

OPENING REMARKS

I wish to express my thanks to the Bureau of the COSP for the invitation to speak at the opening. It is my pleasure to address you as the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the COSP provides an opportunity to the United Nations, States, organizations of persons with disabilities, Civil Society Organizations, and other relevant partners to strengthen efforts to build societies that are more inclusive and accomplish the goal of leaving no one behind. We welcome the overarching theme **“Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: achievements and challenges”**. To successfully achieve this, it will be necessary to replace the existing welfare and medical approaches with the human rights model of disability that is embedded in the Convention.

186 ratifications to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reflect a strong commitment of States Parties to our Convention. The Committee congratulates the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his office, for developing the campaign aimed at reaching the universal ratification of the UNCRPD and its Optional Protocol. We encourage Member States who have not yet ratified, to advance in their ratification to foster equality, autonomy, freedom and dignity for all.

States Parties to the Convention should ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are addressed in the negotiations of the Post-2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the 2023 SDG Summit. Particularly, that the human rights model of disability is fully included and that the 2030 Agenda recognizes persons with disabilities as subjects of change and not merely recipients of services. This is an opportunity to emphasize the transformation of services in society from institutional care to community-based support. The call for action in the Political Declaration should refer to inclusive care and support systems based on human rights. A key transformative action that would include us, persons with disabilities, include the provision of inclusive public services, ensure decent work for persons with disabilities in the open labour market and an effective social protection system.

We acknowledge the achievements at the international level, including addressing the situation of persons with disabilities in the Voluntary National Reviews for the High-Level Political Forum, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Security Council Resolution 2475 on the protection of persons with disabilities in conflict, the General Assembly Resolution 77/240 on promoting and mainstreaming easy-to-understand communication for accessibility for persons with disabilities (A/RES/77/240), and the Human Rights Council Resolution on mental health (A/HRC/43/L.19). However, the Committee is concerned about other initiatives for example:

- a) on mental health which is not compliant with the Convention. We, therefore, urge States to implement community-based mental health services with respect to the autonomy and will and preferences of all persons, and without coercion.

- b) the lack of understanding by some women with cognitive and/or communication disability during sexual assault where their communication can wrongly be perceived as their consent.

Notable also is the progress being made in many States Parties, including legislation and strategies to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, but, overall, there is a long way to go. After having held more than 100 dialogues with States Parties, the Committee insists on the importance of the active involvement of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations, including those of women and girls with disabilities in public decision-making processes and harmonization efforts.

Concerning sub-theme 1, the Committee urges States Parties to prohibit harmful practices, including forced sterilization, forced abortion, and forced contraception. The Committee also emphasizes that States should ensure the accessibility and availability of sexual and reproductive health services, information, equipment and facilities, in particular for women and girls with disabilities; and train health professionals to respect the rights of persons with disabilities to make choices and decide over their own bodies and sexuality on an equal basis with others.

In relation to the sub-theme 2, the Committee calls States Parties to ensure the accessibility and affordability of assistive devices and technologies; provide financial and capacity support for local enterprises to manufacture aids for the local market; and allocate adequate funding to overcome the digital gap and ensure access to information and communications technology for all persons with disabilities.

And for sub-theme 3, the Committee urges States Parties to address multiple and intersectional discrimination against persons with disabilities, including by adopting anti-discrimination legislation and combating disability stigma and stereotypes; and adopt strategies to empower under-represented persons with disabilities, including by increasing disaggregated data to identify barriers to the implementation of their rights.

The Committee has General Comments to provide guidance to States about the provisions in the Convention including; General Comments No. 3 on women and girls with disabilities, No. 5 on the right to live independently and being included in the community, No. 6 on equality and non-discrimination, No. 7 on participation of persons with disabilities, No-8 on work and employment as well as its Guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies.

I acknowledge the ongoing discussion on the care economy and duty of care and call upon States Parties to take concrete steps towards establishing support and care systems that are gender-responsive and disability-inclusive. It requires recognizing persons with disabilities as autonomous agents rather than care recipients.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you during this Conference and in the various side events. I observe, however, that the requirement to have a UN agency or a State Party sponsor side events and the requirement to have side events fully in person has posed challenges to Civil Society this year. His Excellency President of the Conference and members

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of the Bureau, we are aware of your efforts to ensure the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in this crucial forum. We hope that the CoSP and its Secretariat could be supported with adequate human and technical resources that allow for greater in-person and online attendance of many persons with disabilities around the world who acknowledge this annual gathering as a landmark for promoting international cohesion and advance disability rights.

Thank you.