

**Joint Statement of the Group of Countries for the General Debate
16th Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of
Persons with Disabilities**

**Delivered by Mr. Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson,
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Dear President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of a cross-regional group of 66 countries: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Capo Verde, Canada, Columbia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czeckia, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor Leste, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay.

I would like to sincerely thank the Bureau for selecting equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities as one of the Conference sub-themes. This is a historic occasion, as this is the first time sexual and reproductive health and rights are discussed at the Conference Round Table.

Persons with disabilities have the same rights as all other persons, including the rights to education and health, and therefore to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Yet they continue to face discrimination and exclusion in realizing

these rights. Persons with disabilities face barriers in accessing information about sexual and reproductive health and services. They face physical, environmental and attitudinal barriers to accessibility of health services, facilities, equipment and transportation. Pervasive stigma, harmful stereotypes and social norms and prejudice cause structural and systemic discrimination of persons with disabilities, putting them at risk of serious human rights violations.

Persons with disabilities face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including due to their disability, but also based on their gender, age, race, and ethnicity. As a result, especially women and girls with disabilities are often prevented from making informed decisions about many aspects of their lives, are perceived as unfit to be parents, and also face increased risk for sexual and gender based violence, abuse and exploitation.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, including equal access to sexual and reproductive health services. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women further protects the rights of women and girls with disabilities to sexual and reproductive health. States Parties are obliged to take measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services including health facilities. In this regard, we want to underline that access and accessibility of information and education on SRH and services, and the fulfillment of related rights, are crucial.

Sexual and reproductive health is at the core of sustainable development, and of the implementation of the CRPD through inclusive development for and with

persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the Agenda 2030 sets clear targets for leaving no one behind and achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health services for all.

Discriminatory and harmful laws, policies and practices must be eliminated. States parties must meet their obligations under the Convention, and take proactive measures to ensure that all persons with disabilities have equal access to sexual and reproductive health and education.

Advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights of persons with disabilities at this critical Conference is a welcome step. But we must do more. We must ensure that these rights are advanced more broadly in the normative work of the United Nations. To do this, we can take advantage of, and continue developing innovative accessible technologies and inclusive solutions to ensure that no one is left behind. Most importantly, we must meaningfully engage with all persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, particularly women and girls with disabilities, including creating opportunities for them to serve in key leadership roles at all levels in order to ensure that decisions are informed by their expertise, insight and experience.

Thank you.