

**Statement**  
**by Mr. Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson,**  
**Minister of Social Affairs and Labour of Iceland,**  
**the 16th Conference of State Parties (COSP16) to the**  
**Conference on the rights of persons with disabilities**

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, people of all genders.

Persons with disabilities do not enjoy equal human rights to others. This is true all over the world.

This is sad. This is unacceptable. This needs to change.

We, the member states, play a critical role here.

The biggest challenge remains fighting disability stigma and discrimination.

- We need to ask ourselves critical questions about our own attitudes.
- Think about the words we use.
- Be supportive.
- Educate ourselves.
- Be open to knowledge.
- Spread positivity.
- Tell others about success stories.

Let's not wait for others to make change. Let's be the change ourselves.

The Icelandic government has put matters of people with disabilities high on its political agenda.

First, In Iceland, many of us have been waiting impatiently for enactment of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into national legislation, as it was already ratified in 2016. This is now to take place in January 2025.

Second, another important step in implementing the Convention in Iceland will be taken in January next year, with the establishment of an independent human rights foundation, in accordance with the Paris Principles. Yesterday, a draft bill of law on the matter was introduced for public consultation.

Third, since October last year, we have been working on forming a national implementation plan for the Convention, in active collaboration with the Association of Municipalities as well as various NGOs. At this point in our process, we have collaborated on projects and ideas to bridge the gap between the Convention and today's reality.

Fourth, in conjunction to the national implementation plan, we have already started to make some radical changes, including the expansion of the labor market to include more varied employment opportunities.

And fifth, we are currently working on a reformation of the disability pension scheme to increase incentives for more active involvement on the labour market as well as in society at large, with the aim of improving the standard of living for people with disabilities.

Last, but not least. Let's make sure that persons with disabilities are not left behind as we look towards new challenges, such as digitalization, impacts of climate change and development of our labour markets.

I urge member states to show true leadership in tackling today's and tomorrow's challenges.

Thank you.