

**Viceministrės Justinos Jakštienės pasisakymas JT Neįgaliųjų teisių konferencijos debatuose
apie Konvencijos įgyvendinimo klausimus
Niujorkas, birželio 13 d.**

Mr./Madam Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak in this debate.

I would like to express Lithuania's solidarity with Ukraine, which has been engaged in a year and a half-long war caused by Russia. I am proud of the solidarity shown by the Lithuanian citizens, the public sector, and non-governmental organizations in supporting and assisting the Ukrainian people who have fled the conflict. Together, we tirelessly provide support and assistance to help them settle down and create a safe life in Lithuania.

We place special emphasis on supporting Ukrainians with disabilities who have sought refuge from the war. Our goal is to ensure that their situation and opportunities for a fulfilling life are no different from those of Lithuanian citizens with disabilities. Firstly, the procedures for determining disability are the same for Ukrainians as they are for Lithuanian citizens. Additionally, if needed, we offer technical assistance tools for mobility, sight, hearing, communication, and other sensory needs. Social services, personal assistant support, housing adaptations, and sign language interpreters are also available to them.

Turning to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, Lithuania places great importance on improving the daily lives of people with disabilities, promoting their participation in society, and ensuring their full inclusion. This year, amendments proposed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour have entered into force, providing broader opportunities for people with disabilities to actively participate in the labour market. We also assist employers in recruiting and retaining employees who acquire disabilities. Preventive measures, such as accompanying assistance, workplace adaptations, work environment support, and the aid of work assistants, facilitate the employment of people with disabilities in the open market.

Disability reform is a current topic of focus, with anticipated changes coming into force at the beginning of next year. These positive changes are expected to impact the daily and public lives of over 200 thousand people with disabilities, guaranteeing their rights and equal opportunities in all aspects of life. The reform will enhance the quality of disability assessments, provide targeted support, improve access to services and assistance, expedite the provision of personalized support, and make public

information more accessible to everyone. The influence of medical criteria on disability assessments will be reduced, giving more consideration to individual needs and environmental obstacles. Various areas, including mobility, self-care, communication, and daily activities, will be evaluated to determine an individual's need for assistance.

Another crucial aspect is the accessibility of information. As part of the ongoing reform, people with disabilities, including those with vision or hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, will have the right to receive information through communication means of their choice, e.g. in easy-to-read or sign language format. This will enhance their independence and ease their daily lives.

Starting from 2024, state and municipal institutions will be obligated to provide information to individuals with disabilities in a manner that is acceptable and comprehensible to them. This may include using Lithuanian sign language, easy-to-read languages, Braille, and other alternative forms. The right to receive information in a language that is understandable is a fundamental human right.

Mr./Madam Chair,

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that on May 28th, we celebrated the International Day of Easy-to-Read Language. Easy-to-read is a method created by experts that facilitates accessibility of information in written text for people with reading, comprehension, intellectual, or psychosocial disabilities. Easy-to-read texts, due to their simple language and clear structure, are also highly suitable for seniors, children, foreign language learners, and others. Easy-to-read is particularly important in the context of our aging population.

Starting from 2024, with the implementation of amendments to the Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, Lithuania will become one of the first countries in Europe and the world to legally establish the concept of "easy-to-read" in its legal system. It will also stipulate that state and municipal institutions and organizations must recognize and provide public information in an easily understandable manner, free of charge, according to the chosen accessible communication method of persons with disabilities.

Thank you for your attention.