



**Statement by Hon. Anupa Pasqual, State Minister of Social
Empowerment of Sri Lanka at the General Debate
16th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP16)
13th June 2023**

Mr. President,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Sri Lanka, it's a pleasure to address the 16th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CRPD. It is of added significance that this year, Sri Lanka serves as a vice president of the bureau.

Sri Lanka became a signatory to the UN CRPD by ratifying the convention on February 2016.

Mr. President, Sri Lanka has submitted the first national report on UN CRPD in 2018 and it's under review and we hope to work more closely in the review process and beyond.

Sri Lanka has protected the rights of the PWDs since 1978 by its Second Republican Constitution through its human rights chapter and then by the Act of 1996 as well.

Under the provisions of 1996 Act, the National Council and the first ever Secretariat for PWDs was established.

In order to comprehensively address matters relating to rights of PWDs, a new bill has been drafted which includes an Independent Monitoring Mechanism as an oversight body in accordance with the CRPD.

The rights enshrined in the Convention are protected by the new Bill and also, it is expected to be passed in parliament very soon.

Sri Lanka published its National Policy for PWDs in 2003 and upgraded and developed the National Action Plan.

Mr. President, Sri Lankan government has also taken a number of legal and policy measures by establishing the Accessibility Regulations in 2006 and White Cane Rules to enhance mobility for the blind and the visually impaired community in Sri Lanka in 2017.

The Sign Language Bill has been drafted for the rights of the deaf and hearing-impaired community in Sri Lanka.

The Visually Impaired Rehabilitation Trust Fund plays a significant role in assisting persons with visual impairments.

Sri Lanka is committed to taking further measures to integrate its disable community so that they participate as full-fledged citizens in the life of the nation.

Thank you, Mr. President.