



# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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## Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Eighth session**

New York, 9-11 June 2015

### **Report of the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The eighth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held at United Nations Headquarters from 9 to 11 June 2015.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Conference held six meetings over three full days, opening on the morning of 9 June and closing on the afternoon of 11 June.
3. Accessibility arrangements and reasonable accommodation provisions were made by the Secretariat to facilitate the participation of all participants at the Conference, including International Sign interpretation, closed captioning (via communication access realtime translation (CART) services), wheelchair accessible seating, braille documentation and other measures via the Accessibility Centre at United Nations Headquarters.

#### **II. Opening of the Conference**

4. The first meeting was called to order on the morning of 9 June by the Deputy Secretary-General, who opened the meeting on behalf of the Secretary-General.
5. Under agenda item 2, the Conference proceeded with the election of the officers of the Conference: the representative of the Republic of Korea was elected

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<sup>1</sup> Over 1,000 participants, including delegates representing 154 States parties and other observer States, United Nations entities, national human rights institutions, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations attended the session. In conjunction with the session, over 52 side events were held by Governments, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations at United Nations Headquarters and other locations.



President of the Conference and the representatives of Brazil, Italy, Poland and the United Republic of Tanzania were elected Vice-Presidents.

6. The Conference adopted the provisional agenda submitted by the Secretary-General (CRPD/CSP/2015/1), under agenda item 3.

7. Pursuant to rule 25, paragraph 5 (c), of the rules of procedure, 32 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were accredited to the Conference (see annex II).

8. During the opening meeting, statements were made by the President of the Conference, the Deputy Secretary-General, members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a representative from civil society.

9. The Conference then proceeded to consider agenda item 5 (a), entitled “Matters related to the implementation of the Convention: general debate” in the first and second meetings of the Conference on 9 June.

10. Ninety-seven statements were made under agenda item 5 (a) by 83 States parties,<sup>2</sup> 3 signatories<sup>3</sup> and 10 observers,<sup>4</sup> including representatives of national human rights institutions, United Nations entities and NGOs.

### III. Round-table discussions

11. On 10 June and the morning of 11 June, the Conference held the second set of meetings, which included presentations by a panel of speakers from round tables 1 and 2, as well as an informal panel, followed by interactive discussions. Subsequent to the presentations, the Chairs of the round tables opened the floor to questions and discussion. The President’s summary of the discussions from round tables 1 and 2 and the informal panel, of the interactive dialogue on implementation of the Convention and of the closing session is available at annex II.

#### **Round table 1. Mainstreaming disability in reduction of poverty and inequality**

12. Round table 1, entitled “Mainstreaming disability in reduction of poverty and inequality”, was chaired by the representative of Brazil. Presentations were made by four panellists: Rocio Soledad Florentin Gomez (National Secretariat for the Human Rights of People with Disabilities, Paraguay), Tiina Nummi-Södergren (MyRight,

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Egypt, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe, the State of Palestine and the European Union.

<sup>3</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Finland.

<sup>4</sup> World Intellectual Property Organization, International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, Disabled Peoples International, International Disability Alliance, the Nippon Foundation, Rehabilitation International, Fundación Teleton Mexico, World Blind Union, European Disability Forum and Arab Organization of Disabled People.

Sweden), Kamal Lamichhane (University of Tsukuba, Japan) and Catalina Devandas Aguilar (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities). The panellists noted that there was a strong correlation between poverty and disability, which tended to be mutually reinforcing unless targeted policies and actions were put in place. They also noted that the sustainable development goals should be disability inclusive, on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in order to avoid the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals in that regard. Panellists also noted the need to address persons with disabilities specifically in sustainable development goal 1, as poverty and inequality indicators were much higher for that group, particularly for women and children with disabilities. Also noted was the key role of technology as an enabler and the need for technology to be accessible, available and affordable.

**Round table 2. Improvement of disability data and statistics: objectives and challenges**

13. Round table 2, entitled “Improvement of disability data and statistics: objectives and challenges”, was chaired by the representative of Poland. Presentations were made by the following five panellists: Francesca Perucci (Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs), Jennifer Madans (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Sophie Mitra (Fordham University), Mr. Hyung Shik Kim (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and Maryanne Diamond (Chair, International Disability Alliance). The panellists discussed issues under the theme of the round table and shared ideas and suggestions as to how to overcome the challenges in improving disability data and statistics with a view to better informing development policy and programming and ensuring effective implementation of the Convention.

**Informal panel on addressing the vulnerability and exclusion of persons with disabilities: the situation of women and girls, children’s right to education, disasters and humanitarian crises**

14. The informal panel discussion on addressing the vulnerability and exclusion of persons with disabilities: the situation of women and girls, children’s right to education, disasters and humanitarian crises, which took place in the morning of 11 June, was co-chaired by the representative of Italy and a civil society representative. Presentations were made by five panellists, including Walton Alfonso Webson (Antigua and Barbuda), Rachel Kachaje (Deputy Chair, Disabled Peoples International), Rangita de Silva de Alwis (University of Pennsylvania Law School), Diane Kingston (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and Mary Crock (University of Sydney). In their discussions, speakers emphasized the necessity and urgency of fully taking into account the rights, needs and perspectives of women and children with disabilities, particularly in special situations, such as natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, and made suggestions for further mainstreaming of disability in the development agenda and efforts in the post-2015 development context.

#### **IV. Interactive dialogues with the United Nations system on implementation of the Convention**

15. Under agenda item 6, an interactive dialogue was conducted during the 6th meeting on the afternoon of 11 June 2015. Presentations were made by representatives of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, also made presentations to inform the Conference of their work as it relates to implementation of the Convention.

#### **V. Decisions by the Conference of States Parties**

16. At the 6th meeting, the Conference of States Parties adopted three decisions concerning the venue and timing of the ninth session; a recommendation to the Secretary-General for support to the future sessions of the Conference; and a request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the session to States parties and observers. Those decisions are contained in annex I to the present report.

#### **VI. Closing of the Conference**

17. At the closing of the Conference, the representatives of Brazil and Italy made statements. The representative of Brazil emphasized that the common thread of discussions, both in the Conference itself and in most of the side events, was the relationship between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the continuing negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. The goals related to education, employment, urbanization, means of implementation and the technology facilitation annex were at the basis of a development process that was socially inclusive and promoted economic growth and sustainability for all, in particular persons with disabilities.

18. The President of the Conference, made a final closing statement to summarize the achievements of the eighth session, underscoring the importance of incorporating disability in the post-2015 development framework and efforts. He also emphasized the need to strengthen the Conference of States Parties and to provide adequate support to the sessions of the Conference and ensure the accessibility of the Conference to all participants with disabilities. The President also highlighted the added-value of the Conference as a United Nations mechanism for advancing disability rights and inclusive development that deserved more resources and support.

19. The Conference was adjourned at 6 p.m. on 11 June 2015.

## Annex I

### Decisions by the Conference of States Parties

1. At its eighth session, the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted the following decisions:

**Decision 1: Venue and timing of the ninth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

2. The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recalling General Assembly resolution 61/106, and taking into consideration rule 1, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, decides that its ninth session will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 14 to 16 June 2016.

**Decision 2: Allocation of six meetings over three full days to the sessions of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

3. The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities notes the provision of support for six meetings over three full days during the eighth session of the Conference and reiterates its recommendation to the Secretary-General to provide similar adequate support for six meetings over three full days at future sessions of the Conference. The Conference invites the Secretary-General to ensure the swift implementation of this decision.

**Decision 3: Request to the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

4. The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities decides to request the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Conference on its eighth session to all States parties and observers.

## Annex II

### **President's summary of the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

#### **Opening of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

1. The Deputy Secretary-General opened the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties on behalf of the Secretary-General and presided over the election of the Bureau of the Conference.
2. After his election as President of the Conference, the representative of the Republic of Korea made opening remarks, in which he stated that the Convention was adopted by the international community to ensure the protection and promotion of the universal human rights and dignity for persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development.
3. The Deputy Secretary-General stated that the year 2015 was the time for global action for a new global development framework, in particular, by ensuring the accessibility and inclusion of all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities. He stressed that the adoption of an inclusive post-2015 development agenda should be based on the Charter of the United Nations, which enshrined the aspirations of the Organization to achieve economic and social progress and human rights for a peaceful and prosperous world for all. He also stressed that under the premise of "Leave no one behind" and to guarantee a life of dignity for all, the rights of persons with disabilities should be integrated into all aspects of a post-2015 development framework. In addition, he encouraged all to work on possible global indicators that reflected the goals and objectives of the Convention. The Deputy Secretary-General further emphasized the importance of data collection in ensuring that persons with disabilities were included in all regional and national strategies, especially groups with heightened vulnerabilities, including children, women and older persons. In closing, he reiterated that there was an urgent need to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the continuing process towards a post-2015 development agenda that was inclusive, accessible and sustainable for all.
4. Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) discussed the report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals. She noted that persons with disabilities should be included in education and economic growth, in reducing poverty and inequality, the creation of inclusive and safe cities and in strengthening the means of implementation of sustainable development through the collection of data and statistics. She continued by stating that the human rights model was crucial in all major activities of the United Nations, such as the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in Istanbul in May 2016, and the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015.
5. Mr. Venkatesh Balakrishna, representing organizations of persons with disabilities, took the floor. He pointed out that, while the Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities had been adopted by 154 Member States, 20 per cent of all persons with disabilities were among the poorest in the world. Mr. Balakrishna argued for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

## **Adoption of the agenda**

6. The Conference adopted the agenda of the Conference (CRPD/CSP/2015/1) and approved by consensus the accreditation of the NGOs that had applied to participate as observers to the Conference.

## **Round-table discussions**

### **Round table 1. Mainstreaming disability in reduction of poverty and inequality**

7. The representative of Brazil opened round table 1 and offered comments on the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. Persons with disabilities were mentioned in certain goals and targets in the sustainable development goals, as had not been the case with the Millennium Development Goals, and were present throughout the document. The Vice-President noted that some of the goals and targets included in the zero draft referred to existing international standards and suggested that the standards enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could be referenced. He also stressed the necessity of developing a mandate that would allow the United Nations system to provide assistance and support for technologies used by persons with disabilities. In the coming months, the forthcoming discussions on financing for development provided a unique opportunity to raise issues related to technology and access for persons with disabilities. The Vice-President also mentioned the importance of ensuring that the indicators to measure implementation of the post-2015 development agenda included data disaggregated by disability status, to ensure visibility of the needs of persons with disabilities. This was an opportunity that must be seized to advance poverty reduction and equality for persons with disabilities under the Convention and the emerging post-2015 development agenda.

8. Kamal Lamichhane (University of Tsukuba, Japan), presented evidence-based research from the Philippines and Nepal regarding disability and education, to illustrate the relationship between poverty, disability and inequality. That research had recently been published with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Mr. Lamichhane highlighted the importance of education as a central means for eliminating poverty, stressing that ensuring access to education benefits not only persons with disabilities but also their families and society as a whole. He provided some examples of the returns from early investment in children with disabilities in terms of reducing the incidence of poverty later in life. For example, his research findings in Nepal showed that with one additional year of schooling, the income of persons with disabilities would increase by 19 to 20 per cent. Mr. Lamichhane concluded by stressing the need for a paradigm shift “from exclusion to inclusion, from discrimination to acceptance and from charity to investment.” He also discussed the current status of Nepal, where thousands of people were still recovering from the recent, devastating earthquake. He reiterated that all countries, in particular developing countries such as Nepal, should address

the urgent need for investment in capacity-building of persons with disabilities through education, in particular, for disaster risk reduction, resilience and reconstruction.

9. Rocio Soledad Florentin Gomez (National Secretariat for the Human Rights of People with Disabilities, Paraguay), discussed the significance of the inclusion of people with disabilities in all sustainable development goals, but also pointed to major barriers that needed to be overcome to make that happen. She indicated that progress ultimately depended on political will and highlighted the need for each Member State to reflect on its own challenges in policymaking. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was one of the instruments that should guide States when designing inclusive policies, but to “think globally, act locally” was crucial. Ms. Florentin Gomez stressed the importance of adequate timelines in order for actions to be projected over the short, medium and long term, as well as the importance of budgeting. Finally, she stated that the cost of the exclusion of persons with disabilities was high, while inclusion meant an investment in the future.

10. Tiina Nummi-Södergren, (My Right, Sweden) stressed the importance of designing and implementing the sustainable development goals in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She highlighted the aspect of gender disparity in poverty reduction policies. Furthermore, she stressed the need for strengthening disability indicators to improve and monitor progress for the effective implementation of national and international policies and services. Ms. Nummi-Södergren also emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder participation in the decision-making process for the sustainable development goals, in order to ensure the inclusion of disability in the entire post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

11. Catalina Devandas Aguilar (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) stated that, despite the progress made to eliminate poverty globally, rates of poverty and inequality remained disproportionately high among persons with disabilities. She emphasized that poverty was a human rights issue and extreme poverty was a human rights violation. She also stated that poverty among persons with disabilities was not relevant only for developing countries, but was a global issue affecting persons with disabilities in all parts of the world. Furthermore, she stressed the crucial need for overcoming traditional approaches to social protection programmes, which might reinforce exclusion, and focusing instead on disability-inclusive social protection that promoted the independence of persons with disabilities, their meaningful participation in society and the full enjoyment of human rights. She also acknowledged that, while the recently published zero draft of the outcome document for the United Nations summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda represented important progress, there was still a major opportunity to ensure that the post-2015 sustainable development goals had an explicit and strong mention of disability and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to develop disability-inclusive indicators that measured the progress achieved in combating the poverty of persons with disabilities.

12. During the ensuing discussion, representatives from Ghana, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and the European Union took the floor.

**Round table 2. Improvement of disability data and statistics: objectives and challenges**

13. The representative of Poland chaired the second round-table discussion.

14. Francesca Perruci (Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) discussed the indicator framework for the sustainable development goals, which was expected to include indicators at international, national and subnational levels. Indicators helped to inform the political discussion in terms of priorities, provided a structural framework at the international level and informed the public and media. Addressing the principle of “leaving no one behind” would require data disaggregation and indicators that related to all groups of the population. While a census could easily be used for any subgroup of the population, it was only conducted every 10 years and contained fewer variables. Surveys tended to collect more information. Of 124 countries in the world, 74 per cent had included questions on disabilities in their most recent census. Additionally, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) had developed and carried out surveys on children with disabilities. Next steps included focusing on new opportunities for capacity-building and the involvement of disabled people’s organizations and national and international statistics organizations. A proposal on the indicators for the sustainable development goals would be submitted in March 2016 to the Statistical Commission.

15. In her presentation on disability data collection, Sophie Mitra (Fordham University) discussed the urgent need for quality data for global comparability and how evaluation and longitudinal data could track progress over time, including the data and information regarding a country’s compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Progress in that area had been made in the past decade by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, an international expert body working in line with the mandate of the United Nations Statistical Commission. Continuing work to measure disability among children included work by UNICEF. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank were also developing a survey on disabilities and environmental barriers. Progress at the national level could be seen by parties joining the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Opportunities for further global data collection included data sets from demographic and health surveys, the multiple indicator cluster surveys and the living standards measurement study. Each of those surveys offered unique opportunities for collecting data on disabilities globally.

16. Maryanne Diamond (Chair, International Disability Alliance) discussed how the new global agenda could strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities by including input from persons with disabilities at all levels. While the situation of persons with disabilities had often not been captured in data collection, disaggregation of data must be a priority in the future. There were a number of targets in the sustainable development goals that needed disability indicators, such as education, poverty and access to clean water. Many States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had mechanisms to measure data on disability and the new agenda would help to strengthen those means. Data collection and disaggregation of data was possible through data-sharing partnerships. The partnership for statistical institutions and civil society was also much needed to uphold multi-stakeholder interest. Disabled people’s organizations and NGOs could play a crucial role in that regard.

17. Jennifer Madans (Associate Director of Science at the National Center for Health Statistics, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) provided a brief presentation concerning the work of the National Center for Health Statistics and the Washington Group that had arisen out of an international call for more internationally comparable, comprehensive and reliable data on persons with disabilities. Through a coordinated effort by several United Nations organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations and national statistics offices, the Washington Group had created a set of tools to collect disability-specific data. The tool, consisting of a short questionnaire, took the form of a set of six questions and four related answer categories that, when applied to any large data collection studies such as surveys and censuses, helped investigators to disaggregate data for persons with disabilities and therefore to improve national statistics on disability. That tool was created not only to increase the amount of data available around the world, but also to standardize data to facilitate cross-national and cross-temporal data comparisons. That, in turn, would help researchers and Governments to track progress or changes related to disability over time and across several countries. Ms. Madans discussed the urgent need, as a first and immediate step for States parties, to include that validated set of questions in censuses and national surveys to gather information disaggregated by disability.

18. Hyung Shik Kim (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) spoke on the importance of improving data collection methods for the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He mentioned that the need for a comprehensive and standardized data collection method was an imperative stated in article 31 of the Convention. Mr. Kim noted that many States parties to the Convention failed to provide disaggregated data in their implementation reports, revealing the huge gaps that existed between the intention of States parties to implement and monitor the Convention and their follow-through. Mr. Kim called for a comprehensive and standardized method of data collection in order for all States parties to meet the requirements for data collection set forth in the Convention. He also highlighted the importance of balancing the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to respond to and address the diverse issues and needs of persons with disabilities. Qualitative data, in particular, would help to provide a fuller understanding of disability and human functioning and the fulfilment of rights under the Convention that were not readily measured through quantitative methods. He concluded by stating that a new, internationally recognized and agreed-upon data collection method should be created and used for two sets of processes: monitoring and implementation of the Convention and monitoring and implementation of the sustainable development goals.

19. Representatives from Australia and India asked questions from the floor.

**Informal panel: Addressing the vulnerability and exclusion of persons with disabilities: the situation of women and girls, children's right to education, disasters and humanitarian crises**

20. The informal panel was co-chaired by the representative of Italy and Yetnebersh Nigussie (Executive Director, Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development).

21. Walter Alfonso Webson (Antigua and Barbuda) began his presentation by providing statistics on the prevalence of disability in Latin America and the

Caribbean. He stated the need, owing to the more than 60 million people with disabilities living in the region, to establish provisions to prevent exploitation and harm towards persons with disabilities, specifically women and children. He also spoke about the challenges that persons with invisible disabilities still faced in the region, as few countries had the resources and knowledge base necessary to support those individuals. Mr. Webson also spoke about the need to develop disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies in countries that were prone to natural and man-made disasters. He spoke of the strategies that Antigua and Barbuda prepared for the hurricanes that hit every year. He spoke briefly on the infrastructural challenges that developing countries faced in trying to implement disaster risk reduction strategies and outlined specific examples of how his country had worked around those infrastructural challenges to include persons with disabilities.

22. Rangita de Silva de Alwis (University of Pennsylvania Law School) focused on inclusive education and the rights of children with disabilities as well as the cross-sectionalities between gender and disability. She discussed the need for a reassessment of inclusive education that would involve the increased participation of persons with disabilities, including in the context of the Incheon Declaration, which had emerged from the World Education Forum in 2015, calling for the commitment of the international education community to refocus existing national and regional educational policy toward providing access to education for the world's most vulnerable populations. She also mentioned examples of how different countries had tried to make their laws and education policies more inclusive to persons with disabilities. As one of those examples, she mentioned the efforts of the High Court of South Africa to redefine education to include civic engagement and political participation, simultaneously broadening the definition of disability in the country and promoting inclusive political participation for persons with disabilities. She also discussed how violence against persons with disabilities, specifically women, was a barrier to inclusive education and subsequently the participation and leadership of women with disabilities in society and development.

23. Mary Crock (University of Sydney Faculty of Law) discussed the protection of persons with disabilities in disaster situations and humanitarian crises. She began her discussion by outlining a six-country study she had conducted with her colleagues at the University of Sydney on the prevalence of disability among migrant and refugee populations. The study had concluded that refugee populations were at much greater risk of loss of life or injury during natural and man-made disasters and that persons with disabilities living in those communities were at even greater risk. One of the many challenges facing Governments and humanitarian aid organizations in disaster situations was finding a way to deliver support services to persons with disabilities. In their study of Syrian refugee camps, they had found that persons with disabilities were often denied health care and food because of resource shortages. She then discussed how the international policymaking bodies had been very slow to provide protections to persons with disabilities in disaster areas. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was an international, binding obligation and a first step in creating strategies to ensure the protection of disability rights in disaster situations. One of the critical issues that remained was the identification of persons with disabilities within disaster areas. Echoing her colleagues, Ms. Crock called for a comprehensive and reliable data-gathering system in order to serve the needs of the disability community better.

24. Rachel Kachaje (Deputy Vice-Chair, Disabled Peoples International) made a presentation on women with disabilities and discussed the complexity for policymakers of addressing the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women with disabilities. The most important thing was to find a solution to the exclusion of women and girls in disability policies. High levels of poverty could lead to increased vulnerabilities and sexual-based violence for women with disabilities. Ms. Kachaje called for disaggregated data to help inform policy decisions. Education would help to empower women so that they were no longer excluded from policy decisions. The most effective way to include women was a twin-track strategy, ensuring that women with disabilities had access to education and health care, as well as economic empowerment. A second strategy was mainstreaming disability in all government line ministries. In Malawi, mainstreaming was progressing as each ministry now had a disability policy to ensure that it was not concentrated in only one government department. In addition, the training of government officials at all levels to ensure they understood disability was equally crucial. Recommendations included the collection of disaggregated data on specific situations that affected women and girls with disabilities and deliberate efforts to fund organizations for women with disabilities and their participation in conferences. Creating partnerships of women and girls with disabilities would prove beneficial as the international community moved forward with the post-2015 development agenda.

25. Diane Kingston (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) took the floor and spoke about situations of vulnerability, in which persons with disabilities were in danger or at risk. She emphasized the need to reshape the discourse on disability by focusing on empowerment mechanisms rather than adopting a paternalistic approach. Creating a level playing field for both persons with disabilities and those without disabilities would mean that persons with disabilities were well protected, resilient, secure and empowered. In emergency situations, persons with disabilities needed to be fully included in decision-making and the implementation of plans. Women with disabilities, who were more prone to sexual-based violence, needed safeguards put in place for them. In addition, women with disabilities needed economic empowerment and access to health care.

26. During the question and answer session, a delegate from India took the floor.

### **Implementation of the Convention by the United Nations system**

27. The President of the Conference opened the session on “Implementation of the Convention”.

28. Lenni Montiel (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) provided an overview of ongoing efforts of the Department to advance a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-2015 development framework, bringing together new and traditional stakeholders and operationalizing multi-stakeholder partnerships for concrete progress on priority issues, such as accessibility, for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society and development. He reminded the audience that approximately 15 per cent of the world’s population had some form of disability and of that 3 per cent had a severe disability and those numbers were likely to rise, emphasizing conflict as a serious factor. Mr. Montiel reaffirmed

the importance of the continuing efforts towards an inclusive post-2015 development framework to ensure that the development agenda would be people-centred and listed the many gains of including explicit and implicit references to persons with disabilities in the sustainable development goals. He highlighted disaster risk reduction and data collection as important areas of action and mentioned the contributions of Member States, the United Nations system and civil society organizations to the successful outcome of the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in terms of its inclusion of the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities to be a model for future United Nations conferences and global meetings. He stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels and highlighted the challenges of their impact on development progress and the well-being of all people, especially persons with disabilities.

29. Maarit Kohonen Sheriff (OHCHR) discussed numerous initiatives being carried out by OHCHR. It had submitted its report to the twenty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, organized panel discussions and provided technical assistance to Member States in order to better implement the Convention. Ms. Sheriff listed the challenges OHCHR had faced, namely including persons with disabilities in global indicators with disaggregated data. She mentioned that poverty and inclusive education remained priorities as did an increased focus on women and girls as a vulnerable group that faced discrimination.

30. Charles Chauvel (UNDP) stressed the importance of mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities. He then discussed the role of UNDP in providing support to Member States to meet their obligations, as well as in promoting internationally agreed human rights standards and principles and integration. Mr. Chauvel then discussed the new UNDP Strategic Plan, “Changing with the world”, which focused on reducing the exclusion and inequalities faced by persons with disabilities and on education, employment, stigma and accessibility, as well as a recognition of disability as a major source of vulnerability in humanitarian crises and disasters. He concluded by reaffirming earlier sentiments that the post-2015 framework could not be achieved without tackling disability as a driver of social inequality and exclusion.

31. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA) made a presentation on behalf of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and spoke on the increasing efforts to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies through partnerships with state governments, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities. Ms. Nauk highlighted the milestone achieved at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai in recognizing persons with disabilities as agents of change and a resource in disaster situations. She referenced several examples of United Nations entities strengthening their cooperation in advancing the development of data collection on disability under article 31 of the Convention. She concluded by reaffirming the existence of the Inter-Agency Support Group prepared to help Member States create tangible disability-inclusive policies.

32. Margareta Wahlström (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) briefed the Conference on the historic achievement of the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai of including the disability perspective and

persons with disabilities in the processes leading to the Conference and its outcome. She noted that the newly adopted global framework on disaster reduction that emerged from the Sendai Conference represented a clear shift in the approach to disaster risk reduction, putting more stress on risk preparedness, resilience-building and reconstruction. She emphasized that the focus was no longer on disaster itself, but on the risks of disaster and what needed to be done to prevent or reduce those risks. That broadened the agenda considerably in terms of the need for collaboration among stakeholders and also for coherence with other developmental frameworks being negotiated in 2015. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 set seven global targets that were particularly important. Of those seven targets, four needed to be quantitatively monitored, with a focus on loss of life, economic loss, the impact on social and critical infrastructure, risk-informed plans, early warning systems and accessibility. Ms. Wahlström concluded by discussing the lessons the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction had learned, emphasizing that international agreements were necessary but not sufficient and that any policy or project that was being planned needed the perspectives and suggestions of persons with disabilities.

33. Kristin Hetle (representative of UN-Women) discussed the intersectional discriminations women and girls with disabilities faced, as they were twice as likely to experience domestic violence as women without disabilities and were abused over a longer period of time. She then shared the twin-track approach, a solid basis of action to promote and protect women and girls with disabilities. The new UN-Women Strategic Plan gave special consideration to women and girls with disabilities, ensuring that all UN-Women policies and supported programmes were inclusive of women with disabilities, in line with gender equality. However, many challenges remained, including the need for improved data disaggregated by disability, sex and age; the need for a global partnership for the rights of women and girls with disabilities that would build alliances with women and organizations of women that had common goals; and ensuring the voices of women with disabilities were present at all levels. Ms. Hetle stressed the necessity of UN-Women working in partnership with other agencies to ensure those challenges were addressed.

34. Following those statements, representatives from the Dominican Republic, Mexico and South Africa took the floor to ask questions.

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

36. Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) stated that the Committee had various pillars of action. The first pillar dealt with Committee partnerships with various United Nations agencies dealing with disability and with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities and the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility. The Committee's second pillar dealt with strengthening treaty bodies. The third pillar addressed capacity-building with civil society and others. The Committee was also involved in the process of setting out the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The Committee had emphasized its work in promoting universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. Ms. Cisternas Reyes affirmed that the Committee had worked tirelessly in interacting with the

Conference by holding and participating in side events and panels. She suggested that there should be a panel on education during the ninth session of the Conference.

37. Lenín Moreno (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility) stated that there was evidence of growing efforts to strengthen the international agenda in terms of the rights of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system. However, mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in society and development remained a work in progress. The invisibility of and discrimination against persons with disabilities created a vicious circle of inequality and discrimination, and it was unclear whether the Millennium Development Goals had improved the condition of that group. It was essential to continue to advocate for inclusive education, health care and employment, and policies, programmes and projects must be developed to end exclusion, marginalization and inequality. Mr. Moreno suggested that an updated world report on disability might be needed.

38. Catalina Devandas Aguilar (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) noted that she had worked during the first six months of her mandate to ensure the full access and effective participation of persons with disabilities. In terms of the sustainable development goals, she stated that it was crucial to ensure the inclusion in the new framework of both disability-specific indicators and data disaggregated by type of impairment for general indicators. She further highlighted a need to translate international human rights standards into specific measures that had a direct impact on the lives of persons with disabilities and stressed that her office was ready to provide technical assistance to Member States in that regard. Ms. Devandas Aguilar also noted the continuing need to affirm and promote the rights and participation of women and girls with disabilities as a cross-cutting issue.

39. Following the panellists' statements, questions from the floor came from the representatives of Chile, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

40. Following the panel discussions, the President presented three decisions that were subsequently adopted by the Conference (see annex I).

## **Closing of the Conference**

41. In his closing remarks, the President noted that the Conference had had a record number of 97 speakers during the general debate. He summarized the key issues of the round-table discussions and the interactive dialogue, noting that progress had been made in supporting States parties in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but that efforts to mainstream disability were still required to achieve the goal of a disability-inclusive society and development. He noted that the common message among States parties identified during the eighth session of the Conference was that mainstreaming of disability was an imperative for the new economic and social development agenda, including the continuing work for an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post 2015 development agenda and framework. The inclusion of the rights and well-being of over 1 billion persons with disabilities in a new global development agenda was essential to ensure realization of universal human rights, social justice and sustainable development for all.

42. The President also referred to the centrality of the universal design approach for accessibility in considering any investment in urban and rural development including infrastructure, facilities and services, noting that there was no full and effective participation of persons with disabilities without accessibility.

43. The President also stated that the eighth session of the Conference and all its related programmes and high-quality side events, a record number in the history of the Conference, had clearly demonstrated that the Conference was a central United Nations mechanism for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and for inclusive development, in view of the expected adoption of an inclusive post 2015 development agenda in September 2015. New opportunities were emerging for the States parties to the Convention to strengthen the linkage between the normative framework and development policy and practice. Since its establishment in 2008, the Conference had evolved into a unique international multi-stakeholder platform for Governments, NGOs and academia to exchange ideas, experiences and practical solutions for integration of the rights of persons with disabilities into society and development. He further emphasized the need for improving the accessibility of United Nations facilities, services and regulations to ensure a non-discriminatory and inclusive working environment for delegates and staff members with disabilities throughout the United Nations system. To that end, it was important to improve the existing rules and guidelines of the United Nations system to provide adequate support and accessibility to all persons with disabilities. The President further stated that the membership of the United Nations, including the States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, should consider initiating a General Assembly resolution to request the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive report on how better to reflect the rights of persons with disabilities and improve the working environment of the United Nations system, including its facilities, rules and regulations.

44. Finally the President reiterated the need for allocating the necessary resources for future sessions of the Conference since attendance and participation had grown since 2008, when 20 States parties had taken part, while there were 155 in 2015, and attendance had grown to over 1,000 participants from over 150 delegations and 100 civil society organizations, as well as from many United Nations agencies.

## Annex III

### **Non-governmental organizations accredited to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at its eighth session**

1. Access Israel
2. Australian Disability and Development Consortium
3. Association of Parents, Friends and People with Disabilities of the Brazil Bank
4. Autism Europe
5. Best Buddies of Mexico
6. Brazilian Academy of Neurology
7. Campus Arnau d'Escala (Spain)
8. Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation (Tanzania)
9. Centre for the Education and Development of Mauritian Children
10. Centre for Legal Assistance for People with Disabilities (Moldova)
11. Collective (Morocco)
12. Commitments (India)
13. Dominica Association of Persons with Disabilities
14. Discovering Deaf Worlds (United States)
15. Gedaraf Digital City Organization (Sudan)
16. IDeA Center (United States)
17. Jubilee Sailing Trust (United Kingdom)
18. Korea Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities (Republic of Korea)
19. Korea Differently Abled Women United (Republic of Korea)
20. Korea Employment Security Association for the Disabled (Republic of Korea)
21. Korea Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (Republic of Korea)
22. Korean Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (Republic of Korea)
23. Korea Spinal Cord Injury Association (Republic of Korea)
24. Lakeshore Foundation (United States)
25. Latin American Blind Union (Uruguay)
26. Lumos (United Kingdom)
27. Manasa (India)
28. Muscle Disabilities Association of Korea (Republic of Korea)
29. Mobile Theatre Cultural Society (India)
30. Sense International (India)
31. Seocho Centre for Independent Living (Republic of Korea)
32. Wheelchairs of Hope (Israel)

**Annex IV****List of documentation before the Conference of States Parties at its eighth session**

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<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title or description</i>
<a href="#">CRPD/CSP/2015/1</a>	Provisional agenda
<a href="#">CRPD/CSP/2015/2</a>	Mainstreaming disability in reduction of poverty and inequality
<a href="#">CRPD/CSP/2015/3</a>	Improvement of disability data and statistics: objectives and challenges
<a href="#">CRPD/CSP/2015/4</a>	Addressing the vulnerability and exclusion of persons with disabilities: the situation of women and girls, children's right to education, disasters and humanitarian crises

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