

Statement by New Zealand

Annual Panel Debate on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Mr President, Madam High Commissioner,

New Zealand warmly welcomes and thanks the High Commissioner and President and all of today's expert panelists. We sincerely thank also the tremendous team within OHCHR for the thematic study which forms the basis of today's debate. We take this opportunity also to restate the vital significance of collaboration between DPOs, NGOs, States and UN agencies. Collaboration was key during the negotiations on the Convention; and it remains key now during its implementation.

International cooperation for the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities is important for all of us: around 10% of the world's population have a disability, 80% of those live in developing countries. Taking into account families and caregivers, an even larger percentage of our world's population is involved. As just one example, the World Bank has estimated that no more than 5% of children with disabilities complete even a primary education. Care-giving falls disproportionately on women and girls, resulting in even fewer opportunities for them to gain employment or complete schooling either. Disability and poverty thus create a cycle, and it is our hope that the Convention provides us with a tool to break that cycle apart.

To achieve 99 ratifications in a little over three years is an extraordinary achievement but the work to translate the Convention's provisions into practical reality will take time. The value in today's debate is in taking stock of progress to date and seeing where we can all do better.

A finding of the OHCHR thematic study is that there remains a focus on disability-specific international cooperation. While we acknowledge that such projects still have a place, there is a real need for mainstreaming disability, that is assessing the implications for people with a disability throughout all international cooperation. Failing to do so not only runs contrary to the Convention but runs the real risk of creating new barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities. The thematic study also found that much

international cooperation related to disability still falls within the traditional realms of cooperation assistance, with less attention is given to other areas. The Convention explicitly, but non-exhaustively, identifies other areas of cooperation, including capacity building, research and access to knowledge, and technical assistance such as transfer of technologies. The thematic study also found that persons with a disability are often overlooked in emergency and humanitarian responses.

In light of these findings, we should be grateful for the panellists to comment on:

1. For the concept of "disability mainstreaming" to be more widely understood, it would be instructive to hear practical examples of disability mainstreaming in the context of traditional forms and non-traditional forms of international cooperation?
2. How best might States have adequate coordination between all actors involved and participation of persons with disabilities to ensure all international cooperation is consistent with the CRPD in promoting a rights-based approach to persons with disabilities?
3. How do those involved in humanitarian responses better acknowledge that people with a disability have abilities and capacities as well as vulnerabilities, and design of response interventions that actively utilise and build on those abilities?