

16th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD
Opening Session: Civil Society Statement
13 June 2023
Statement by Nawaf Kabbara

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends:

I'm here today representing the disability movement. We are united, as a movement, to shift from words to action. Action for the people in this room, and for the more than one point three billion people we represent.

In the last year since we met, a lot of significant progress has been achieved in the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

These new developments will de facto create a new demand on organizations of persons with disabilities at all levels. We are yet again asking for strategic thinking on how to urgently strengthen organizations of persons with disabilities to serve as partners to many of the stakeholders, including the UN and member states, as we deliver your commitments to the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda – and beyond.

Further, unfortunately, we continue to report on a number of setbacks and obstacles, especially from the implementation of the CRPD and SDGs at the national level:

- we continue to hear reports of our partners at the national level that services for persons with disabilities are being cut in the fiscal space;
- implementation of the agenda 2030 is still not inclusive of persons with disabilities at the national level and with less than eight years to go until the expiration of the 2030 Agenda, can we really say that the SDGs left no one behind?

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- War, conflicts and climate crises demonstrated and continue to demonstrate how fragile our response mechanisms are. We lost many brothers and sisters from our communities because of lack of planning. We have been shouting these messages for over a decade but we are still here.

Yesterday, over 500 representatives from Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, Civil Society, Governments, Multilateral Organisations, and the Private Sector met to discuss these obstacles as well as to see how best organizations of persons with disabilities can contribute and act as partners to many of the positive developments and new commitments of the world leaders and to many of you in this room. We had reflections on what is the current state of play in the promotion of the UN CRPD, and we looked towards the Summit for the Future and beyond the 2030 Agenda.

Collectively, we wish to share the following message:

- We recognise the need to increase the meaningful consultation and involvement of persons with disabilities, and their organisations, in all decision-making processes. We do not want to be added at the end. We are not a check box. Involvement should always be at the beginning and heart of all processes.
- We call for increase investment in, and partnership with, a diversity of organisations of persons with disabilities, including the most marginalized groups.
- We urgently call for an investment in the capacity building of all stakeholders – government, multilaterals, and broader civil society - to implement the CRPD for persons with disabilities.

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- We recognize successful practices in capacity building and call for such initiatives to receive additional support and be more readily available.

We have all seen and experienced the extraordinary work we can do together. There is a lot to celebrate indeed. But we recognize that more needs to be done and we look forward to hearing from our leaders as to how you are ensuring the livelihoods of persons with disabilities. We all share a responsibility and encourage each of you to take the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities seriously.

Thank you.