



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 Fifteenth session

New York, 14–16 June 2022

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

I. Introduction

1. The fifteenth 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 14 to 16 June 2022.
2. Six meetings were held at the fifteenth session of the Conference. On 14 June, the Conference considered the agenda items on the opening of the session, the adoption of the agenda, the organization of work and election of members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The general debate was held in 5 meetings, including the 1st and 2nd meetings on 14 June, continued at the 3rd and 4th on 15 June, as well as the 6th meeting, on 16 June. Three round tables were held at the 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings, on 15 and 16 June. At its 6th meeting, on 16 June, the Conference considered agenda item 5 (c), “Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention”; item 6, “Decisions by the Conference of States Parties”; and item 7 “Closure of the session”.
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 session

4. The Conference was opened by the Permanent State Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and President of the Conference, Jukka Salovaara.
5. At its 1st meeting, the Conference adopted the provisional agenda (CRPD/CSP/2022/1), agreed on the organization of work for the session and approved the text of its decisions.



6. Pursuant to rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure, and under agenda item 3, 13 new non-governmental organizations were accredited to the Conference (see annex III).

7. Opening statements were made by the President of the Conference; the Secretary-General; the President of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid (Video message); the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Rosemary Kayess; 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; Civil Society Representative and President of the World Blind Union, Martine Abel-Williamson; and Youth Representative of Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Pakistan, Waqar Puri, using the virtual platform.

III. Election of 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 2023: Amalia Eva Gamio Rios (Mexico), Rehab Mohammed Boresli (Kuwait), Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame (Ghana), Markus Schefer (Switzerland), Muhannad Salah al-Azzeh (Jordan), Rosemary Kayess (Australia), Laverne Jacobs (Canada), Miyeon Kim (Republic of Korea) and Alfred Kouadio Kouassi (Côte d'Ivoire).

IV. Matters related to the implementation of the Convention

A. General debate

9. Under agenda item 5 (a), statements were made by 92 States parties, including one regional integration organization (the European Union);¹ five country groups;² and 24 institutions and organizations observing the Conference, including 1 other

¹ Statements were delivered, in chronological order, by: New Zealand, Mexico, Malta, Egypt, European Union, Belgium, Italy, Kenya, Luxembourg, Paraguay, Canada, Andorra, Mauritania, South Africa, Zambia, Iraq, Guyana, Djibouti, Qatar, Ecuador, Morocco, Mongolia, United Arab Emirates, Denmark, Sudan, Ireland, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Türkiye, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Ukraine, Jordan, China, Russian Federation, Portugal, Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Singapore, Poland, Malawi, India, Kyrgyzstan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, Chile, Zimbabwe, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Dominican Republic, Romania, Peru, Namibia, United Republic of Tanzania, Argentina, Belarus, Georgia, Israel, Indonesia, Cambodia, Uruguay, Panama, Finland, Pakistan, Estonia, Tunisia, Slovakia, Viet Nam, Costa Rica, Greece, Algeria, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Austria, Guatemala, Cuba, Nepal, State of Palestine, Ethiopia, Spain, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Japan, Sri Lanka, Australia, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Syrian Arab Republic, Cyprus, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, El Salvador and Yemen.

² Joint statements were delivered by: Honduras on behalf of the LGBTI Core Group; Türkiye on behalf of the MIKTA Group (Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Türkiye and Australia); Mexico on behalf of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities; Ukraine on behalf of a group of States parties; and Philippines on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

international organization,³ 19 non-governmental organizations,⁴ 2 national human rights institutions⁵ and 2 United Nations system entities.⁶ Written statements were also received from two States parties as their contributions to the meeting under the agenda item.⁷

B. Round-table discussions

10. On 15 and 16 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

Innovation and technology advancing disability rights

11. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (i), was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Sarhad Sardar Abdulrahman Fatah, and civil society representative, Moses Serwadda. Presentations were given by five panellists: the Assistive Technology Manager at the University of Ghana and the Chair of the National Advocacy Committee of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations, Alexander Bankole Williams (virtually); the Programs Manager at United Disabled Persons of Kenya, Esther Mkamori (virtually); an official of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies, Colombia, Diana Paola Palma Pardo; an advisor in the Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia, Meelis Joost; and a lawyer, Member of the European Parliament and President of the Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Ádám Kósa.

Round table 2

Economic empowerment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities

12. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (ii), was co-chaired by the Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Libna Elubina Bonilla Alarcón, and civil society representative and the founder, former president and current representative of Fulbrighters with Disabilities, Itto Outini. Presentations were made by five panellists: the Commissioner for Equal Rights for People with Disabilities in the Ministry of Justice, Israel, Dan Rashal; Executive Director of the Nippon Foundation, Japan, Ichiro Kabasawa; an inventor, manager and Chair of the Council of Founders of the Chance for the Blind Foundation, Poland, Marek Kalbarczyk (virtually); the Director of Training, Employment, Operations and Agreements of the ONCE Foundation, Spain, Sabina Lobato; and an entrepreneur, paralympian and Founder of ableMove, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Josh Wintersgill.

³ League of Arab States.

⁴ The International Disability Alliance, the International Disability and Development Consortium, the World Federation of the Deaf, Inclusion International, the Christian Blind Mission (CBM), International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Women Enabled International, CBM Global Disability Inclusion, the European Network on Independent Living, the European Union of the Deaf, Under the Same Sun, Handicap International, Down syndrome Australia, Inclusion Canada, the United Disabled Persons of Kenya, Women with Disabilities Australia, Red de Asistencia Legal y Social, People with Disability Australia, and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

⁵ Human Rights Defender of Armenia and the Public Defender's Office of Georgia (on behalf of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions).

⁶ The United Nations Office for Project Services and the International Labour Organization.

⁷ Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Bangladesh.

Round table 3**Participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience against natural disasters**

13. The round-table discussion, under agenda item 5 (b) (iii), was a hybrid meeting and took place in Conference Room 4 with the virtual platform connection. The round table was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland and Vice-President of the Conference, Mateusz Sakowicz, and civil society representative and Advocacy Director of the International Disability Alliance, Jose Maria Viera. Presentations were made by five panellists: the officer at the University of San Carlos, Guatemala, José Eduardo Curruchich, who oversees accessibility and universal design projects; a lawyer, university lecturer and board member of a bilingual school for the deaf, Japan, Hiroshi Tamon (virtually); the Executive Director of the African Disability Forum, South Africa, Shybe Chalklen (virtually); the President of the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal, Pratima Gurung (virtually); and the General Manager of Nuanua O Le Alofa, Samoa, Mata'afa Fa'atino Utumapu (virtually).

C. Interactive dialogue among States parties, the United Nations system and other stakeholders 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 Deputy Secretary-General, Executive Office of the Secretary General, Amina J. Mohammed (video message); the Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin; Mr. Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Achim Steiner; the Director and Deputy Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, New York, Craig Mokhiber; Ms the Special Representative to the United Nations and Director of the International Labour Organization Office for the United Nations, Beate Andrees; the Senior Coordinator for Digital Inclusion at the International Telecommunication Union, Roxana Widmer-Iliescu; Manager of the Technical Secretariat, Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ola Abualghaib.

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, Rosemary Kayess; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Gerard Quinn; the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes; and civil society representative and a national organization of persons with disabilities Engagement Officer, Inclusion Works Uganda project, Betty Najjemba.

V. Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

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

VI. Closure of the session

17. Under agenda item 7, the President of the Conference announced the composition of the incoming bureau (2023–2024): President, Tunisia (African States);

and Vice-Presidents Greece (Western Europe and others States), Georgia (Eastern European States), Panama (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Sri Lanka (Asia-Pacific States).

18. Remarks were made by the representatives of Guatemala, Iraq, Poland and Zambia, 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 fifteenth session of the Conference of States Parties a success. He then declared the closure of the session.

Annex I

Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

At its fifteenth 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 sixteenth 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 sixteenth session will be held at Headquarters from 13 to 15 June 2023.

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 fifteenth session of the Conference and reiterates its recommendation to the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate support to the Conference at its sixteenth and future sessions.

Decision 3

Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the fifteenth 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 fifteenth session to all States parties and observers.

Annex II

President's summary of the fifteenth 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 remarks, the President of the Conference, Jukka Salovaara, recalled the history since the adoption of the Convention and that of the Conference of States Parties emanating from article 40 of the Convention. As at 14 June 2022, 185 States were parties to the Convention, thus demonstrating the high-level commitment at the global level to the rights of persons with disabilities. He deplored that persons with disabilities often experienced discrimination and were more affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. He noted that the Conference presented a unique opportunity to reflect on lessons learned in addressing the pandemic and to strengthen policies for the full implementation of the Convention in accordance with the theme of the current session. The President was particularly pleased to see that the participation of persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities had played a major role in the processes leading to the adoption and implementation of the Convention, recognizing them as agents of change. Emphasizing that Member States, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector, academia and national human rights institutions all have a role to play to further advance the rights of persons with disabilities and build an inclusive future for all, the President of the Conference commended the United Nations system for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities, especially through the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. Finally, he expressed his hope that the Conference would continue to provide good practices and experiences to further promote accessibility and full inclusion for persons with disabilities.

2. The Secretary-General, in his statement, reflected on the progress achieved. He noted that since the adoption of the Convention, 92 per cent of States parties had adopted disability laws and the percentage of countries with school materials supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities had more than doubled. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had hampered that progress and revealed pre-existing inequities such as unequal access to education, health care and livelihoods. As with other crises, persons with disabilities were the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretary-General reminded the Conference that the Convention and Security Council resolution [2475 \(2019\)](#) called for the equal protection of persons with disabilities. According to the Secretary-General, although technology could promote accessibility, it remained inaccessible in many cases, hence the importance of closing the gap. He called for the development of entrepreneurship to support the access of persons with disabilities to the labour market on equal terms. He also called for enhancing the active participation and leadership of persons with disabilities in climate action given their vulnerability and as a source of knowledge. Although there was still much to be done, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy provided a framework for the United Nations system to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities globally in all aspects of the work of the United Nations, at Headquarters and in the field.

3. In his video message, the President of the of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, Abdullah Shahid, noted that the Convention reflected the shared ambitions of the global community and the changed approaches for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. He noted that although much had

been achieved, persons with disabilities were still among the most marginalized and were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. He urged participants to include persons with disabilities in the post-COVID-19 agenda. Among examples of efforts made, the President of the Assembly mentioned the informal dialogue he had convened on accessibility to United Nations Headquarters. His office also organized a training on increasing accessibility. He explained that persons with disabilities remained disadvantaged in most Sustainable Development Goal target areas, as confirmed by the 2018 United Nations flagship report on disability and development. In response, the Assembly reaffirmed Member States' commitment to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The President of the Assembly urged all States parties to continue to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in policy design and programme implementation, including through improved funding and resources commitments.

4. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Rosemary Kayess, noted that the Convention provided a road map for transforming existing systems to build disability-inclusive societies. That effort required recognizing the right of persons with disabilities as an essential human right and ensuring that systems were in place to guarantee autonomy for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life, from choosing what to eat, to managing personal finances or choosing for whom to vote. She further highlighted the importance of embracing an intersectional approach. To support those efforts, the Committee provided guidance in areas such as legislation, gender equity and advancement of women and girls with disabilities, independent living, and education. Other initiatives of the Committee included its eighth general comment on the right to work and employment, and the guidelines on deinstitutionalization. She expressed her wish to see gender parity maintained in the composition of the Committee, and the continued leadership of persons with disabilities following the election of Committee members.

5. The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Gerard Quinn, recalled the drafting process that led to the Convention. Looking ahead, he identified trends to watch for, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflicts and the rise of artificial intelligence. Without consistent effort, they threatened the progress made by the Convention. Mistakes were made in the early apprehension of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as institutionalization which heightened risks for persons with disabilities. The Special Rapporteur emphasized that wars around the globe continued to affect persons with disabilities disproportionately, hence the need to make international humanitarian law norms sensitive to their particular protection. Even though that process had started, he highlighted the need to establish mechanisms to guarantee accountability. He also called for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes including at the United Nations.

6. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, highlighted the resilience of persons with disabilities during the pandemic, especially in countries where persons with disabilities and their organizations worked in participatory forums with policymakers. She also mentioned the Global Disability Summit co-organized by the Governments of Norway and Ghana and the International Disability Alliance. More than 1,200 commitments were made at the Summit, by many participating States and major stakeholders. The Special Envoy called for technology to be made available to persons with disabilities. She expressed her wish for organizations of persons with disabilities to participate in the co-creation of a global digital compact during the Summit of the Future that would be held the following year and called on States and the private sector to contribute to that endeavour. She further highlighted entrepreneurship as a means to address issues

of inequality, provided that persons with disabilities could access credit institutions. She emphasized accountability mechanisms contained in global instruments such as the Convention, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development. She insisted upon inclusive education, in reference to the Transforming Education Summit to be held during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, and she also shared a video showcasing an awareness-raising campaign with students with disabilities.

7. In her statement, the President of the World Blind Union, Martine Abel-Williamson, introduced her organization. She stated that the pandemic had exacerbated existing inequalities and heightened the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, as evidenced by the deterioration of support systems and reduced access to services. She presented a global study undertaken by the World Blind Union which showed that blind and partially sighted individuals experienced loss of employment as well as challenging access to public transportation and health care systems. According to the study, some measures related to COVID-19, such as distance markers or contactless payments, were not inclusive of persons who were blind. That demonstrated the need to include persons with disabilities in the design of such solutions, following the principle of “nothing about us without us.” Nevertheless, she considered the pandemic to be an opportunity to build back better. Beyond the Conference, other frameworks such as the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, provided avenues for greater inclusion.

8. A youth representative of Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Pakistan, Waqar Puri, made his remarks using the virtual platform. He emphasized issues including delays in providing full legal identities, rights and support for persons with disabilities to live independently in the community, especially in some developing countries. He indicated that persons with psychosocial disabilities were often not sufficiently involved in the design of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. In certain countries, organizations of persons with psychosocial disabilities did not exist, which limited their ability to be represented and claim their identity. He further condemned the institutionalization of persons with psychosocial disabilities. He called for investment in community support to guarantee the well-being and inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities. He commended the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for preparing the draft guidelines on deinstitutionalization.

Round-table discussions

Round table 1

Innovation and technology advancing disability rights

9. The first round-table discussion was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq and Vice-President of the Conference, Sarhad Sardar Abdulrahman Fatah, and civil society representative, Moses Serwadda. In his opening remarks, the Vice-President acknowledged the power of technology and innovation to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, should they be designed in an inclusive manner and if regulation guaranteed equal access. Governments and all stakeholders needed to ensure that education and training were provided to persons with disabilities so that they could utilize new technologies to their full potential. It was also important that policies encourage and support investment for more development of inclusive and accessible technologies and their availability for all persons with disabilities in need. He then raised several questions to guide the discussion.

10. The Assistive Technology Manager at the University of Ghana and the Chairperson of the National Advocacy Committee of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations, Alexander Bankole Williams, focused on the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in remote learning systems. He identified challenges to inclusive remote learning systems such as defective visual platforms, the absence of sign language or captions and the high prices of electronic devices. To address such challenges, he made recommendations. To ensure inclusiveness, developers should keep persons with disabilities as the main target audience; policies must be put in place for teachers/instructors to ensure access to information for persons with disabilities; and accessible content must be produced on the internet so that persons with disabilities can access information independently.

11. The Programs Manager at United Disabled Persons of Kenya, Esther Mkamori, listed several barriers to digital inclusion in Kenya. Persons with disabilities faced difficulties accessing job platforms due to insufficient digital skills training. Other barriers such as complex screening processes, inaccessible help desks, the requirement of university diplomas, inadequate infrastructure, financial barriers, lack of assistive technologies and lack of inclusive programs had kept persons with disabilities excluded. She therefore advocated for the removal of such barriers to instead focus on the aptitudes and attitudes of the learners with disabilities. She also deemed it essential to provide persons with disabilities with the necessary skills and qualifications to compete in the job market. Furthermore, she suggested adjustments such as flexible hours and alternative learning methods, rendering interviews and application processes accessible, and lowering the cost of devices, especially assistive devices, for persons with disabilities. In terms of coordination, she suggested that Governments, non-governmental organizations, donor organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities work together towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

12. An official of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies, Colombia, Diana Paola Palma Pardo, underscored the need to use technology to create a more inclusive environment. Public policy should guarantee that persons with disabilities had equal opportunities, that training was available to provide digital skills, that digital content was produced in accessible formats and that more entertainment was made accessible for persons with disabilities. She highlighted the progress made by Colombia thanks to the strengthening of its legal framework. The Government of Colombia had strengthened its policies to develop opportunities for persons with disabilities. For example, the Con Sentidos TIC programme allowed people to communicate through a sign language interpreter while the ConVerTIC project provided screen reading software for free.

13. In his presentation, an adviser in the Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia, Meelis Joost, noted that digitalization had improved accessibility worldwide, including in processes such as voting. In Estonia, the Government focused on 12 areas of improvement including environment, infrastructure, education and e-services. During the COVID-19 crisis, remote medical help was made available. In order for such efforts, as well as other initiatives such as robotized delivery systems, to keep functioning, all prerequisite infrastructure must be kept in good working order. In addition, the Government collected statistics to inform its policies. Cultural products such as films had been made more accessible. Similarly, singing and dancing events were made more accessible.

14. A lawyer, Member of the European Parliament and President of the Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Ádám Kósa, highlighted the ambivalent nature of digital progress. The telephone, for example, widened the gap for deaf people as they could not use it. However, mobile phones and services such as short message service helped deaf people to communicate with others. Furthermore, such

services now included additional accessibility features. He stated that the Convention provided a strong framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, along with guidelines for the implementation of its articles. He particularly highlighted article 9 on accessibility, article 20 on mobility, article 21 on freedom of expression, article 24 on inclusive education, article 26 on rehabilitation and article 29 on participation in policymaking. Supporting the implementation of those articles through the development of technology raised the question of whether technology must be regulated by the Government or be left to the market. He further provided examples such as the European Accessibility Act which removed barriers to certain digital products including computers, operating systems, smartphones, e-books, television and e-commerce devices. He stated that innovation had been benefitting persons with disabilities and society as a whole.

15. During the interactive discussion segment of the round table, interventions were made by Iraq, Egypt, El Salvador, the European Union, Mexico, Denmark, Switzerland, Ukraine, Spain, Brazil and Colombia, and representatives of the World Blind Union, Sense International, as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Round table 2

Economic empowerment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities

16. The round-table discussion was co-chaired by the Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Libna Elubina Bonilla Alarcón, and civil society representative and the founder, former president and current representative of Fulbrighters with Disabilities, Itto Outini.

17. The Vice-President made introductory remarks, emphasizing the importance of the round table as an opportunity to discuss the key issues and challenges that people with disabilities faced at work. She encouraged participants to share good practices and experiences to improve access to the labour market and to learn how to foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem for persons with disabilities.

18. The Commissioner for Equal Rights for People with Disabilities in the Ministry of Justice, Israel, Dan Rashal, discussed the advantages (financial independence, remote work option, flexibility in work fields, possibilities, career development, confidence with a sense of contribution to the society) and challenges (knowledge and physical barriers, lack of accessible business services resources) for increasing entrepreneurship and self-employment of persons with disabilities. He recommended the provision of well-designed mentoring programmes, personalized training schemes and financial assistance.

19. The Executive Director of the Nippon Foundation, Japan, Ichiro Kabasawa, stressed the importance of making the change in the mainstream as he witnessed many graduates with disabilities failed to secure jobs or were compelled to resign due to lack of proper support. The initiative, Valuable 500, created jobs for people with disabilities in the world's largest corporations. He concluded that further change would be needed on the corporate side to promote the social participation of people with disabilities.

20. An inventor, manager and Chair of the Council of Founders of the Chance for the Blind Foundation, Poland, Marek Kalbarczyk, emphasized the issue of accessibility based on his experience as a blind person. Despite social integration efforts, people with disabilities could not access many governmental, educational and social institutions. He pointed out several devices that were available for partially sighted persons, which would improve the issue of access, and that more financial assistance should be available for them to acquire those devices.

21. The Director of Training, Employment, Operations and Agreements of the ONCE Foundation, Spain, Sabina Lobato, addressed the shift in the field of entrepreneurship to technology-based digital initiatives, which she pointed out as key to improving the sustainability of the businesses run by people with disabilities. She emphasized that in addition to practical training, funding and improving accessibility, it was crucial to make the talent and capabilities of people with disabilities visible to the public.

22. An entrepreneur, paralympian and Founder of Able Move, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Josh Wintersgill, discussed the challenges faced by people with disabilities when seeking employment and becoming entrepreneurs. Speaking from his experience, he remarked that Change 100, a programme to bridge the employment gap for youth with disabilities, stood out as a successful example of giving confidence and providing a safe environment for employers. For his transition from an employee to an entrepreneur, schemes such as the Stelios Awards for Disabled Entrepreneurs and Access to Work were very effective.

23. Following the panellists' presentations, Canada, China, Egypt, the World Blind Union, Switzerland, Mexico, the European Union, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), El Salvador, Panama, Spain, Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Belarus, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Ukraine and the Gambia took the floor for questions and comments. The discussion centred around the role of Governments and businesses, and ongoing support measures for people with disabilities, such as the Disability Employment Package, which would be launched by the European Commission in September 2022. Also, in their statements, China emphasized the use of big data and the internet to empower people with disabilities; Switzerland remarked that promoting entrepreneurship could complement labour market integration activities but not replace them; and the World Blind Union stated that it would be a question of will, which should improve the situation, because the solutions such as assistive technology, initiatives, schemes and best practice were well known.

Round table 3

Participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience against natural disasters

24. The third round-table discussion was co-chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations and Vice-President of the Conference, Mateusz Sakowicz, and civil society representative and Advocacy Director of the International Disability Alliance, Jose Maria Viera.

25. At the University of San Carlos, Guatemala, José Eduardo Curruchich, who oversees accessibility and universal design projects, highlighted the need to include persons with disabilities in risk management plans prior to disaster events. He indicated that developing countries sometimes lacked planning in risk management and that persons with disabilities lacked information on how to react during such events. He explained that disaster management was closely linked with accessibility and universal design. Universal design without disaster management could increase risks for persons with disabilities. He suggested that civil society organizations should play a proactive role in working with Governments to design disaster response plans, as was done in Guatemala. Though universal design may be costly, certain practical and cost-effective solutions could be brought forth by organizations of persons with disabilities, such as locating persons with disabilities on ground rather than upper floors.

26. The Executive Director of the African Disability Forum, South Africa, Shybe Chalklen, emphasized that persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected

by climate change and natural disasters. He highlighted countries' insufficient preparedness and responses, resulting from lack of training and resources. He regretted that relief actions of international organizations were often time-bound and project-restricted. He recommended that persons with disabilities be put at the centre of policymaking processes, in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, as they knew the location and the needs of local people with disabilities. He requested that countries train personnel working in disaster risk reduction, and collect disaggregated data during disaster risk reduction planning.

27. The General Manager of Nuanua O Le Alofa, Samoa, Mata'afa Fa'atino Utumapu, presented her work advocating inclusive disaster risk reduction. Through that work, sign language interpretation during a humanitarian emergency was introduced for the first time in the Prime Minister's national address during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. According to research conducted by her non-governmental organization, 25 per cent of the 700 persons with disabilities surveyed were not able to access the handwashing stations during the pandemic. She called for action to protect persons with disabilities during times of disaster, to close gaps in employment, education and access to justice, through collaboration between development partners, global and regional advocacy organizations, national Governments and community stakeholders.

28. A lawyer, university lecturer and board member of a bilingual school for the deaf, Japan, Hiroshi Tamon, recalled the impact of previous disasters on persons with disabilities including both physical and psychological trauma. He stated that the lack of access to information was a major cause of vulnerability. He indicated that the Government of Japan amended the Basic Act on Disaster Countermeasures in 2013, which required regional/local governments to prepare lists of persons in need of assistance, and tailored evacuation plans for each person with a disability. However, there were difficulties in its implementation at the regional and local levels. During the pandemic, the need for such actions increased as persons with disabilities lacked information regarding test locations and treatment options. He called for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the policymaking process and engagement with regional and local governments.

29. The President of the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal, Pratima Gurung, was unable to connect to the virtual meeting platform and deliver her presentation.

30. In the interactive discussion following the presentations, statements were made by representatives of Kenya, Fiji, Panama, Mexico, Iraq, Denmark, Finland, Ecuador, Ukraine, Jamaica, Egypt, China, Barbados, El Salvador, South Africa, ILO, the United Nations Office for Project Services, Transforming Communities for Inclusion, Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso.

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

Building disability-inclusive and participatory societies in the COVID-19 context and beyond

Part 1: United Nations entities

31. The President of the Conference noted that discrimination against persons with disabilities was made more apparent by the pandemic. But the pandemic also led Governments and international organizations to increase their efforts to leave no one behind. He encouraged participants to seize that momentum to work towards more inclusive societies and indicated that the interactive dialogue would allow them to share experiences.

32. In a video message, the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, stated that disability inclusion was essential to leave no one behind. She noted that in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, United Nations entities and country teams were proactively integrating disability inclusion into strategic plans and working with Governments to strengthen data on persons with disabilities, leading to more than a third of the cooperation frameworks with Governments now explicitly addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. The representation of persons with disabilities was also increasing among staff members. In order to do more, the Deputy Secretary-General called on the leadership of the women, men, boys and girls with disabilities and their representative organizations to provide guidance.

33. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin, highlighted the contributions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to the implantation of the Convention. The Department supported the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention. As the Secretariat for the Conference, the Department also contributed to the inclusion of its work in other forums such as the Commission for Social Development, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Department had been conducting studies, including in response to General Assembly resolutions [74/144](#) and [75/154](#). The Department was working towards the update of the flagship report on disability and had launched a website to showcase good practices and national plans and strategies for data collection and disaggregation, including by disability status. The Department also led the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy working group on data and directly supported project implementation through capacity-building, as well as the funding of projects through the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability.

34. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Achim Steiner, emphasized how the triple crisis of food, fuel and finance increased poverty levels for persons with disabilities. He reaffirmed the full commitment of UNDP to the Convention, as exemplified by its actions. In Egypt for example, UNDP developed the first artificial intelligence sign language chat bot in Africa and the Middle East, allowing persons with hearing disabilities to test for COVID-19 symptoms and receive health guidance. In addition, UNDP increased inclusion internally through initiatives such as its programme for young professionals with disabilities, and the funding mechanism to cover reasonable accommodation costs for UNDP employees with disabilities. In partnership with the Secretariat, UNDP also launched an online course to increase knowledge on disability inclusion within the organization. The Administrator insisted on the importance of collaboration, including through the Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the Inter-Agency Support Group. He also indicated that the UNDP strategic plan, 2022–2025, was fully in the line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

35. The Director and Deputy Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, New York, Craig Mokhiber, emphasized the importance of community-based support, especially towards older persons. The pressure on health care systems grew along with the proportion of older persons. It was therefore important to adopt a human rights-based approach. He insisted on the need to increase access to assistive technology, accessible transportation, housing and community-based services. He urged partners in the international community to double efforts to include disability rights perspectives in their care and support initiatives at the global level. He concluded with a tribute to Gábor Gombos, a Committee member who had recently passed away.

36. The Special Representative to the United Nations and Director of the ILO Office for the United Nations, Beate Andrees, focused on the opportunities that the digital economy offered persons with disabilities. To reap its full benefit, training institutions

must heed the needs of persons with disabilities, while public and private sector employers must enhance digital accessibility. To support those efforts, ILO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) launched a joint initiative to make online recruitment systems more accessible. Noting with concern that persons with disabilities were more likely to work in the informal sector, she also insisted on the importance of formalization. Regarding social security, the ILO, UNICEF and the International Disability Alliance, with funding provided by the Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, had been working for the past three years to foster a better understanding of social protection for promoting formal employment. Furthermore, the ILO statistics department had published more than 20 indicators describing the gaps in the labour market between persons with and without disabilities.

37. The Manager of the Technical Secretariat, Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ola Abualghaib, stated that since it was established, the Partnership had invested more than \$50 million in almost 60 countries. The multi-donor Partnership Fund provided support to 47 countries, including through four multi-country programmes and four global initiatives addressing the overarching issues and needs of persons with disabilities. She acknowledged the important role of civil society organizations and thanked the Partnership's donors. The programme launched in Ukraine in May 2022 to ensure persons with disabilities were taken into account in humanitarian action would also inform the Partnership's future work supporting countries in crisis.

38. The Senior Coordinator for Digital Inclusion at ITU, Roxana Widmer-Iliescu, using the virtual platform, presented on the achievements of ITU. ITU had been raising awareness, including through its information and communications technology (ICT) accessible for all programme, through which it had trained 2,000 decision makers and stakeholders using over 60 tools and resources on ICT Accessibility. It also trained 500 ITU staff members. The Senior Coordinator emphasized the importance of collaboration. ITU worked with ILO to produce a guidebook on accessibility for online job application and recruitment systems. With the World Health Organization, it had also developed global standards on accessibility for telehealth services.

39. In the interactive segment of the discussion, statements were made by representatives of South Africa, China, Mexico and Chad.

Part 2: Mandate and other stakeholders

40. The Chair of the Committee noted the gender parity reflected in the newly elected Committee. She commended the Conference for discussing important issues, including in the side events where the intersectional perspectives on women with disabilities, the LGBTQI community and indigenous peoples were explored, even though there remained much to be done. She urged Member States and participants to act upon all the valuable information shared during the Conference.

41. The Special Rapporteur indicated that technology must be balanced with regulations to combat ageism and ableism. He underscored that climate change actions and relevant strategies should be sensitive to the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities. He also recognized persons with disabilities as agents of economic development and entrepreneurs.

42. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy presented her upcoming campaign for people with disabilities and inclusive policing of people with disabilities. She also indicated that she was working with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to develop a resolution on women with disabilities.

43. National organizations of persons with disabilities Engagement Officer, Inclusion Works Uganda project, Betty Najjemba, called for persons with disabilities to be involved in planning and programming so that they could help to remove the barriers that they faced. Among persons with disabilities, she indicated that persons with psychosocial disabilities, deafblind people and persons with intellectual disabilities were the furthest left behind. They should all be considered when solutions were designed.

44. Following those presentations, statements were made by representatives of the Russian Federation, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Mauritania, Namibia, the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Japan, Sri Lanka, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Australia, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, the Syrian Arab Republic, Cyprus, Venezuela, Brazil, El Salvador and Yemen.

Closure of the session

45. During the same meeting, the President of the Conference announced the composition of the incoming bureau-elect (2023–2024): President, Tunisia (African States); and Vice-Presidents, Greece (Western Europe and others States), Georgia (Eastern European States), Panama (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Sri Lanka (Asia-Pacific States).

46. Under agenda item 7, remarks were made by the representatives of Guatemala, Iraq, Poland and Zambia, in their capacity as Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

47. The President, in his closing statement, expressed his appreciation to all States parties and to the Secretariat as well as civil society partners for their cooperation and strong support in making the fifteenth session of the Conference of States Parties a success. He acknowledged that the fifteenth session had once again showcased the importance and value of the Conference as a United Nations mechanism to advance the rights of and inclusive development for persons with disabilities. He emphasized that the Conference was a unique platform for global partnerships and helped Governments, development practitioners, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector to come together and exchange innovative ideas, experience and practical solutions.

48. The President closed the session at 6.12 p.m. on 16 June 2022.

Annex III

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

1. Federação Nacional das Apaes/National Federation of Parents and Friends of People with Intellectual Disabilities Associations of Brazil
 2. Fordham Research Consortium on Disability
 3. WORLD Policy Analysis Center
 4. She Writes Woman Mental Health Initiative
 5. Asociación por los Derechos Civiles (ADC)
 6. FIU Embrace – Center for Advancing Inclusive Communities
 7. Consortium CHACDD
 8. Disability Rights Movement (DRIM)
 9. AboutFace Craniofacial Family Society (AboutFace)
 10. Face Equality International
 11. ARCH Disability Law Centre
 12. Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
 13. Associazione Italiana Elettrosensibili
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