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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

28th session

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Statement by

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**Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

**Colleagues and Friends,**

On behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General, it is an honour for me to open the **twenty-eighth session** of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which will take place from today, 6 March until Friday, 24 March 2023.

I wish to extend a warm welcome to the four **new members** of the Committee, namely: Mr. Muhannad Salah AL-AZZEH *[Jordan]*; Ms. Rehab Mohammed BORESLI *[Kuwait]*; Ms. Laverne JACOBS *[Canada]*; and Mr. Alfred Kouadio KOUASSI *[Ivory Coast].*

I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the **re-elected** **members** of the Committee, namely: Ms. Amalia GAMIO RIOS *[Mexico]*; Ms. Rosemary KAYESS *[Australia]*; Ms. Miyeon KIM [*Republic of Korea*]; Ms. Gertrude FEFOAME [*Ghana*]; and Mr. Markus SCHEFER *[Switzerland]*.

As a result of the election, the composition of the Committee has changed this year to 11 women and 7 men among their members. It is the largest female representation in a Treaty Body after the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

**Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

**The 186 ratifications** to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities show the commitment of the international community to an inclusive and accessible world. Since your last session, Timor-Leste ratified the Convention. In addition, Armenia, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, and Timor-Leste ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, bringing the States parties to that instrument to 104.

Allow me to brief you on **the most important events and developments** related to disability rights at the international level since the Committee’s previous session, which ended on 9 September 2022.

On 15 December, the **General Assembly** adopted **Resolution 77/189 on inclusive development for and with persons with disabilities.** It urges States, United Nations agencies, and other stakeholders, to ensure that the implementation of Agenda 2030 is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities are included in the decision-making processes that impact them. It also recognizes the importance of continuing to improve accessibility and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including by ensuring their access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, and information and communications technologies and systems.

On 16 December 2022, the **General Assembly** adopted **Resolution 77/240 on promoting and mainstreaming easy-to-understand communication for accessibility for persons with disabilities** (A/RES/77/240). The General Assembly decided that a half-day meeting on the margins of the 16th session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be held to discuss good practices on the role of easy-to-understand communication in enabling persons with disabilities to live independently and to fully, equally and meaningfully participate in all aspects of life. It also requested the Secretary-General to address the implementation of easy-to-understand language as an accessibility resource and tool for persons with disabilities and to present recommendations on guidelines and best practices, to be submitted during the 78th session of the General Assembly, in consultation with and ensuring the active engagement and participation of persons with intellectual disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as relevant United Nations entities, including the Committee.

In September 2022, the **Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities** presented a report related to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of military operations (A/77/203) to the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. This past January, the Special Rapporteurpublished a report on the transformation of services for persons with disabilities (A/HRC/52/38), which will be presented during the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council. This study reimagines services to give effect to the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community.

The [**fifteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean**](https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/15/en)took place in Buenos Aires from 7 to 11 November 2022 to move towards a care society for a sustainable recovery with gender equality. As we all know, unpaid care and domestic work have traditionally been viewed as a female role, imposing a social organization of care that disproportionately relies on women. The **Buenos Aires Commitment** acknowledges the importance of approaching the duty of care through a human rights and gender lens.The Commitment, therefore, recognizes and values unpaid care and domestic work, promotesmeasures to overcome the sexual division of labour and to move towards a fair social organization of care, based on the principles of equality, universality and social and gender co-responsibility.

**The Buenos Aires Commitment** also highlights a human rights approach to care in relation to persons with disabilities. It indicates the importance for persons with disabilities of their individual autonomy and independence, including the freedom to make their own choices, and put in place policies, services and accessible infrastructure to protect their right to provide and receive care and to self-care, considering their specific needs, including the use of mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies. It also actively supports the participation of women’s and feminist organizations, including those of women with disabilities, in the design, implementation and monitoring of care policies.

In January 2023, **the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** published a report on “Support systems to ensure community inclusion of persons with disabilities, including as a means of building forward better after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic” (A/HRC/52/52). This report provides a conceptual framework for gender-responsive and disability-inclusive support and care systems to enable the full inclusion of all persons with disabilities to live independently in their communities.

As part of the campaign on the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, called “**UDHR 75,**”the High Commissioner decided to focus the monthly thematic spotlight on **“Human rights in support and care systems”** this past February, calling on States to take concrete steps towards establishing support and care systems that are human rights-based, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and age-sensitive. This commitment is particularly relevant considering ongoing preparations for the SDG Summit in September, where the care and support agenda will be reflected as a key lever for sustainable development.

**Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

I’d like to turn to some **important upcoming developments** related to disability rights.

On 13 March, during the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, the **Annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities** will be held on support systems to ensure community inclusion of persons with disabilities, including as a means of building forward better after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 16th session of the **Conference of States Parties** (COSP) to the Convention will take place in New York from 13 to 15 June 2023, under the theme “Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: achievements and challenges”. The Conference will focus on three areas. First, “ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities”; second, “digital accessibility for persons with disabilities”, and third, “reaching under-represented groups of persons with disabilities”.

The **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** (HLPF) will also take place in New York from 10 to 19 July 2023, under the theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”.

**Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished members,**

The Office of the High Commissioner continues its work to support **the strengthening of the treaty bodies** and is in the process of finalising an implementation plan following the June 2022 conclusions of the Chairs. The aim is to facilitate your work, as well as of the other treaty bodies, including by introducing a predictable review calendar.

As you know, a predictable schedule of reviews can only be implemented if we have human and financial resources, including modern digital tools that must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

We are aware of the chronic under-funding of the treaty body system, which has contributed to significant backlogs in the consideration of State party reports, individual communications and confidential inquiries.

Advancing the full implementation of treaty-based human rights obligations requires sustainable funding from Member States and sufficient budgetary resources from the Office. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, is committed to supporting greater funding for the treaty body system during his tenure.

The work of the Office and the treaty bodies is mutually reinforcing, and we will continue to build on the substantive deliberations and decisions of this Committee. Your concluding observations on country-specific situations, general recommendations and jurisprudence constitute essential guidance for the work of the Office and the UN system on disability rights.

The momentum and energy of the UDHR 75 campaign in 2023 presents an occasion to strengthen cooperation and engagement between international and regional human rights mechanisms to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The Committee is naturally a key actor in the campaign, with the authority to engage with the 186 States parties to the Convention. We hope you will make full use of the campaign, individually as well as collectively.

**Madam Chair,**

**Distinguished members,**

At this session, you will hold **dialogues with six States parties**: Angola, Argentina, Georgia, Peru, Togo and Tunisia, and examine their reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

You will also review three **individual communications** under the Optional Protocol and follow-up on earlier views.

Likewise, the Committee will hold a **Day of General Discussion** on 7 and 8 March 2023 with a regional focus on persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, aimed to help it to elaborate a **General Comment on persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies** that will clarify State party obligations pursuant to article 11 of the Convention.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to express appreciation for the Committee members, the State parties to the Convention, and all stakeholders who have actively prepared their work in advance of the 28th session. Well aware that you have a heavy programme ahead of you for the next three weeks, I will conclude here by extending my very best wishes for a successful and productive session.

Thank you for your attention.

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