President’s summary of the tenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Opening of the Conference

1. Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) opened the tenth session of the Conference of States Parties in his capacity as temporary President of the Conference.

2. The Conference at its first meeting elected by acclamation the following as new members of the Bureau: Bulgaria, President of the Conference; and Ecuador, Germany, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, as Vice-Presidents of the Conference. It also adopted the agenda of the Conference (CRPD/CSP/2017/1) and approved by consensus the accreditation of 38 new non-governmental organizations that applied to participate as observers to the Conference.

3. During the opening segment of the 1st meeting, a statement was made by H.E Mr. Georgi Panayotov, the newly elected President of the Conference and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations who extended a special welcome to eight States Parties which had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities since the previous session.[[1]](#footnote-1) Acknowledging that significant steps has been taken by the international community to implement the Convention since the adoption of the Convention a decade ago, the President underscored the importance of achieving the goals of the Convention and creating societies without discrimination and further promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion and empowerment, emphasizing the need to focus on ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

4. Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, in her statement, recognized the Convention as a tool for both human rights and development. She stated that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges to leave no one behind, and therefore emphasized that enhanced efforts must be made to promote participation of persons with disabilities in every sphere of life.

5. Ms. Theresia Degener, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Person with Disabilities, noted in her opening statement the importance of participation and representation of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the Convention. She outlined several areas for collective efforts that are crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including ensuring empowerment of women and children with disabilities, enhancing participation of persons with disabilities in national institutions, data collection and evaluation of policies and programmes.

6. Ms. Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, called for increased involvement of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development including decision-making processes, based on the principle of equality of opportunity and full participation as enshrined in the Convention. While noting the complementarity of the CRPD and 2030 Agenda, the Special Rapporteur called on the UN System, including the UN Statistical Division, to support national statistical offices to collect disaggregated data by disability using the short set of questions on disability developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

7. Ms. Maria Farah, a representative of civil society emphasized the importance of the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, working together with States Parties and other stakeholders, in establishing strong laws that protect, promote and respect all rights of all persons with disabilities. Ms Farah called for concrete actions and measures to be taken to achieve full inclusion of persons with disabilities through revising or adopting relevant laws and policies and other actions.

Round-table discussions

Round table 1. Addressing the impact of multiple discrimination on persons with disabilities and promoting their participation and multi-stakeholder partnerships for achieving the SDGs in line with the CRPD

Brief overview:

8. The international human rights framework, in particular the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), formally recognizes persons with disabilities as rights holders on an equal basis with others. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development formalized the international community’s political commitment to “leave no-one behind”, which applies to all people equally.

9. The realization of all human rights for all persons with disabilities, and their full and effective participation and inclusion in society, is hindered by the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination leading to lower employment rates, lower participation in public and political life, and lower access to services such as education, health, rehabilitation, sexual and reproductive health and justice.

10. Persons with disabilities subjected to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experience even greater marginalization. Employment rates for women with disabilities are more than 30% lower than men with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities experience violence at a rate 2-3 times higher than their peers without disabilities.

11. While governments must play a primary role in formulating policy, the achievement of “no-one left behind” requires a pro-active, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. The inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in multi-stakeholder partnerships is a crucial step toward addressing the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination for all persons with disabilities, and the realization of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

12. Mr. Thomas Schieb, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of Germany and Vice President of the Conference and Diane Kingston, a representative of civil society co-chaired the first round table discussion on 14 June morning.

13. In his introductory remarks, Mr. Schieb indicated that the current situation of persons with disabilities, especially for those women and girls with disabilities, is unacceptable – addressing the existing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by persons with disabilities and ensuring their full and effective participation must remain a top priority. Although governments shall play the primary role in the implementation of the Convention, their work will be more effective through forming partnership with other stakeholders, including persons with disabilities and their representative organisations.

14. H.E. Ms. Emerine Kabanshi, Minister of Community Development and Social Welfare, Zambia, in her presentation shared her country’s experience in addressing the multiple forms of discrimination and pursuing inclusive development for persons with disabilities. She enumerated a series of actions and measures taken, including: adopting the Persons with Disabilities Act (2011), the National Social Protection Policy and the National Policy on Disability with specific targets and strategies on protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, she highlighted the need to develop a national strategy with clear targets and timelines, adequate budget allocation and the importance of having a sound legal redress and accountability mechanism in addressing discrimination. Zambia also conducted a National Disability Survey in 2015 to assess the situations of persons with disabilities and effectiveness of relevant laws, policies and programs. Finally, Ms. Kabanshi reiterated that all above mentioned should be pursued through actively consulting, engaging and cooperating closely with persons with disabilities and their representative organisation and forming multi-stakeholders’ partnership.

15. H.E. Ms. Mercedes Juan Lopez, Director General of the National Council for the Rights and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities presented a perspective on how Mexico has been combating discrimination against persons with disabilities that account for nearly six percent of the national population. She stated the Government’s commitment to persons with disabilities was embodied in many aspects. Following the incorporation of a provision on right to non-discrimination in the Constitutions in 2001, the new Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination and Creation of the National Council to Prevent Discrimination (CONAPRED) was promulgated among other legal actions to close the gaps of social inequality experienced by persons with disabilities. Through the National Strategy for Social Inclusion, multi-dimensional work was carried to combine ministries’ resources and efforts, and actively engage with civil society. To formalise the participation of the latter, a consultative assembly was also set up. To better assess the situations and inform the policy making and implementation, the National Information System takes an integrated approach to collect data on persons with disabilities, and their registration in and linking to different sectors in the system such as beneficiary standard of health and social development sector. Ms. Lopez identified two outstanding challenges: legal capacity of persons with intellectual and /or psychosocial disabilities to exercise their individual autonomy; and lack of progress on healthy ageing and home care for older persons with disabilities whose number is growing as a result of demographic and epidemiological transition.

16. Ms. Marieta Dimitrova, a lawyer and legal consultant of Bulgarian Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, focused her presentation on one challenging issue faced by persons with cognitive and/ or mental disabilities in enjoying their human rights, autonomy and exercise of legal capacity. She stated that stereotypes persist in many occasions, as the existence of the guardianship regimes is equivalent to a statutory discrimination, in her view. Ms. Dimitrova challenged the guardianship systems, suggesting three key actions to be taken in order to combat the aforesaid discrimination against persons with disabilities, including: (1) legal reform based on actual situations on the ground and national contexts; (2) supported decision-making for the persons in question in line with the spirit and principle of the Convention; (3) civil society organisations must be involved and engaged as key partners for this endeavour. She presented the draft law on legal capacity developed by the Bulgarian authorities in close collaboration with civil society organizations and persons with disabilities which establishes a model of supported decision making and provides conditions for the full realization of all human rights of persons with disabilities. She emphasized that Bulgaria was one of the very few countries in the world that had developed such kind of pilot projects for implementation of Article 12 of the Convention and called for the early adoption of the Law.

17. Mr. Alastair McEwin, Disability Discrimination Commissioner of Australia, made his presentation with a focus on indigenous aboriginal people with disabilities who were more likely than other Australians to experience various forms of disadvantages, such as higher unemployment rates, poverty, discrimination, exposure to violence which reinforces the need for a more inclusive approach to ensure the full realization of their human rights. While noting some measures were taken already by the Government of Australia, Mr. McEwin called for additional actions to cut across policy intervention silos, with a more holistic approach to address the intersection of disability and other characteristics like gender, indigenous status and race in order to meet the socio-economic needs of indigenous people with disabilities. In the contexts of the ongoing efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which does present more opportunities to better monitor and evaluate the impact of multiple disadvantages, he highlighted that States need to adopt and implement appropriate legislations, policy and programmes that recognise and respond to the needs of all those who experience multiple forms of discriminations. And in this endeavour, persons with disabilities and their representative organisations must be involved in the development of solutions, and be provided with opportunities and resources to participate in relevant processes. Likewise, national human rights institutions shall also play a leading role in relevant monitoring and evaluation efforts.

18. Mr. Facundo Chavez Penillas, Human Rights and Disability Adviser, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, referenced the questions under discussion in the policy framework of the Convention especially article 5 on equality and non-discrimination, underscoring that persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, often face compounded barriers to exercise and enjoy the full spectrum of human rights in all spheres of life. Central to non-discrimination is the provision of reasonable accommodation. In this regard, the failure of provision of such reasonable accommodation could lead to discrimination. He added “reasonable accommodation” is still a comparatively new concept in human rights and disability discourses. Furthermore, proactive steps are required to uphold equality and non-discrimination, including: consulting with and actively involving persons with disabilities in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies; harmonizing laws and policies in line with the Convention; applying a twin-track approach to be adopted to mainstream disability in policy interventions and also develop specific policies. Training is vital to eliminate stereotypes and stigma. Mr. Penillas concluded that SDGs could not be really achieved if equality and non-discrimination are not properly reflected in laws and policies.

19. Mr. Lauro Purcil, Jr., a lead convenor of Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD and member of ASEAN Disability Forum, discussed the experience of organisations of persons with disabilities in engaging in national budgeting processes in the Philippines since 2010. Mr. Purcil said that constitutionally all Filipino citizens have the right to influence governmental policies, including budget allocation, through their affiliation with civic groups. The key to the budget advocacy of the Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD was the monitoring and assessment of allocation of funds as regards persons with disabilities. He said there were still many challenges such as governmental agencies’ hesitancy to share relevant information; lack of awareness of diverse situations and needs of persons with disabilities; lack of capacities of civil society in engaging with the Government and other stakeholders in a sustainable and effective manner. Mr. Purcil said, organizations of persons with disabilities, as well as wider civil society organisations need to enhance networking among them in order to better attend to these challenges and to achieve their objectives, namely participating in public budgeting related decision-making processes that impact persons with disabilities.

20. In the interactive discussion segment, representatives from Panama, Romania, Chile, Republic of Korea, China, South Africa, Norway, Namibia, European Union, Costa Rica, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Iraq and observers including International Committee of the Red Cross, African Disability Forum, Progetto Filippide, Jeffs Foundation, Collective Group of Civil Society Organizations of El Salvador, the Federation of Disability Organizations (Malawi), and National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (Sierra Leone), made interventions from the floor.

Round table 2. Inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action

Brief overview:

21. Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized in any crisis-affected community. Available data shows that morbidity of persons with disabilities in a disaster – the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami- was estimated at a rate 4 times higher than of those without disabilities.

22. Conflicts and natural disasters heighten the risks faced by persons with disabilities as they seek out assistance, support and protection. In crisis situations, persons with disabilities require the same assistance common to all those affected, in addition to specific requirements related to disability. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination further exacerbate the situation of persons with disabilities in these contexts.

23. Historically, humanitarian action has largely failed to take into account persons with disabilities in its response. A paradigm shift is required towards the rights-based approach as underscored by the CRPD. The promotion of the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of humanitarian action is the key to drive this change.

24. Article 11 of the CRPD requires States Parties to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development formalized the international community’s political commitment to “leave no-one behind”, which applies to all people equally.

25. Inclusive humanitarian action will only be achieved through international, financial and technical cooperation and convergence, in line with CRPD Article 32 (International Cooperation).

26. The active participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian and disaster preparedness and response programmes and policies is crucial to successfully reshaping humanitarian aid and emergency response. This is explicitly recognized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015 – 2030), which requires the empowerment of persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches. The round table was co-chaired by H.E Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and Vice President of the Conference, and Mr. Kalle Könkkölä, a civil society representative.

27. Ms. Julien Mwape, Board Chairperson of Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities, highlighted that efforts must be made to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in the goals, targets and indicators of national policies and action plans related to humanitarian action and disaster risk management in line with existing international frameworks such as the Sendai Framework. Development agencies and humanitarian actors shall do more to ensure the needs of persons with disabilities be assessed and included at all stages of disaster management, i.e, preparedness, response, relief, recovery and reconstruction and fully engage all key stakeholders working together. Ms. Mawpe identified some key areas for humanitarian action: determine vulnerabilities, economic, physical and environmental alike that can raise risk for persons with disabilities; conduct risk and needs assessment; establish community registers to gather accurate information; design national action plans to reduce risks for all, while paying special attention to persons with disabilities. She further referenced to a case in Zambia, stated that proper legislation and policies, action plans as well as specific guideline and strategy are needed to enhance early warning system, including in communication, and to ensure disability inclusion in humanitarian actions.

28. Mr. Muhammad Salah Alazzeh, Secretary General of the High Council of the Affairs for Persons with Disabilities, Jordan, began his presentation by making a distinction between two categories of refugees with disabilities residing in Jordan, namely, an estimated 53,000 Palestinian refugees with disabilities who were registered with UNRWA and approximate 19,000 Syrian refugees with disabilities in Syrian Refugee Camps in Jordan. However, based on a more recent UNHCR survey using the Washington Group questions, the latter figure of the Syrian refugees with disabilities may turn out to be much bigger. Mr. Alazzeh stated Jordan adopted a Syrian Crisis Response Plan (2016-2018) to make services and support available to refugees with disabilities. Poor accessibility and lack of reasonable accommodation in the refugee camps have been a major challenge that deserves special attention by relevant authorities and donors. The emergency line for deaf refugees using sign language through video calls was recognised as a good practice at home and abroad. In addition, sign language training was provided also by Civil Defence Department for its staffs. Mr. Alazzeh concluded by calling UN agencies, governmental and non-governmental organisations and in particular donors to work in partnership to discharge their own responsibilities as outlined in the Convention article 32 (on international cooperation) so as to ensure humanitarian responses and actions be inclusive of and accessible to refugees with disabilities.

29. Mr. Gopal Mitra, Programme Specialist, Disability Section, UNICEF, co-chair of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, pointed out that persons with disabilities are at higher risks in humanitarian crisis, yet humanitarian actions often fail to include persons with disabilities, further deepening their exclusion. This is even more often the case for women and children with disabilities in such circumstances. Four aspects are critical for making humanitarian actions inclusive of children and adults with disabilities: (1) participation of persons with disabilities in planning and implementation of humanitarian action; (2) humanitarian action data has to be disaggregated by disability and humanitarian needs assessment must ask the right questions and use appropriate tools to capture the needs of persons in question; (3) building knowledge and capacity on disability among humanitarian personnel is critical to the inclusion of persons with disabilities; (4) elaborating guidelines to strengthen accountability and transform practice. He finally made a call to stop funding any projects that build inaccessible new humanitarian infrastructure and reconstruction.

30. Mr. Ramkusha Pant, President of the National Federation of the Deaf, Nepal, in his presentation using the 2015 earthquake in Nepal as a case, discussed some key issues and challenges facing deaf and other persons with disabilities in natural disaster risk preparedness, relief and humanitarian responses. Based on the case studies, he found that timely and adequate information on the humanitarian needs of persons with disabilities, on humanitarian actions and services available and actual access to emergency relief and accessible services such as sign language interpretation, are vital, yet too often not in place. Learning from the Nepal lessons, he stated that disaster reduction and humanitarian actions need appropriate legislation, accessible institutions, national strategic plans to ensure mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as promoting the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities. Also, it is of vital importance to ensure better coordination of humanitarian actors, training and dissemination of relevant information in an accessible manner.

31. Ms. Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said persons with disabilities are usually the most affected in all kinds of humanitarian emergencies and yet one of the most invisible groups who often face greater challenges to access and benefit from humanitarian actions, due to wide-spread discrimination, lack of accessibility and support services, as well as the absence of proper training and awareness among humanitarian actors. With the strengthened international normative frameworks, Ms. Devandas-Aguilar underscored three priorities to fully include persons with disabilities in humanitarian action: (1) ensure a human rights approach in all efforts to make humanitarian action inclusive; (2) ensure greater international, financial and technical cooperation for an inclusive response; (3) elaborate comprehensive technical guidelines for inclusive humanitarian response. The Special Rapporteur appealed to States and the UN system to enhance their efforts and work more closely together to make humanitarian action accessible and inclusive. Finally, she emphasized that the transformation of humanitarian action to adequately respond to diversity cannot be done without the active participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of the emergency preparedness and response.

32. Ms. Theresia Degener, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, highlighted some key issues related to the implementation of UNCRPD Article 11 for which States Parties shall pay attention in their national reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, including measures adopted to ensure persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are meaningfully informed of, consulted with and actively engaged in strategies, plans and programmes related to disaster risk reduction and humanitarian emergencies; measures adopted to ensure the inclusiveness and accessibility of disaster risk reduction measures and disaster management strategies; steps taken to optimise the use of mass media with the aim of providing adequate, accessible and timely information on risks and humanitarian emergencies to persons with disabilities; measures adopted to ensure the protection of the life and safety of persons with disabilities; steps taken to ensure that post emergency rehabilitation and reconstruction are inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, and measures adopted to train emergency and humanitarian actors on the inclusion of an age and disability perspective based on human rights and the principle of leaving no one behind in situations of risks and humanitarian emergencies. Ms. Degener emphasized the need to take an intersectional human rights approach and to address multiple forms of discrimination of women and girls with disabilities in all humanitarian actions.

33. During the interaction with the panellists, statements and questions were made from the floor by representatives of Italy, United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Ecuador, Finland, Morocco, China, and Myanmar, UNICEF, Federation for Disability, Women’s Refugee Commission, Federation for Disability Societies in Malawi, Handicap International, International Association of Disability Advocates Nigeria and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Round table 3: Promoting inclusive urban development and implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Brief overview:

34. The *World Urbanization Prospects* (2014 Revision) reports that 54% of the world’s population resided in urban areas in 2014, and that by 2050, approximately 6.25 billion people—66% of the world population—will be living in urban areas, of which 15% are projected to be persons with disabilities.

35. The commitment of the international community to advance the human rights of persons with disabilities has been strengthened with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The New Urban Agenda, that was adopted at the “Habitat III” (2016), commits States to take action and implement measures to promote equitable access to sustainable physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, modern and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, safe, nutritious and adequate food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, health care and family planning, education, culture and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for persons with disabilities. The Agenda calls for the elimination of legal, institutional, socioeconomic and physical barriers for all.

36. In the current pattern of urbanization persons with disabilities experience widespread lack of accessibility to the built environment, to basic urban services and to ICTs. Ill-planned urbanization may create new barriers to the built environment, transport and services, as well as to ICTs and services in heavily populated areas.

37. Inclusive urban environments incorporate three thematic areas established under UNCRPD Article 9 (Accessibility): the built environment, transportation, and information and communication technologies.

38. Governments and stakeholders require clear and coherent legal requirements and standards regarding inclusive urban development for all persons with disabilities that should be developed in consultation and with the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

39. Round table 3 was co-chaired by Mr. Xavier Torres, President of the National Council for Disabilities of Ecuador and Vice-President of the Conference and Mr. Jean- Luc Simon representing civil society.

40. H.E Mr. Senarath Bandara Attanayake, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, Livestock, Land and Forestry of Uva Provincial Council, Sri Lanka, stated that3the Government of Sri Lanka pledged to ensure sustainable urbanisation. In Sri Lanka, with the support of the United Nations, a concept of “inclusive cities” and “disabled and age friendly city” was adopted to consider improvement of built environment coupled with social and economic inclusion. This concept emphasized the elimination of barriers and the participation of all stakeholders in achieving the goal - inclusive and accessible city for all. This concept received recognition from the President of Sri Lanka who established a special office to coordinate and promote the application of the “Inclusive Cities” concept in a number of districts in the country. From 2011 to 2017, some progress was made in implementing programmes for accessible built environments (in public institutions, religious places of worship, community centres, health centres), accessible sanitation facilities, improved access to the electoral processes, to education, and in addressing poverty through provision of livelihood support and in promoting employment of persons with disabilities in public sector and supporting self-employment by persons with disabilities. He underscored the importance of creating wider awareness about the concept of “inclusive city” among policy makers and officials.

41. Mr. Samuel Kipng’etich Tororei, Commissioner of the National Land Commission, Kenya, in his presentation said neither the 1948 Colonial Nairobi Master Plan nor the Post-Independence Land Planning Act (repealed in 1996 by the Physical Planning Act) gave sufficient attention to the specific needs of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities clearly found themselves excluded in the planning for and development of cities and urban areas, especially in informal settlements. Highlighting the importance of all users’ rights and needs in urban planning and development, he noticed a perceptive move toward the right direction in Kenya’s legislations and government policies concerning persons with disabilities: more specifically, he emphasized that the enactment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), the establishment of a National Council for Persons with Disabilities (2004), and the ratification of the Convention (2008), should be embraced by urban planners and development actors. He stated that advocacy shall shift its focus to practical programme for actions, and called for the engagement of all stakeholders to work together with greater inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities as envisaged by the New Urban Agenda.

42. H.E Mr. Marco Antonio Pellegrini, National Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Brazil, shared the experience and lessons learnt in promoting inclusive urban development in Brazil. His office is a national focal point that coordinates the actions and efforts of line ministries within the Government for the implementation of the Convention. Many initiatives and programmes were undertaken at national and local levels, including constructing accessible public parks, sport facilities, housing and transportation, by taking some strategic measures such as following universal design approach towards housing and providing incentives to developers to do so. Another important element for the successful promotion of accessible and inclusive urban development is the provision of proper training of development actors and professionals.

43. Mr. Victor Pineda, President of the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, pointed out that the Convention Article 9 (on accessibility) and SDG 11 (on sustainable urban development) provided a sound set of international normative framework on inclusive urban development for all. For the successful promotion of accessibility in transportation and built environments, there is a need for political will and a real partnership among the different stakeholders. The gaps between national commitments and local capacity need to be addressed. Taking building “smart cities for all” as an example, tools and guidelines are needed to enable local authorities and development actors on the ground to enhance the understanding of people on how to deliver digital accessibility and inclusion, including relevant technical codes and standards. With the pace of rapid urbanization, urban planning must be inclusive, utilizing a cross-sectoral approach, and taking into account disability, climate change, gender, accessibility, equity among other facets.

44. Ms. Inmaculada Placencia, senior expert in the Disability and Inclusion Unit of the European Commission, EU, said that accessibility in urban contexts illustrates the intersection of three areas - built environments, transport and ICTs, such as smart mobile phones and electronic interfaces, which are increasingly impacting the provision of services. Making accessible ICTs is the most cost effective option that deserves more attention and investment in a long term. For effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and promoting accessible development, she listed some common elements for successful good practices: (1) a comprehensive legislation that sets accessibility in the frameworks combating discrimination, public procurement that combines both horizontal and sectoral requirements, (2) a clear responsibility allocation for ensuring that accessibility is taken into consideration by both public and private actors, (3) realistic timeframes for implementation; (4) a practical guidance for practitioners in the form of technical standards that is linked to the legal requirements; (5) tools for monitoring of implementation; (6) robust enforcement of legislation and policies; (7) participation of persons with disabilities in policy-making and monitoring processes; (8) proper trainings of professionals and urban development actors, and (9) investments and research on accessibility.

45. Mr. Markus Schefer, Professor of Law, Basel University, Switzerland, argued that cities could offer opportunities to plan design and build better places for all and meet their rights, needs and aspiration. Discussing as to how inclusive development strategies can capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of persons with disabilities, Mr. Schefer emphasised the importance of their active participation in the planning and execution of urban plans. Co-construction will increase the expertise of urban planners and architects to fulfil their mandates. State can play important role in fostering such co-construction through including relevant requirements into urban planning models. Another area is public procurement where experts with disabilities could be included as co-constructors, not just consultants, from the beginning of a project.

46. During the question and answer segment, representatives from Kazakhstan, Qatar, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Morocco, Mexico, Canada, China, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Guinea, Netherlands, Turkey, Thailand, Ecuador, Namibia, Malawi, the National Human Rights Commission (Republic of Korea), Christian Blind Mission, Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil - Conselho Federal, and the Brazilian Bar Association, took the floor.

Interactive dialogue between States parties and the United Nations system on implementation of the Convention

47. H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN and President of the Conference, opened the interactive dialogue between States Parties and the United Nations System on the implementation of the Convention.

48. Ms. Wenyan Yang, Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, made a presentation on behalf of Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. Since the last session of the Conference, DESA has focused its work on key areas concerning the promotion of the implementation of the Convention, in particular those related to supporting the implementation of the Convention in tandem with other global commitments and building upon the interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She gave as an example the preparation of the first UN flagship report on disability and development, which is scheduled for release in 2018 and aims to provide a knowledge base to inform and further disability inclusive development and implementation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities. A number of expert group meetings and discussions organised by DESA contributed to major global policy processes, including the World Humanitarian Summit, the UN Habitat III Conference and the annual CSW session and their follow-ups. DESA also provided support to Governments and stakeholders to implement the Convention, by organizing capacity training workshops on the CRPD and collection and utilization of disability data, engaging and benefiting 82 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Arabic region. It also started its work to update the UN Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics to assist States to better meet demands for quality data to monitor progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

49. Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN-Women, in her presentation highlighted that women and girls with disabilities were more likely to be left behind, in terms of lower economic and social status, experience of violence, abuse and neglect, discriminatory practices since they often faced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on their gender and disability. In this regard, efforts shall be made to consider gender equality and women empowerment on the one hand, and the disability aspect on the other hand. She introduced some work of UN Women which started to regard disability in a systematic manner: bringing normative changes and standard-setting at global regional and national levels; prioritizing disability and gender equality and the nexus between the larger discourses of gender equality and mainstreaming disability into gender equality discourses; advocating for equal access to physical environments and protection against violence and discrimination; improving data and statistics on gender and disability, by encouraging the use of the Washington Group tools; promoting synergies between gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities at country offices.

50. Ms. Michelle Funk, a representative from the World Health Organization presented a joint statement of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the CRPD (IASG) in the capacity as the annual rotation chair of the IASG. She highlighted the collective initiatives and work of the group in the past year, focusing on priority issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities such as lack of employment, hindered access to health care services and ICTs, as well as limited participation in decision-making processes. In response to these challenges, IASG strengthened collective efforts across the UN system, including through establishing a number of working groups to work on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian actions, community-based development initiatives, women and girls with disabilities and on options for potentially use the UN system-wide action plan as a strategy to better address the challenges related to the implementation of the Convention.

51. Mr. Craig Mokhiber, Director and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, reported the initiatives of the OHCHR. For instance, OHCHR proposed to better use the tools available for data disaggregation at the 2020 round of national censuses and recommended the use of a set of questions developed by the Washington Group and UNCIEF module on child functioning. It also initiated a project to develop human rights indicators for the CPRD and policy guidelines connecting the SDGs with human rights obligations under the Convention. The Office also conducted a study on equality and non-discrimination to inform the annual debate of the Human Rights Council in 2017 and was working on another annual study on the right to access to justice. OHCHR strongly encouraged States Parties to address the current gender imbalance within the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the next year’s elections of members to the Committee. Finally, Mr. Mokhiber appealed to Member States to commit to actively promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the negotiations towards the adoption of a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

52. Ms. Grainne O’Hara, Deputy Director of New York Office, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), informed the meeting that in situations of humanitarian crises such as forced displacement, persons with disabilities continued to be left behind, experiencing challenges of moving physically to safer places. Programs with shortage of funding often left persons with disabilities behind, causing the lack of access to basic services. She expressed UNHCR’s commitment to continuing the promotion of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit, including the Charter on inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the elaboration of guidelines for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. She concluded by underscoring the need and importance of working closely with persons with disabilities in this endeavor.

53. Ms. Filiep Decorte, Acting Director of the New York Office, United Nations Human Settlement Programme, stated that the 2030 Agenda promised to leave no one behind while the New Urban Agenda further elaborated how to operationalize this goal in urban development contexts. She stated that for inclusive and sustainable urban development, we must ensure accessibility and access to adequate housing, mobility and transportation, and public services for all, including persons with disabilities. In order to achieve this and a transformative urban development for all, we need strong participation of civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, as well as a well-designed and planned urban development. .

54. Mr. Nagesh Kumar, Director for Social Development Division, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), stated that ESCAP had launched the Asian Pacific Decade of persons with disabilities with the adoption of the Incheon Strategy as its guiding framework, in response to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the region. Many initiatives have been taken and progress is being made in implementing the Incheon Strategy. For instance a number of Governments adopted national legislations on the rights of persons with disabilities and enacted disability inclusive action plans. He informed that a high level inter-governmental meeting will be held in Beijing, China, at end of November this year, to mark the mid-term review of the implementation of the Strategy and to reinforce the efforts and action in this regard for the next five years.

55. Following the panellists’ presentations, the representative of New Zealand (on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Finland, Iceland, Jamaica, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Panama, Poland, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Zambia and New Zealand), presented a joint statement with the following recommendations: 1) utilizing the Washington Group Short Set of Questions as the tool to disaggregate data by disability, particularly in household surveys and national censuses; and 2) continued establishment of focal points on persons with disabilities in UN agencies, as well as the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Strategic Plans and reporting and indicator frameworks of UN agencies, in line with both the CRPD and Agenda 2030. The group commended the Bureau for their leadership in the implementation of Article 4.3 of the CRPD, the full and meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the preparation and official programme of this year’s Conference.

56. Following the joint statement, representatives of Mexico, Namibia, and the National Association of Disability Advocates from Nigeria made interventions.

57. The President of the Conference introduced the panellists for the second segment of the interactive dialogue.

58. Ms. Theresia Degener, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, stated that the Conference of State Parties and the Committee are the two pillars of the same international mechanism for the implementation of the Convention. The success of each pillar will reflect on the other. She said it was important that the rights of persons with disabilities be mainstreamed in State Parties’ reporting to the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum as well. Since the ninth Conference of State Parties, the Committee held its 16th and 17th meetings. It has adopted concluding observations in this regard, including specific recommendation as to the implementation of the SDGs. The Committee has also adopted two general comments on women and girls with disabilities and on the right to inclusive education. It is currently working on two general comments - on the right to live independently in the community and on non-discrimination and equality. She concluded by encouraging States Parties to give special attention to women candidates with disabilities for the forthcoming elections of members of the Committee in 2018 in order to restore gender parity in the Committee.

59. Ms. Catalina Devandas, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, stated that, she placed emphasis on three strategic areas - inclusive development, active citizenship and diversity assessment. Within these mandates, she produced four thematic reports - on social protection, participation in decision-making, inclusive public policies and support services, and visited Moldova, Paraguay, Zambia and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the past year. She also continued to cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Independent Expert on the Human Rights of Older Persons, with a view to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. She finally called for the support of States to the idea of having a possible system-wide plan of action for further promoting the inclusion and the human rights of persons with disabilities within the United Nations System.

60. Ms. Gertrude Fefoame, a representative of civil society, in her presentation referenced the achievements made over the first decade since the adoption of the Convention, stating that she was pleased to notice many initiatives had been taken by Governments and other stakeholders to further implement the Convention in the second decade. She also stated more progress must be made in improving the collection of quality data on disability in order to track the progress of development efforts and to hold Governments accountable. She recommended States to use the Washington Group questions in their censuses and surveys. Finally, she also called for attention to the gender balance in the UN CRPD Committee during the forthcoming elections in 2018.

61. Following the presentations by panellists, questions and interventions were made by the representatives of Brazil, Mexico and the National Association of Disability Advocates, Nigeria.

62. Under this agenda item 6 a written statement was also received from the Russian Federation.

63. Following the panel discussions and under agenda item 7, the President of the Conference presented three decisions that were subsequently adopted by the Conference of States Parties (see annex I).

Closing of the Conference

64. H.E Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN and President of the Conference, in his closing remarks extended his appreciation to all States Parties for their confidence entrusted in the Bureau for organising this important session which started the second decade of the Convention He also expressed his compliments to the Secretariat (DESA) and to OHCHR for their support in the preparation and organisation of the session. He recapped the highlights and achievements during the three day programme which covered a wide range of issues related to the implementation of the Convention with a record high number of speakers of nearly 130 under one single agenda item “general debate”, including over 20 at ministerial level; he pointed out also that the three round table discussions during this year’s Conference focused on some of the most pertinent issues for persons with disabilities with regard to the implementation of major global agreements of the last couple of years – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, commitments related to humanitarian actions and the New Urban Agenda – the success of which would largely depend on how States engage persons with disabilities and take necessary action to empower them and ensure their full inclusion and participation. He welcomed also the very informative and useful exchange on the implementation of the Convention with the UN system, the Chair of the CRPD Committee and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, emphasizing that an important take-away of this interactive dialogue was the need to further strengthen all UN actions with regard to the promotion and protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities as a coherent and consistent policy within the UN system.50. The President of the Conference stressed that in this session the Bureau, under the leadership of Bulgaria, had put a stronger emphasis on the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, national human rights institutions and other stakeholders in all deliberations related to the implementation of the CRPD which constituted a major step forward in the efforts to make the Conference and the implementation of the Convention more participatory and inclusive for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in line with the Convention especially its article 4.3.

65. He recalled that the deliberations during the tenth session had an added value for strengthening the inclusive implementation of the 2030 agenda and assuring that the achievement of the SDGs would lead to the realization of all human rights of persons with disabilities and to their empowerment and inclusion in society on an equal basis with others. During these discussions, a number of important issues were highlighted, including that more attention and concrete action both on the part of States Parties and the UN system was needed in order to ensure that the commitments contained in the Convention and the 2030 Agenda were fulfilled for persons with disabilities as a matter of priority. One of the most pressing issues is to ensure desegregation of data by disability - the President of the Conference underscored that in order to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first, enhanced efforts should be made to collect quality data disaggregated by disability.

66. Representatives from Ecuador, Germany, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, Vice Presidents of the Conference, also made statements at the closing meeting in the afternoon of 15 June.

1. Belarus, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Iceland, Micronesia, Samoa, and Fiji. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)