

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 55th SESSION

### Annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities

*Theme: Good practices of support systems enabling community inclusion of persons with disabilities*

11 March 2024

**Ms Nada Al-Nashif, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**, in her opening remarks affirmed that despite efforts made, **persons with disabilities are still too often left behind** in our societies and economies, many are still segregated and isolated from the rest of the community in institutions and their homes. The human rights economy, with care and support systems at its core, works to reduce such inequalities and dismantle systemic discrimination. In doing so, **the international community must**: transform traditional care models, which are a source of harm for persons with disabilities; develop coordination mechanisms within governments to establish effective and efficient governance structures supporting care and support systems, which include data collection and utilization; work together with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, placing their voices and rights at the centre of decision-making processes; ensure key policy areas are well embedded in care and support economy efforts.

She mentioned developments in reforming care and support systems, including laws, policies and services that advance human rights and wellbeing of both care and support givers and receivers in *Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Mexico, and Uruguay*. The transformation of care economy demands the adequate allocation of resources to establish systems that reduce and redistribute unpaid care and support work, departing from past approaches.

She concluded that the upcoming **Summit of the Future** is the opportunity to boost the implementation of the commitment to leave no person with a disability behind, agree on concrete solutions to the challenges that persons with disabilities face, and reinvigorate multilateralism for disability inclusion.

**Ms Fatma Wangare Haji, Regional Coordinator for Inclusion Africa**, stressed that people with disabilities have been excluded from their communities for a very long time due to limited or lack of supports. She reported that for outdated care models to transform into human rights-based care and support systems she advocates for: 1. Policies and services that support the right to live independently and be included in the community, including personal assistance services, assistive technologies, supported decision making mechanisms and accessible housing options that should be designed in collaboration with persons with disabilities, their families, and respective organizations. 2. Increased attention to the pivotal role families play in support and care, providing resources, information, and emotional assistance. 3. Inclusive social protection systems are essential components of a just and equitable society. Indeed, she stressed the importance of universal access to ensure that social protection programs are designed to be accessible to all individuals, without discrimination based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, or any other characteristic. 4. Availability of information in accessible formats such as easy to read or plain language and the use of assistive technologies to ensure that persons with disabilities can access and communicate information effectively. 5. Active leadership and participation of persons with disabilities, their families, and respective organisations in decision-making processes at all levels, ensuring that their perspectives are considered in policies and programs that affect their lives.

Moreover, she called for available, accessible, and affordable transportation options and the removal of barriers that hinder the freedom of movement for persons with disabilities and their families. Ensure that transportation systems, including buses, trains, and taxis, are designed to be accessible to

persons with disabilities. Likewise, she called for the enforcement of legal protections and safeguards against discrimination, abuse, and violation of the rights of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life in particular the recognition of the right to legal capacity to all persons with disabilities and removal of guardianship laws.

**Ms Prudence Mooney Acting Assistant Secretary of the Care and Support Economy Taskforce at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Australia**, shared National rights-based model for people with disability, funded through the **National Disability Insurance Scheme**. Despite the advanced care and support systems, there are lots of challenges, including budget pressures; workforce shortages; an ageing population; poor pay and conditions for workers; and high regulatory inefficiencies. A **National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy** sets out strategic goals, namely: quality care and support; quality jobs; and productivity and sustainability. This is going to help guide and prioritise all the (expensive, complex, and time-consuming) reforms.

Australia's main goal is delivering quality care and support. Moreover, another priority reform area is the workforce governance and labour market systems. This means, growing the domestic workforce with training and education that supports rewarding, long-term careers in caring. It also helps close the gender pay gap and support women's economic equality.

**Ms Jimena Luna Benavides, Founder and Executive Director at Independent Living Foundation Chile**, shared with the Council the **VIDA** program implemented by Chile in 2023. It aims to promote autonomy and self-determination through personal assistance, accessibility in housing and education on these rights, for people with disabilities. Support services, accessibility in housing and education are the main components. Due to the lack of awareness of people with disabilities' rights, the Independent Living Foundation aims to promote and ensure the exercise of the right to autonomy and independent living. While progress has been made in the provision of services for independent living, there are still many challenges to be faced to ensure community living, especially related to access to support services.

In conclusion, she affirmed that to ensure full and meaningful access to human rights-based support services governments should generate regulations that guarantee personal assistance, incorporating the voices of people with disabilities to guarantee access to personal assistance in a continuous, affordable, and equitable way.

### Interactive dialogue

24 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. Despite the progress made in the past decade, persons with disabilities still face considerable barriers and have a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Women and girls with disabilities are often exposed to multiple forms of discrimination. **The majority of the countries** agreed on establishing a comprehensive social protection system inclusive of the rights and needs of all persons with disabilities; a holistic approach in creating an enabling environment including by developing appropriate legal and policy frameworks and fostering inter-agency coordination is essential for sustainability of support and care; and embracing a bottom-up approach, such as through improved socio-economic capacity of persons with disabilities, removing barriers that may hinder their participation and inclusion to public services is particularly effective for low-income settings. Human rights-based support systems are a necessary condition for people with disabilities to live independently in their community, with autonomy, agency, and choice, added **Mexico**.

Guided by the principle of "leaving no one behind", **OIC member countries** have identified persons with special needs as an important area of cooperation under the joint Islamic action. It reported

countries' progressive steps to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities in their socio-economic life and to increase their participation in the development of societies. For example, in recognition of the importance of persons with disabilities as an integral part of Iraqi society, **Iraq** adopted **Law No. (38)**. It instituted the **Authority for the Care of Persons with Disabilities** to ensure the promotion and protection of their rights, the advancement of their reality, and the guarantee of their economic independence and full participation.

**UNPRPD** focused on its support to all persons with disabilities impacted by war and other emergencies around the world and is currently monitoring and took note of the grave violations of the rights of persons with disabilities in *Gaza and the West Bank of Palestine* and in other humanitarian emergencies as the *Democratic Republic of Congo, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ethiopia, and Yemen*. **FAO** affirmed that if they receive appropriate support, people with disabilities have an important social and economic role, particularly in agri-food systems and the rural economy in general.

**NGOs** welcomed the discussion on support systems enabling the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Caregivers must also be recognized and included, particularly in the case of children with disabilities where the care and support system generally rely on parents, especially mothers. Widespread awareness on health and social services is urgently needed for a real change of culture at local and national level. **Make Mother Matter** added that an effective gender, disability, age-responsive care, and support system, therefore, requires a paradigm shift and profound transformations to our economic and social systems so that care and human rights are prioritized over purely financial growth and short-term profit. **Privacy International**, among others, urged the HC to call upon Member States to adopt and enforce national data protection laws and regulatory frameworks which provide enhanced safeguards for the processing of sensitive data including health data. **NGOs** also urged the United Nations to continue supporting initiatives aimed at the inclusion of disabled people worldwide. Together we can surely build a more equitable and inclusive society.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (24 country delegations):

*Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, Mexico, European Union, Egypt (on behalf of Arab Group), Malawi, Philippines, Mauritius, Thailand, Botswana, Viet Nam, United States of America, France, Bahrain, Colombia, Lesotho, Iraq, Romania, Paraguay, Argentina, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Honduras.*

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (11):

Scottish Human Rights Commission, Make Mother Matter, International Disability Alliance, Lesbian and Gay Association, Privacy International, Associazione Papa Giovanni XVIII, Action Canada for Population and Development, Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, RAJASTHAN SAMGRAH KALYAN SANSTHAN, BEIJING GUANGMING CHARITY FOUNDATION, China Society for Human Rights Studies.

International organization (5): UNPRPD, FAO, OIC, UNFPA, Council of Human Rights of Morocco.

To watch the full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).