

Side Event Representation Matters! Deaf Members in the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 16 June 2021

Good morning to everyone:

The Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Disability and Accessibility, apologizes for not being able to be here, and has asked me to deliver her message, on behalf of the Secretary General of the United Nations. She thanks all the organizers for the invitation to this important event.

Her message starts with a question: What are the indispensable requirements to be an expert of the Committee according to article 34 of the CRPD?

- Persons of high moral standing.
- Persons of recognized competence and experience in the field of the Convention.

When submitting nominations, States Parties must consult closely with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

In the election of the CRPD Committee, the criteria is that States in accordance with the Convention, must take into account

- geographical distribution.
- representation of the different forms of civilization and the main legal systems.
- balanced gender representation.
- participation of experts with disabilities.

All the mencionad requirements are essential and must be met in each candidature for the CRPD Committe. This means that States Parties shall value, appreciate and ponder them.

Moreover, the Convention recommends or urges the election of experts with disabilities, among others.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that having a disability transforms a person into an expert on the rights of persons with disabilities.

The character of the Treaty body is reaffirmed as a Committee of experts and not a Committee whose purpose is the representation of disabilities.

However, it is evident that the participation of experts with disabilities in the Committee is a valuable plus for its work, because the proximity of the expert with disabilities in the issues and realities reviewed by the Committee will be precise and crucial.

When it comes to the recommended criteria for the election, we have seen at times certain imbalances, for example, in geographical distribution and gender balance.

In both cases, the CRPD Committee, together with other treaty bodies, carried out campaigns and recommendations, which have had a positive impact.

As we know, in the 2016 election no women were elected, so the CRPD Committee had only one woman during the 2017-2018 period. This situation changed positively in the following election, with 6 women as experts on the CRPD Committee.

Also in the 2016 election, no Latin American expert was elected. In the next election, 2018, two Latin American experts joined the Committee. This reflects that the recommendations on geographic distribution were combined with the gender campaign. Thus, for that year, the two Latin American experts were also women.

Consequently, if the CRPD Committee initiates actions to have Deaf women as experts, it can establish a partnership with other Treaty Bodies and mechanisms to achieve this objective.

I would like to underline that the role of the World Federation of the Deaf will be very relevant in relation to raising awareness of States about the contribution of Deaf experts in the tasks of the CRPD Committee, and also identifying Deaf experts from different parts of the world.

Thank you (Sign Language)

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Special Envoy of the UNSG on Disability and Accessibility

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