



## INTERVENTION

### International Day of Persons with Disabilities

3 December 2019

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Distinguished panelists,  
Dear moderator,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here at the observance of the 2019 International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I thank the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for convening us today to discuss the importance of leadership of persons with disabilities for the 2030 Development Agenda.

As Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ecuador, I had the privilege of presiding over the elaboration of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, between 2002 and 2005, that was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations through its resolution 61/106 on December 13, 2006. The Convention has currently 181 ratifications, which is an impressive number that almost reaches universal ratification, an extraordinary achievement.

The Convention followed decades of work by the United Nations and civil society to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It aimed at perceiving persons with disabilities not merely as “objects” of charity, medical treatment or social protection, but to recognize them as “subjects” whose human rights needed to be recognized, protected and promoted, but more



relevantly, persons who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives as active members of society.

Dear friends,

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force on May 3 of 2008 with the twentieth ratification, which was that of Ecuador. My country has been working hard to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognizes the valued contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty.

The Convention also considers that persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, including those directly concerning them. Thus, as the current President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ecuador been working along with State Parties, the UN System and non-governmental organizations towards a the common goal: to fully implement the Convention, to promote human rights and to advance towards inclusive and sustainable development for persons with disabilities in accordance to the 2030 Development Agenda.

The Conference of States Parties has been in steadily growing and has become one of the largest and the most important global forums on disability



issues. The Bureau of the Conference has already starting planning the 13<sup>th</sup> session, which will take place 10-12 June 2020 with a very important political background, as next year marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the 25th anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, and Beijing Plus 25. The 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of States Parties offers an opportunity for States Parties and all stakeholders to reflect on these milestones, to review experiences and the lessons learnt over the past years, identify gaps to strengthen policies, and improve our practices to fully implement the Convention in line with the SDGs.

As current President of the Conference, I believe it is of outmost importance to explore issues that have not been fully addressed in past sessions. For instance, Article 11 of the Convention tackles the impact of situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies on persons with disabilities. It demands that States Parties take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

Humanitarian action must effectively identify and respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, who are most at risk of being left behind in a calamity or situation of violence, and most importantly, to listen to the guidance and leadership of persons with disabilities in such matters.

Dear friends,

Persons with disabilities are estimated to represent 15 per cent of the world's population. One in ten children has a disability. One in five women is

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likely to experience a disability during her lifetime. Furthermore, 46 per cent of persons 60 years of age and over have a disability. In humanitarian contexts, these numbers can go much higher. The work we are carrying out in our countries, at the Conference of States Parties to the Convention, and across the UN system, has a major impact and the potential to benefit persons with disabilities, their families and communities, and every single one of us who one day may have a disability.

I am convinced that we still have a long way to go for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities and the effective implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda. Strengthening inclusion, full participation, solidarity and equality must be priority, and it should be our firm commitment to contribute to build societies free of discrimination and without the barriers that limit the enjoyment of human rights, in particular persons with disabilities. Only together we will achieve these objectives, and continue working to benefit one billion people with disabilities, rightfully claiming "nothing about us without us".

Thank you.