



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 46th SESSION

Annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities

Theme: Participation in sport under Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(5 March 2021):

- The annual debate/panel is held pursuant to the Human Rights Council [resolution 16/15](#), adopted in 2011.
- The annual debate aims to address the obligation under article 30(5) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to enable persons with disabilities to participate in recreation, leisure and sports on an equal basis with others, including in mainstream and disability-specific sporting activities, in sporting, recreational, leisure and tourism venues, and in education
- Panel chair: **H.E Ms. Nazhat Shameen Khan**, President of the Human Rights Council

Opening Statement

Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes the role of sport and physical activities in **fostering inclusion**. We should increase our efforts to make **social, emotional and health benefits** available, **equally**, to persons with disabilities. **Equal access** has to be guaranteed by all stakeholders including **companies and institutions** involved in the **tourism, recreational and well-being sectors**. Also, **local governments** by transforming people's access to sports facilities and **mayors and municipalities** by making their communities **more inclusive**.

Members States should **ensure that inclusive physical education is a right guaranteed for all children** as children who build friendships with persons with disabilities are better prepared to **counter stigma** and **discrimination throughout their lives**. **Athletes serve as a good example**; that's why the partnership with the **International Paralympic Committee** is a key in promoting the idea that athletes with disabilities should enjoy the same level of support as all other athletes. **States and sports organizations should increase their efforts to address existing inequalities**, ensuring access to appropriate assistive technologies and financial support. Also, they should all develop an **accountability system** that can measure **States' progress in achieving disability rights**.

Gender equality is also essential, as well as **increasing support for indigenous people** with disabilities and generating **inclusive sports in humanitarian settings**.

OHCHR's adoption of the first **Disability Rights Strategy** will have a positive impact across all OHCHR's operations and programming. The Office will report on its performance to this Council at the 47th session. Also, the OHCHR develop the **SDG-CRPD** resource package, which includes practical guidance and tools to ensure that the SDGs Goals will deliver for persons with disabilities, in line with the Convention. Lastly, more efforts should be made to **mainstream disability rights throughout national and global responses to COVID-19**.

Statements by the Panelists:

Mr. Gerard Quinn, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (video message):

The **UN CRPD** is unique as it allowed the voices of persons with disabilities to be heard. **Sport is an avenue for personal self-expression**, it **enables the expression of spirit**, it's conducive to an **ethic of belonging**, all off which people with disabilities should be able to enjoy. Moreover, through sports, people with disabilities **gain self-awareness, courage, resilience, confidence** as they believe they belong to something higher. It



allows for them to **gain life skills** that they wouldn't be able to get through books. Additionally, **sport also bridges the divide between individual and collective endeavor** in less tangible and more symbolic ways (Even if you are not directly participating as a team member, it matters to have been there). This is why accessing **sports venues** is so essential for people with disabilities.

Two challenges remain: First, in the **inter-sectional dimension** - the underrepresentation of women and girls in sports compare to men or boys, and the effective inclusion of older persons and indigenous people - and second, in the **post-conflict dimension** - increasing the role of sport in peace-building and developing an ethics of cooperation.

Ms. Rita van Driel, Governing Board Member of the International Paralympic Committee (video message):

Change starts with sport and it also plays a significant role in advancing and accelerating the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Moreover, the **Paralympics Games** attract TV audiences of billions of people worldwide **helping to break down barriers and drive social change**. It has also the ability to **change people's attitudes towards disability** as is the case of the UK which demonstrated people with disabilities secured more jobs after the transmission of the games.

Just **15 nations supplied 60% of the athletes for Rio's Paralympic Games**, and **42 teams featured no women**. Therefore, it is key to continue strengthening the technical training and resources of the **137 developing National Paralympic Committees (NPCs)**. **Developing nations have already increased their participation** as a result of this along with the help of IDB programs targeted at five Latin American countries. All these programs have had a **transformative effect** as people with disabilities are starting to **live independent lives and are participating more and more in international competitions**. **Challenges** remain in being able to **provide measurable, comparable and disaggregated data** that can be used as evidence of the actual impact of sports in human rights agendas. **UNESCO's Kazan Action Plan** is a good step in this direction.

This summer, the IPC will unite with nine other international organizations, including UN HRC, to **launch a 10-year global campaign that places disability at the heart of the diversity and inclusion agenda**.

Mr. Jaime Cruz Juscamaita, Inclusion International (video message):

It is key that **inclusive sports** allow for us (people with disabilities) to improve our **social relationships with others that have no disabilities**. This contributes to a sense of belonging to the whole school community. Moreover, **physical education teachers** are often the first to prevent children with disabilities from participating in sports activities because they think we can't do it. Inclusive sports allow us to gain **self-confidence to grow and motivates into wanting to set new personal challenges**.

The main recommendation is that people with disabilities **do physical exercise with people with no disabilities because this will lead to breaking myths, stereotypes and stigma** ("that we can't to a certain sport"); Also, it will motivate other clubs and schools to copy these good practices. Schools **must work on surpassing the barriers that affect our development in a sport**, the most important being **attitudinal barriers** because they are the hardest to change.

"I believe that no one should force people to be separated but to be included." This is why the **Paralympic and Olympic games should be one big event**.

Ms. Bodour Almeer, Sustainability Director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 (video message):

The goal is that the **World Cup Qatar 2022 is accessible for all people**. The actions taken to promote this includes: **dedicated tickets for fans with disabilities** and limited mobility and in most cases with a complimentary companion ticket included; extensive services for travelers with disabilities through Qatar Airways; accessible accommodation; barrier-free access, accessible check-in counters, accessible washrooms



and specialized services as well as a dedicated lounges; **accessible transportation and assistance through specially trained staff and volunteers in the stadiums.**

To achieve the **Sustainability Strategy for the FIFA World Cup 2022**, the **Accessibility Forum** was set up in 2016 with the participation of members with disability and representatives of local organizations for people with disabilities. Some of the successful outcomes include trainings in accessibility etiquette for volunteers and staff members, the upgrade of many entertainment areas in Doha and sensory rooms. Also, continuing to interview people with disabilities is a main objective to improve the actions and measures taken forward.

Oral Interventions from States, Group of States and Observers:

States (Joint Statements): *Malaysia (on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Lithuania (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic Countries) Guyana (on behalf of CARICOM Group in Geneva), Mexico (on behalf of a Group of Latin American Countries), Thailand (on behalf of a Group of Countries) Bahrain (on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council) European Union (on behalf of the European Union and the Non-Aligned Movement).*
States (Statements made in the State's individual capacity): *Israel, Greece, Monaco, Mauritania, Brazil, France, Sovereign Order of Malta, Marshall Islands, Uganda, Bulgaria, Serbia, Jamaica, Vanuatu, Egypt, EU.*
Observers: *OEA, UNICEF. NHRI: National Human Rights Council of Morocco. NGOs: Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women ARROW, International Disability Alliance, GANHRI Working Group: Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXII, Sikh Human Rights Group*

States: States agreed on the fact that people with disabilities should participate in physical activity and sports on an **equal basis** with others and that governments should enable their participation **through inclusive policies**. In this regard, independently affirming and implementing the articles of the CRPD, specially **Article 30 is key for social inclusion**. Countries should also center efforts on **challenges posed by the pandemic** which has exacerbated vulnerability and dependency of people with disability **who struggle to get basic needs and healthcare**. Lithuania (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic Countries) and Marshall Islands: Mentioned it is fundamental to include all children in these policies, especially women and girls with disabilities, and that it is crucial to dismantle **structural inequalities**. Greece: Stressed that **the role of associations of persons with disabilities and relevant civil society organizations is of paramount importance**, as they are in the best position to channel requests and assess relevant programs. Israel: Mentioned that the adoption of the **CRPD** reflects a dramatic change in the **recognition of the equal place of persons living with disabilities in the society**, and in the **global understanding that disability is not a medical problem but an issue of human rights and equality**, calling to deal with those obstacles. Jamaica, the EU (on behalf of the European Union and the Non-Aligned Movement) and Thailand (on behalf of a Group of Countries): Called countries to intensify efforts to fully **implement the CRPD and the Optional Protocol**. Uganda: Countries should commit to more **financial resources and further global policy support and cooperation** to prevent unequal social protection to people with disabilities in times of crisis.

OEA: Focused on the current pandemic crisis in which people with disabilities are suffering from increased discrimination and have numerous difficulties in accessing **adequate care**. Therefore, States must ensure the **right to health** of all persons with disabilities and **develop protocols of care**. **UNICEF:** Recalled that all children have the right to participate in sports as it **enhances cognition and improves physical function**. It expressed its concerns over the exclusion of people with disability in physical activities as this leads to high **prevalence of overweight and poor health outcomes**. Also, that country efforts should focus on **girls and women who are underrepresented**, and on **producing statistics of violence against children**. Countries therefore should promote **Inclusive physical education both in school and out of school**. **National Human Rights Council of Morocco:** Mentioned that a better monitoring of persons with disability will enable them to fully enjoy their rights, especially during COVID 19 pandemic.



NGOs: Representatives underscored the importance of **advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities**, specially their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Additionally, that **community-level awareness raising** is required **targeting the myths and misconceptions surrounding sexuality of women and girls with disabilities**. They also urged States to **facilitate and promote the participation of people with disabilities in the “building back better” plans** so that every aspect of their life, including sport, may be given proper consideration. Further recommendations were given to countries regarding **disability-inclusion in governance structures** and **more funding mechanisms in relevant local, national and international sporting organizations**. Also, they highlighted the importance of enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities **through their representative organizations, in public decision-making relevant to sport and physical activity**.

Questions to the Panelists:

Lithuania (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries) Could you elaborate on the possible specific actions that the states should take in countering gender-based structural exclusion of the persons with disabilities? **Bulgaria:** What measures could states further elaborate to raise awareness and strengthen the participation of persons with disabilities, including women and girls, in physical activity and sports? **Greece:** How can the role of associations of persons with disabilities and relevant civil society organizations be increased in the process of the international promotion of the right to participate in recreation, leisure and sports on an equal basis with others? **Guyana (on behalf of CARICOM Group in Geneva):** How can States enhance international cooperation to give fuller effect to the commitments set out in Article 30(5) of the Convention? **Jamaica:** What additional steps can be taken by States to strengthen the application of Article 30 of the Convention?

Final Remarks by the Panelists:

Mr. Gerard Quinn: Highlighted the UN CRPD as an “achievement of civilization” just as Serbia mentioned it. Called for countries to drive change in the field of sport, especially during the pandemic to guarantee the access of health space to people with disabilities. He also mentioned the importance in breaking myths and commended the 10 years strategy for people with disability developed by the EU. Finally, he called for country efforts to focus on gender-based participation.

Ms. Rita van Driel: The IPC is focused on increasing the delivery of development programs and on increasing the capacity of the National Paralympic Committees (NPCs). It is crucial for government to develop good relationships with this NPCs

Mr. Jaime Cruz Juscamaita: Inclusion is key to be able to make friends. People with down syndrome don't have opportunities to participate in high level competency events.

Ms. Bodour Almeer: Working with all right holders is key to guarantee that Qatar World Cup will be accessible to everyone. They are committed to the vision of living a legacy of accessibility infrastructure.

To watch full To watch full Annual debate on the rights of persons with disabilities, refer to [UN Web TV](#).