



**Statement by Mr. Rati IONATAMISHVILI, Member of the Parliament of Georgia  
at the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of State Parties  
to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
New York, 13 June 2023**

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address you on behalf of Georgia today and share with you the achievements and challenges of my country with regard to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. We are happy that Georgia for the first time has been elected as a vice chair of the bureau of the CRPD COSP for the next 2 years and we are ready to use this opportunity in order to further advance the protection of the rights of the PWDs on the international level.

Today, 20% of the territory of my country is occupied by the Russian Federation, where there is a severe humanitarian situation. Due to the occupation, we do not have the opportunity to support disabled people living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. We are implementing all available measures to address human rights abuses in the occupied regions, including by actively raising the issue on the international agenda. Georgia won several cases against the Russian Federation in the European Court of Human Rights. Russia has been assigned responsibility for the grave human rights violations in the occupied territories, including the rights of people with disabilities.

Occupation doubly harms the situation of disabled people, especially under-represented Groups of PwDs. Therefore, we must unite our efforts against the occupation, the pain and harmful consequences of which are felt by the disabled people living in Georgia and Ukraine today due to Russian aggression.

In March 2023, Georgia presented the initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the UN office in Geneva, and we received the first recommendations. These recommendations are an action plan for our country, the implementation of which will not only protect disabled people but also ensure Georgia's progress on the path of European integration. Georgian disabled people play the biggest role in the path of Georgia's European integration and their voice must be heard.

The main challenges facing us today are the reproductive and sexual health of women and girls with disabilities, the protection of the right to accessibility, especially digital and web accessibility, and the protection of the rights of those at risk of cross-discrimination, including LGBTQ persons.

Since the restoration of independence, we have done a lot to the global security processes, when together with NATO, Georgian soldiers maintained world peace in the hotspots of the world. We have 300 servicemen wounded in international missions. Today Most of these soldiers are para-athletes and within the Paralympic Movement, they change the world for the better.

Finally, June 14 is the Day of Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Georgia. On this day, we do not congratulate each other but focus on problematic issues, because we have the obligation to create equal opportunities for disabled people every day and at all levels, and we must not forget that effective protection of the rights of disabled people also ensures effective protection of the interests of other vulnerable groups.

Thank you.