

National Statement of Finland

16th Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention  
on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

General Debate

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Statement by

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Honoured representatives,

Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

We would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres as well as the Secretariat for their efforts in organizing this Conference and for their determined work in bringing the rights of persons with disabilities to the core of the UN system.

Finland wants to be a valuable partner in this work and continue to strongly promote the rights of persons with disabilities, as we did during our Presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. We will continue our advocacy work also in other UN forums and beyond, including as a member of the UN Human Rights Council.

We have made a commitment to anchor our policies firmly in the rights of persons with disabilities, namely through making CRPD-compliant policies, standards and guidance both nationally and internationally. Promotion of the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities is a long-standing priority in Finland's human rights based foreign and security policy. Disability inclusion continues to be a cross-cutting objective in our development cooperation and humanitarian assistance work. Today, I will touch on three points; the Finnish National Action Plan on the CRPD, our side event this year and the important role of OPDs.

Currently, Finland is finalizing its report on the second National Action Plan on the CRPD. The Action Plan set out 110 measures for the years 2020-2023 to promote the implementation of the Convention. The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has carried out a preliminary assessment of the implementation of the Action Plan: despite the impacts of global events, 80 measures have been fully, and 24 partly implemented. It is, therefore, safe to say, that many targets have been achieved, and the bar for the next National Action Plan has been raised. Finland welcomes this year's subthemes, and recognizes the significance and topicality of them, including the right to sexual life of persons with disabilities.

In Finland, new National Criteria for the Provision of Assistive Devices for Medical Rehabilitation were published this year. For the first time, these included also criteria for receiving assistive devices for sexual life. These kind of changes and concrete measures are important also for their symbolic weight - bringing us closer to a future where persons with disabilities' right to sexual life is globally and self-evidently recognized.

Mr. President,

It is essential to address the grave impact that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to have on persons with disabilities in the conflict areas. Persons with disabilities bear often a disproportionate impact of armed conflicts. Moreover, women and girls with disabilities face increased risks in military operations. Finland's side-event this year, "Placing disability at 'the heart' of recovery plans in Ukraine", seeks ways and means to realize the human rights for all, including persons with disabilities, in exceptional circumstances and in risk situations.

Lastly, I would like to note, that OPDs do invaluable work, but the message from the field is, that we are not yet using this work to its fullest potential. As we all know, persons with disabilities are the best experts to give advice on their inclusion. I would, therefore, like to encourage all of us to consider, how we could better promote their voices and turn it into action.

Thank you.