



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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

Thirteenth session

New York, 30 November and 1, 3 and 11 December 2020

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

I. Introduction

1. The thirteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held at Headquarters on 30 November and 1, 3 and 11 December 2020.
2. Seven meetings were held. On 30 November, the 1st meeting was convened to consider the agenda items on the opening of the session and the adoption of the agenda, the organization of work and the decisions by the Conference of States Parties. The election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities took place at three in-person meetings: the 1st and 2nd meetings, on 30 November, and the 7th meeting, on 11 December. Three round-table discussions were held in a virtual format, at the 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings, on 1 and 3 December. At its 6th meeting, on 3 December, the Conference considered agenda item 6, “Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention”.
3. The text of the decisions adopted by the Conference is contained in annex I, the President’s summary of the session in annex II and the list of non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference in annex III.

II. Opening of the session

4. The session was opened by the President of the Conference and Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations, Cristian Espinosa.
5. At its 1st meeting, on 30 November, the Conference adopted the provisional agenda ([CRPD/CSP/2020/1](#)), agreed on the organization of work for the session and adopted its decisions.



6. Pursuant to rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure, and under agenda item 3, 23 new non-governmental organizations were accredited to the Conference (see annex III).

7. Opening statements were made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, Luis Gallegos; the Secretary-General; and the President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. Video messages were delivered by the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Danlami Umaru Basharu; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Gerard Quinn; the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes; and the civil society representative from the African Disability Forum, Idriss Alzouma Maiga.

III. Election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

8. The Conference, under agenda item 4, elected the following members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with terms beginning on 1 January 2021: Rosa Idalia Aldana Salguero (Guatemala), Odelia Fitoussi (Israel), Floyd Morris (Jamaica), Samuel Kabue (Kenya), Gerel Dondovdorj (Mongolia), Soumia Amrani (Morocco), Robert George Martin (New Zealand), Vivian Fernández de Torrijo (Panama) and Saowalak Thongkuay (Thailand).

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

9. No meeting was held under agenda item 5 (a). However, written statements, which were posted online, were received from Member States,¹ institutions and organizations observing the Conference, including international organizations, national human rights institutions² and non-governmental organizations.³

V. Round-table discussions

10. At its 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings, on 1 and 3 December, the Conference held three round-table discussions via a virtual platform. Presentations were given by a panel of speakers, followed by interactive discussions.

A. Disability and business: realizing the right to work in open, inclusive and accessible environments for persons with disabilities

11. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (i), was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Hungary and Vice-President of the Bureau, Katalin Annamária Bogyay, and a country representative of Sense International, Edwin

¹ Andorra, Argentina, Australia (also on behalf of Indonesia, Mexico, Republic of Korea and Turkey), Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam (on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malawi, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

² Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

³ Licht für Die Welt and Redesfera Latinoamericana de la Diversidad Psicosocial.

Osundwa (Kenya). Presentations were given by six panellists: the Director of Planning, Community Integration and Development, SG Enable, Singapore, Phyllis Choo; the Director of the Productivity Pact Programme (labour inclusion model for people with disabilities) of Colombia, Alejandra Consuelo León Rodríguez; the founder and President of Access Israel, Yuval Wagner; the founder of the Valuable 500, Ashoka Fellow and Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum, Caroline Casey; a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, László Lovász; and Vice-President of Merck and member of the steering committee of the International Labour Organization Global Business and Disability Network, Don Watson.

B. Addressing the rights and needs of older persons with disabilities: ageing and demographic trends

12. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (ii), was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations, Israel Choko Davies, and the Disability Inclusion Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross, Samridhi Rana Thapa. Presentations were made by five panellists: the President of the National Council of People with Disabilities and the National Director of Social Security of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Costa Rica, Ericka Álvarez Ramírez; the Head of the European and International Affairs Unit, Ministry for Solidarity and Health of France, Alexis Rinckenbach; the Counsellor on Disability at the Office of the President of the Council of Italy, Giuseppe Recinto; the founder of Focus of Disabled Persons in Nairobi, Jane Nyawira Miano; and the Chair of the Myanmar Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy, Soe Win.

C. Promoting inclusive environments for the full implementation of the Convention

13. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (iii), was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, Jukka Salovaara, and the Vice-President of the Rede Latino Americana de Organizações Não Governamentais de Pessoas com Deficiência e Suas Famílias, Juan Ángel de Gouveia. An introductory video message was delivered by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Pekka Haavisto. Presentations were made by six panellists: the First Lady of Ecuador and President of the technical secretariat of the “Toda Una Vida” Plan, Rocío de Moreno (video message); the Chief Government Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Family and Social Policy of Poland, Paweł Wdówik; the founder of EyeSyght and Hailos, Australia, Santiago Velasquez; the former Chief Accessibility Officer of IBM and founder of FrancesWestCo, United States of America, Frances West; the Director of Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Asia-Pacific, Bhargavi Davar; and a council member of Inclusion International, Malawi, Mark Mapemba.

VI. Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention

14. Agenda item 6 was taken up at the 6th meeting, which was chaired by the President of the Conference. Presentations were given by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin; the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet (video message); the Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact, Sanda Ojiambo; the Special Representative to the United Nations and Director of the International Labour Organization Office for the United Nations, Beate Andrees; and the Senior Coordinator for Digital Inclusion at the International Telecommunication Union, Roxana Widmer-Iliescu.

15. Presentations were also given by representatives of other bodies and mandate holders: the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility; and a civil society representative, Sue Swenson.

VII. Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

16. At its 1st meeting, on 30 November, under agenda item 6, the Conference adopted three decisions proposed by its Bureau (see annex I).

VIII. Closure of the session

17. Under agenda item 8, statements were made by the representatives of Finland, Hungary, Liberia and Singapore, in their capacity as Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

18. At the 7th meeting, on 11 December, the President of the Conference made a closing statement in which he expressed his great appreciation to the Bureau, all States parties and the Secretariat for their strong support for the work of the Conference during his presidency. He reiterated his gratitude to those who had made the session a great success despite the exceptional circumstances in which it had been held as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis.

Annex I

Decisions by the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at its thirteenth session

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

Decision 1

Venue and date of the fourteenth 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 of 13 December 2006 and taking into consideration rule 1, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the rules of procedure of the Conference, decides that its fourteenth session will be held at Headquarters from 15 to 17 June 2021.

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 thirteenth session of the Conference, and reiterates its recommendation that the Secretary-General continue to provide adequate support to the Conference at its fourteenth and future sessions.

Decision 3

Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report 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 decides to request the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Conference on its thirteenth session to all States parties and observers.

Annex II

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

I. Opening of the session

1. The President of the Conference, Cristian Espinosa, prefaced the opening of the session by addressing how it was being held under exceptional circumstances owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis and outlined the in-person safety requirements that had been established by the Secretariat.

2. In his opening statement, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, Luis Gallegos, addressed the challenging circumstances in which the Conference was being held, underlining, however, that any crisis could be turned into an opportunity. He urged that persons with disabilities be prioritized as both leaders and beneficiaries in the ongoing global COVID-19 response, recovery and building back better efforts. He presented that goal as the outgrowth of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the subsequent progress in spearheading the disability perspective in the global agenda.

3. The Secretary-General addressed the United Nations response to the COVID-19 crisis, recovery and building back better efforts, in terms of being disability-inclusive, and drew attention to the first progress report on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, in which the action taken towards meeting its goals was cited and the major gaps that remained were highlighted. He advocated a concerted and cooperative effort to put the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities at the forefront of global action on COVID-19.

4. The President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly recalled the need to keep persons with vulnerabilities, including persons with disabilities, at the centre of COVID-19 recovery and building back better efforts. Continued progress was needed for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Danlami Umaru Basharu, advocated the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in designing COVID-19 response, recovery and building back better efforts. He highlighted accessibility barriers to fulfilling that goal and drew attention to opportunities for further cooperation.

6. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Gerard Quinn, urged that systematic changes in society be guided by the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals with the Convention, building on global, regional, national and local efforts to ensure disability-inclusive COVID-19 crisis, recovery and building back better efforts.

7. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, addressed the need to improve policy by integrating cross-cutting issues on disability and big data in building an efficient and accurate basis for action. She advocated universal accessibility and concerted efforts to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

8. A civil society representative, Idriss Alzouma, emphasized the exclusion of persons with disabilities from national COVID-19 policies. He highlighted the need to build back better and explained that inclusive policies required effective inclusive planning at every step until action made a difference on the ground.

II. Round-table discussions

A. Disability and business: realizing the right to work in open, inclusive and accessible environments for persons with disabilities

9. The Permanent Representative of Hungary and Vice-President of the Bureau, Katalin Annamária Bogyay, and a country representative of Sense International, Edwin Osundwa, co-chaired the round-table discussion.

10. The Director of Planning, Community Integration and Development, SG Enable, Singapore, Phyllis Choo, observed that employment for persons with disabilities demanded a cooperative effort between the public, private and non-profit sectors and required supporting employers, special education and vocational schools and a school-to-work transition for young people.

11. The Director of the Productivity Pact Programme, Colombia, Alejandra Consuelo León Rodríguez, suggested that policymakers must review successful models of disability inclusion in employment, consult organizations of persons with disabilities and build capacity by understanding best practices. She described the Productivity Pact Programme, a successful multi-stakeholder regional effort to create a framework for disability inclusion in the labour market.

12. The founder and President of Access Israel, Yuval Wagner, described the success of the requirement in Israel that companies have persons with disabilities comprise at least 3 per cent of their staff. He advocated awareness programmes led by persons with disabilities, research, knowledge of best practices, training and capacity-building at all levels.

13. The founder of the Valuable 500, Ashoka Fellow and Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum, Caroline Casey, described barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, including competing diversity agendas, a lack of understanding of the value brought by persons with disabilities and their families and a lack of capacity in leadership. She described how the organization was working to systemically remove those barriers.

14. A member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, László Lovász, highlighted the opportunities that technological advances brought to health, inclusion and accessibility and reasonable accommodation.

15. The Vice-President for Global Workplace and Enterprise Services at Merck, Don Watson, described the company's internal and external disability inclusion experiences, workplace norms, its founding of the Global Disability Inclusion Council and the Merck Capability Network and its work with Disability:IN and the Valuable 500.

B. Addressing the rights and needs of older persons with disabilities: ageing and demographic trends

16. The round-table discussion was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations, Israel Choko Davies, and a civil society representative, Samridhi Rana Thapa.

17. The President of the National Council of People with Disabilities and National Director of Social Security of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Costa Rica, Ericka Álvarez Ramírez, described national and regional action in gathering

disaggregated data and protecting the autonomy and legal capacity of persons with disabilities, especially older persons.

18. The Head of the European and International Affairs Unit of the Ministry for Solidarity and Health of France, Alexis Rinckenbach, described the working groups, mandates and tools on ageing formed and created by the European Union and the United Nations. He referred to how they had shaped national policies on housing and social security in France.

19. The Counsellor on Disability at the Office of the President of the Council of Italy, Giuseppe Recinto, explained the reform of the Italian welfare system. He described the previous system as offering siloed support and having too strong a focus on protection. He illustrated the vision for a new system based on awareness, mainstreaming, self-determination and individualized support.

20. The founder of Focus on Disabled Persons, Nairobi, Jane Nyawira Miano, described, on the basis of her personal and work experiences, the problems faced by ageing persons with disabilities in Kenya and other developing countries, especially as a result of COVID-19. She highlighted the need for accessible and affordable health care, transportation, housing and information and communications technology, as well as the participation of older persons with disabilities in policy design.

21. The Chair of the Myanmar Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy, Soe Win, described his personal experience as an older person with a disability, especially with leprosy, in Myanmar. He advocated stronger national policies to protect the rights of and access to necessary services and community participation for older persons with leprosy.

C. Promoting inclusive environments for the full implementation of the Convention

22. The round-table discussion was co-chaired by the Permanent Representative of Finland, Jukka Salovaara, and a civil society representative, Juan Angel de Gouveia.

23. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Pekka Haavisto, made opening remarks. He described the Finnish model for addressing inequality and disability rights, embodied in its “Inclusive and Competent Finland” programme. Its core principles were a human rights-based approach, supporting equal, accessible and non-discriminatory national institutions, strategies and policies, gender equality and civil society participation.

24. The First Lady of Ecuador, Rocío de Moreno, explained how COVID-19 had forced national and local leaders to rethink the effectiveness of institutions and policies. She described how the legal framework and policies in Ecuador were aligned with the Convention to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including the “Toda Una Vida” plan. She advocated accessibility of public spaces and inclusion in decision-making spaces.

25. The Government Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Family and Social Policy of Poland, Paweł Wdówick, described policy and funding increases regarding access to information, education and environment, as well as social inclusion and independent living for persons with disabilities. He remarked on how they were made possible through dialogue with communities of persons with disabilities and civil society.

26. The founder of EyeSight and Hailos, Santiago Velasquez, noted that inclusivity was only as difficult as one made it. He explained how consultation with persons with

disabilities made inclusion easier and how accessibility helped all persons, with and without disabilities, while also making financial sense.

27. The founder of Frances West Co., Frances West, focused on technology implementation for inclusive societies at the individual and institutional levels. She described how new technologies, such as the Internet of things, smart homes and transportation and advances in artificial intelligence and data analysis, could help to create better workplaces and overall quality of life for persons with disabilities.

28. The Director of Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Asia-Pacific, Bhargavi Davar, promoted the transition from a medical to a social model of mental health, explaining the damage caused by traditional mental health systems. She advocated the leadership of persons with psychosocial disabilities, instead of medical service providers.

29. A council member of Inclusion International, Malawi, Mark Mapemba, focused on inclusive environments for persons with intellectual disabilities. He described his personal experiences with accessibility and advocated universal design, “listen, include and respect” guidelines and greater cooperation between government and civil society.

III. Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention

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

31. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin, emphasized that the current session had been strengthening institutional, legal and programmatic frameworks for disability inclusion in the global agenda, addressing ongoing efforts by the international community towards disability-inclusive COVID-19 recovery and building back better. He noted that the use of virtual platforms was increasing accessibility and equalizing opportunities for all. He also described the work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, addressing the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities and developing relevant policy recommendations as part of the Department’s efforts towards creating inclusive, accessible and sustainable environments

32. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, urged States parties to bring persons with disabilities to the forefront of the ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. She described the role of the Office in designing the disability-inclusive development agenda and the launch of a new disability rights strategy.

33. The Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact, Sanda Ojiambo, described the organization’s work in promoting inclusive business models in the workplace, marketplace and community. She highlighted its disability inclusion guide for businesses, designed in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, and its accountability mechanisms.

34. The Director of the International Labour Organization Office for the United Nations, Beate Andrees, enumerated the cooperative efforts of that organization in 2020, including engaging with the private sector through its Global Business and Disability Network. She also provided examples of effective partnerships, such as the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, which had resulted in new models on disability inclusion and data gathering.

35. The Senior Coordinator for Digital Inclusion at the International Telecommunication Union, Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, noted that COVID-19 had exposed the critical need for accessible information and communications technology. In response to the pandemic, the Union had developed many resources, such as accessibility guidelines for policymakers, terms of reference for telehealth and guidelines for web-based remote sign language interpretation, especially for distance learning.

36. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlighted the importance of including persons with disabilities within the United Nations system. He congratulated the United Nations on initiating the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, but called for greater involvement of persons with disabilities, better accessibility and better reasonable accommodation.

37. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities expressed his support for the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and his appreciation to his predecessor for supporting the development of the Strategy at its initial stage. He shared his vision for his future work, focusing on the great global challenges of COVID-19 and climate change, hidden intersectionalities, such as older persons, indigenous persons and prisoners with disabilities, and some specific, often-forgotten issues such as those concerning access to and participation by persons with disabilities in culture activities.

38. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility described her plan of action with activities focusing on children with disabilities, women and girls with disabilities, universal accessibility, ageing, education, policing and mainstreaming the human rights model of disability inclusion. She noted that her office shared its work through accessible educational materials, publications and websites.

39. A civil society representative, Sue Swenson, described how COVID-19 had revealed that the institutional and societal progress made in recent decades was insufficient and did not contribute to building much-needed resilience. She issued a call to action to make COVID-19 response and recovery efforts inclusive, to consult with persons with disabilities and to take full advantage of available data and information systems.

IV. Closure of the session

40. The representatives of Finland, Hungary, Liberia and Singapore, as Vice-Presidents of the Conference, made concluding statements in which they addressed the significance of the Conference and how the session had been successfully concluded owing to the concerted efforts of the Bureau, States parties, the Secretariat and civil society.

41. The President of the Conference made a concluding statement in which he expressed gratitude to the Bureau, all States parties and the Secretariat and agencies, civil society and other partners. He commended the exceptional efforts by and collaboration among all stakeholders that had made the Conference a great success despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. He provided summaries of the key topics of the conference, of each thematic round table and of the first two rounds of elections of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He reaffirmed the significant role of the Conference and how the session had fulfilled its goals: first, to ensure the inclusion of the disability perspective and persons with disabilities in the global agenda; and, second, to provide a unique global platform for building multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks to translating the global commitments into actions on the ground. He reiterated the commitment of his Government to continuing its utmost efforts to strengthen the Conference's status and its relevance, so as to build a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable world.

Annex III

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

1. Asociación Colombiana Síndrome de Down (Asdown) Colombia
 2. Austrian Association Supporting the Blind and Visually Impaired/
Hilfsgemeinschaft der Blinden und Sehschwachen Österreichs
 3. Bangladesh Disabled Development Trust
 4. Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance
 5. Center for Independent Living of Persons with Disabilities, Kathmandu
 6. Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism
 7. Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum
 8. Confederación Plena Inclusión España
 9. Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association
 10. Down Syndrome Albania Foundation
 11. Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth
 12. Fight for Rights
 13. Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations
 14. International Disability and Development Consortium
 15. Korean Disability Forum
 16. Mental Health Europe/Santé mentale Europe
 17. National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People
 18. National Disability & Development Forum
 19. Red Empleo con Apoyo (RECA) Colombia
 20. Special Needs Initiative for Growth
 21. SPOON Foundation
 22. Thailand Association of the Blind
 23. The Donald Beasley Institute, Incorporated
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