaigned on issues concerning political participation, the implementation of the Convention, legal capacity law, sexual and reproductive rights, inclusive education and employment, guidance and assistance for families and the autonomy and self-determination of persons with disabilities. He hoped that, with the implementation of the Convention, persons with disabilities would be able to attend school, play sport, take part in leisure and recreational activities with their peers, have equal access to technology and enjoy the same privacy, respect, attention and sense of belonging as anyone else.

Closing of the Conference

36. The President of the General Assembly congratulated the Ecuadorian presidency and all members of the Bureau for the organization of the Conference. She pointed to substantive participation of the States parties, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, which had made the Conference the world's largest and most effective forum for the empowerment of persons with disabilities. She also congratulated the civil society forum on the Convention held on 10 June. She made three key points in her statement. First, she underlined that the General Assembly should, in its future sessions, continue to integrate a cross-cutting approach to disability in all of its work. She stressed that, during her mandate, she had promoted the participation of persons with disabilities in high-level events, including discussions on health, climate change, migration, youth, peace and security and decent work. She had also launched a campaign for the universal ratification of the Convention and welcomed Kyrgyzstan in being the 178th State party. Second, she warned that if persons with disabilities were not included in endeavours to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, it would not be possible to fulfil the 2030 Agenda. She noted that the wealth of ideas and the good practices put forward during this session of the Conference of States Parties should fuel the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held in July 2019, and the Sustainable Development Goals summit, to be held in September 2019. Third, she emphasized that the United Nations should lead by example, a key point that had led her to create a steering committee on accessibility. On 12 June 2019, she convened a high-level event on inclusive development with the Vice-President of Argentina to provide the steering committee with the opportunity to present its recommendations towards ensuring that United Nations Headquarters and other duty stations became more accessible and inclusive. She underlined the importance of removing physical barriers and combating social prejudices that affected the rights of the largest minority in the world. She underscored the need to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, highlighting it as the most effective way of building inclusive societies in which equality and dignity for all reigned.

37. The representatives of Finland, Hungary, Liberia and Singapore, as Vice-Presidents of the Conference, also made statements at the closing meeting.

38. In his closing remarks, the President of the Conference commented on the record number of interventions during the general debate, which he saw as demonstrative of

increased international commitment to raising awareness and ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities towards the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He summarized the three round-table discussions and the interactive dialogue with the United Nations system, while also recalling the adoption of three decisions and the message delivered by the President of the General Assembly. He expressed his feeling that the Conference was part of a 75-year-long cooperative process to fulfil the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. He explained that the Conference added tremendous value to the work of implementing the Convention by creating a common platform where stakeholders could exchange innovative ideas, relevant experiences and practical solutions for translating international commitments into concrete actions.

Annex III

Non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at its twelfth session

1. Access Bangladesh Foundation
 2. Association of Parents and Friends of Special Children in São Paulo (APAE)
 3. Benetech
 4. Cerebral Palsy Foundation
 5. Congo Handicap
 6. Disability Law and Policy Programme, Syracuse University College of Law
 7. Down Syndrome Australia
 8. Entire Power in Social Action
 9. Global Disability Innovation Hub
 10. International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity
 11. National Federation of the Blind of the United Kingdom
 12. Orange Penguin Foundation
 13. Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies
 14. Reclaiming Our Future Alliance International Committee
 15. United Disabled Persons of Kenya
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