



Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities

16th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Joint Statement delivered by Ms. Paula Tesoriero, MNZM,
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13 June 2023

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I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities.¹

We welcome the focus of this year's Conference on harmonizing national policies and strategies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Full implementation of the rights recognised by the Convention will only be achieved if its provisions are given full effect domestically. Setting well-aligned national legislation, policy directions and strategies that advance the principles of the Convention is therefore essential. International cooperation, including the sharing of achievements, challenges, and best practices, is also critical to fully realising the rights of persons with disabilities.

The topics of this Conference's roundtables entitled "ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities"; "digital accessibility for persons with disabilities"; and "reaching the under-represented groups of persons with disabilities" reflect the importance of discussions around the enhancement of

¹ List of GoF membership: Argentina; Australia; Austria; Belgium; Bolivia; Brazil; Bulgaria; Canada; Costa Rica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; European Union; Finland; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Jamaica; Liechtenstein; Mexico; New Zealand; Palau; Panama; Philippines; Poland; Republic of Korea; Romania; South Africa; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; United Arab Emirates; United Kingdom; United States of America.

accessibility in various areas of life and addressing critical emerging areas of societal change.

We remain concerned about the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We call on States Parties to uphold the obligation to guarantee persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds, and to build capacity to measure the impact of policies and strategies against intersectional identity markers, with a view to achieving equality in outcomes for all persons with disabilities.

As States Parties seek to respond and adapt, policy approaches must be grounded in the rights outlined in the Convention, integrating age-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches.

The Group of Friends reiterates our call for an enhanced systemic approach to disability inclusion and civil society engagement, including the full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations across the work of the UN.

We welcome the efforts undertaken by the UN, in particular implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and the efforts of the President of the General Assembly on accessibility

measures, including the meeting to exchange views and identify good practices on the role of easy-to-understand communications. We recognize the ongoing efforts by the Bureau and Secretariat to improve accessibility, including access for persons with mobility disabilities, increased sign language interpretation, and an easy-to-read programme for the Conference.

We are moving closer to achieving universal ratification of the Convention - an important step to reaching under-represented groups of persons with disabilities. The Group of Friends strongly encourages those countries who have not yet ratified the Convention to do so, as well as considering ratifying its Optional Protocol.

Finally, we must continue to implement the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in full partnership with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. We call upon all States Parties to build a future upholding the principle of the disability movement: “*nothing about us without us*”.

Thank you.