

**Asociación Cubana de las Naciones Unidas**

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ACNU’s Contribution to the 21st session of the **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Cuba’s Report** (March 2019)

The **Cuban United Nations Association (ACNU),** established on May 30, 1947, as a non-governmental organization, entered in Cuba’s Register of Associations, that groups on a voluntary basis, natural and legal persons truly interested in knowing and taking part in the United Nations management. Promotes people’s knowledge and understanding of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, the nature, functioning and activities of the United Nations System. It keeps and promotes relationships with agencies in the System of the United Nations in Cuba, collects and reports complaints on international situations endangering to people’s peace and safety and/or represent violations of the United Nations purposes and principles; encourages solidarity and international cooperation between men, women and children from all over the world regardless of skin color, gender, religious beliefs, national origin and any other form or discrimination, detrimental to human dignity. Works with Cuban and international civil society organizations based in Cuba, as well as government bodies with their social, environment and cultural programs. It groups 109 organizations from the Cuba’s civil society. .

It has special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1999. Affiliated to the Department of Public Information (DPI). It has observer status with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification since 2003 and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change since 2004. It’s a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA, for short in English) and belongs to its Executive Committee since 2003 and to the NGO Conference in consultative relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO).

By virtue of its goals and purposes, ACNU works and coordinates with Cuban civil society and the membership include main Cuban organizations for persons with disability, such as: Asociacion Cubana de Limitados Fisico- Motores (ACLIFIM); Asociacion Nacional de Sordos e Hipoacusicos (ANSOC) y la Asociacion Cubana de Ciegos (ANCI).

The above mentioned organizations, make their financial contributions and share under equal conditions and opportunities, enjoyment and compliance with Statutes and regulations, as well as joint work projects addressed to contribute from the civil society to the social integration of persons with disability.

Significantly, those organizations are specially active in all UN sponsored programs, on different subjects, and are particularly collaborative and participants in different forums arranged by civil society organizations, national surveys and exchanges with government authorities which they attend on equal terms, without any discrimination and with absolute freedom exercise their rights of expression and participation with the rest of the organizations, with conditions being created in these activities for physical access and the use of sign language translation.

As part of contributing to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the country, ACNU has included among its priorities to invite organizations for persons with disabilities to take part in all the activities and events. In addition to that, it has supported and promoted training and awareness-rising actions, and the celebration of the International Day for people with disabilities. Which has been included in ACNU’s yearly agenda on a permanent basis.

The following are some examples of the most significant activities sponsored and supported by ACNU:

* 1st Workshop addressed to women leaders with disabilities from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean sponsored by ACLIFIM y RIADIS (Latin American NGO’s Network of persons with disability). This outstanding initiative was attended by over 100 disabled persons from Cuba’s provinces and representatives from 11 countries in the region. During the three day-gathering, over 15 papers were presented along with the discussion on different subjects dealing with women’s disabilities and women’s leadership.
* International Day on Equalization of Opportunities, under the slogan “Anything you might do for others, is an act of good will”, took place highlighted in Havana’s Convention Palace in 2016 on the occasion of the celebration of the International Day for Persons with Disability.
* Cultural Activity, at the venue of *Retazos* dance ensemble, in Havana’s Historian Office, to celebrate the International Day for Disabled persons, (2017), with the performance of “Cuento de Hadas” (Fairy Tale) the most recent work by the National Psycho-Ballet Group. It would be appropriate to point out that Psycho-Ballet is a genuinely Cuban psychotherapeutic-cultural method, aimed to enhance rehabilitation, healing and social insertion of persons with special mental, motor and sensorial needs, while improving their quality of life as well as that of their families.
* Session of the Regional Secretariat of the Steering Committee for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean of the World Federation of the Deaf, in Havana, on 2018.

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| * Celebration for the International Day for persons with Disability (2018) at the Psycho-Pedagogical Medical Center La Castellana, with a cultural gala, performed by ACLIFIM, ANCI, ANSOC actors together with institutionalized intellectually disabled patients. |  |

* Participation in the VII Conference on Equalization of Opportunities under the slogan: “Let’s do everything for a more inclusive world” (2018 ) with a debate by with ACLIFIM affiliates, on the impact from the blockade imposed by the United State Government on Cuba and the effects on the persons with disability.

On the topic of foreign relations, it’s important to point out the work accomplished between ACNU and disabled persons associations in drafting and delivering their written contributions to national reports issued by Cuba to Human Rights agencies. In this, ACNU has offered all its methodological expertise and guidance, to the process by which ACLIFIM was granted special consultative status before ECOSOC.

Likewise, organizations addressed to disabled persons have attended sessions sponsored by Cuba’s civil society with Mrs. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special relator for the Human Rights of the Victims of Human Traficking, Victims specially women and children as well as by Mrs. Virginia Dandan, UN’s independent expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity, both, coordinated by ACNU.

As a tradition, ACNU sits in Board of Directors and yearly balance meetings held by organizations for persons with disabilities, being this a good opportunity to strengthen working bonds, discuss plans for future projects, challenges and common targets in the work for a more inclusive world where the respect for diversity should outweigh other considerations.

The associations for persons with disabilities, have responded unconditionally to ACNU’s request to contribute, support and engage in actions to condemn the economic financial and commercial blockade imposed by the United States government on our country which have a very particular impact on that population sector.

Contribution:

1. On the occasion of the coming discussion of the National Report to be presented by the Republic of Cuba before the CRPD, ACNU wishes to acknowledge the advances accomplished by the Cuban Government in giving concrete form to a constant and stable enhancement of the human rights for the persons in our country with a disability situation.
2. ACNU views very favorably the use of the latest terminology on persons with disabilities in the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, thus, bringing the said Constitution into line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
3. The text of the new Constitution shows a turn from an assistance-oriented approach to one of human rights for persons with disability, that is, they are protected as a vulnerable sector, while respecting their interests, autonomy and preferences.
4. Implementation of the three Action Plans to Care for Persons with disability, including actions and services aimed to provide equalization of opportunity, integration, active engagement in social life and increase of personal autonomy to the highest possible level, shows the will and commitment of Cuban government to improve the level and quality of life for the disabled persons in our country.
5. ACNU appreciates the actions undertaken addressed to build positive attitudes towards disability and change the culture of approaching disability as a limitation to a functionality approach, which has benefited from an outstanding contribution from different audio visual aids to showing the results achieved by different persons with disability in terms of social insertion, sports, culture, science and employment, to mention only a few spheres of activities for the above mentioned population.
6. ACNU appreciates that, as part of the will to include disability as a perspective within its regulatory framework, Cuba has expressly prioritized protection and safety actions specific to disabled persons in the Disaster Reduction Plans, including all the logistic supply demanded to guarantee their safety and protection as listed.
7. ACNU highlights the prioritized attention granted by the Cuban government to the social integration of the disabled persons in which the rehabilitation plan, based on the community, has played an essential role, allowing to meet the demands and needs in the population with disability condition and improve the quality of services provided at a community level. Also it has contributed to show that a substantial part of the difficulties and handicaps faced by persons with disabilities, are not ascribable to their condition but to the lack of resources as well as obstacles and barriers already existing in their own social environment.
8. ACNU recognizes the employment policy established by the Cuban government for persons with disability. In Cuba, they are assured equal salaries and benefits as the rest of the workers. The different educational institutions together with the associations addressed to persons with disabilities, provide training on skills required to perform different crafts, in the meanwhile, they are also included in education and training plans addressed to their future labor insertion, from the first levels of education. It would be valid to point out the inclusion in study plans of computer education and the use of new technologies as an example of the wide scope of the computerization of society.
9. ACNU wishes to highlight the policy of attention to the early childhood, focused on providing a competent guarantee for boys and girls, in a situation of disability, to receive the proper attention and the conditions to have access to the means and opportunities required for full participation in their family and social life.

To acknowledge the concept of the child’s higher interest” endorsed by the 1975- Family Code, shows the determined will in the part of the Cuban Government to guarantee the protection and favorable conditions required for a full personality growth and the enjoyment of Human Rights by all Cuban children, boys and girls, including those in a situation of disability.

1. ACNU makes a special recognition to the National Plan of Action for Children, Adolescents and their Families (2015-2020). This Plan, drawn in full harmony with theUnitedNations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), considers among its main goals to assure the promotion, prevention and quality of the attention to boys, girls and adolescents with disability.
2. Cuba counts on a coherent and solid regulatory framework for addressing issues related with marriage, family, reproduction, motherhood and parenthood. Also with a body of regulations to prevent separating a child from one or both parents, by cause of the child’s disability. ANCU considers among the rights related to those matters, fully recognized and assured by Cuba which should be highlighted: the right to marry on equal terms and start a family on free and full consent, to decide freely and responsibly the number of children they’d want and the time span between one childbirth and the other. It also gives support to fathers and mothers of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities by offering them special conditions to raise them, thus contributing to prevent concealment, abandonment, neglect and segregation of the disabled minor.
3. Education in Cuba’,world-wide recognized for its quality, universality and

broad scope is also ensured for persons with disability. Special Education for children and adolescents who need special attention for their specific disability, bring to fruition the principles of equity, non-discrimination and inclusion as well as ensuring the access to free education.

1. In this respect, ACNU points out as a positive element an increase during the last few years in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream education. This goes to prove the positive results from the comprehensive attention offered to disabled persons by the family, the community and further institutions and associations related to this sector of the population.
2. Persons with disability count on all the guarantees to exercise their civil and political rights. They can be either elected or appointed to political, legislative or government posts in the State structure and have the right to vote in all election processes. They have the right to intervene in the State management, take part in decision making processes, as they’re not only beneficiaries from social programs and public policies but active agents in Cuba’s political and social environment. ACNU appreciates the policy practiced by the Cuban State to consult with organizations addressed to persons with disability previous to the promulgation of a law or a policy related to the subject.

15.In accordance with the provisions of the Law 54 of 1985, “Law of Associations” persons in a situation of disability are associated to different organizations representing their interests and stand as a way to communicate with institutions, governmental or not, as well as other organizations in Cuba’s civil society environment.

16. La ACNU recognizes the significance of the support that organizations for persons in situation of disability receive from the Cuban government in order to carry out their activities and accomplish their purpose and gives them the possibility and the guarantees to participate in and be active protagonists in the country’s political and public life.

17,ACNU highlights the reasonable adjustments implemented to assure the access to justice for persons with disability and stresses the coordinated and systematic work of institutions and organizations that make it effective.

1. ACNU underscores that although there isn’t a specific legislation on the rights of persons with disability, Cuba’s legal-institutional framework is firmly aligned with the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and considers legal provisions for guarantees, legal procedures and resources for the realization of the human rights of that sector of the population, as well as to prevent or punish violations to the rights of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations:

1. We urge the State and the Government to continue developing a comprehensive strategy on the subject of accessibility to make it possible the timely identification and removal of architectonic barriers obstructing the access of persons with physical-motor and visual disability, in public spaces Nevertheless, we recognize that the flow of financial resources and availability of funds, as a result, among other factors of the genocide blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba, represent the main obstacle to that effect.
2. We recommend the Cuban Government, as part of updating the economic and social development model, to continue strengthening the legal-institutional framework and take the appropriate steps towards a more effective promotion of human rights and protection of persons in a situation of disability.
3. Considering that Sign Language, has been validated and legitimized as a public policy in Cuba and the expressed will of the government to guarantee the inclusion of all deaf persons in our country, we invite the government to take the steps required for the legal recognition of the Cuban Sign Language as Official Language for the Cuban Community of Deaf..