

June 15, 2021

## STATEMENT

### 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP)

United Nations Headquarters, New York

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Working Group on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>1</sup> (GANHRI WG RPD), thank you for the opportunity to address this 14<sup>th</sup> COSP. (Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

In an Ableist world, even during the ‘best of times’ persons with disabilities experience significant inequities. And these are only exacerbated in times of risk and humanitarian emergency such as that created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We agree with the Special Rapporteur RPD that, ‘times of crises often reveal deep truths’<sup>2</sup> Those truths, in the current crisis, include that disabled people’s rights and voices too often remain in the margins.

To ensure we “Build back better, Meeting the needs, Realizing the rights, and Addressing the socio-economic impacts on persons with disabilities” will require commitment to fundamental structural change, to break the mutually reinforcing cycle between invisibility and inequity.

Persons with disabilities must be at the forefront of responses to the risks posed by the virus, by the containment measures, and by pre-existing social and economic inequities.

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<sup>1</sup> WG members (South Africa, Kenya, Morocco (observer), Canada; El Salvador, New Zealand, Philippines, Georgia and Finland

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/46/27 P 5. Para 14.

As some nations enter a recovery phase, others continue to experience high or rising infection rates. As a global community we must continue to monitor the safety and rights of citizens with disabilities who remain at immediate risk.

As national human rights institutions, with a broad human rights mandate and functions, we call on States in close partnerships with persons with disabilities and with disability organisations to:

- Facilitate the meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities throughout the cycle of response, recovery and advance planning, and to provide adequate resources for them to do so, on a par with the public officials engaged in such work.
- Ensure that all response and recovery efforts take an intersectional approach inclusive of the diverse needs of all persons with disabilities.
- Address health inequities for example by prioritising access to services and vaccines; and maintain continuity of essential supports in safe ways.
- Ensure that all pandemic related information and communication is in accessible formats and easily available.
- Incorporate reasonable accommodations at public policy level where recommended measures, such as physical distancing, are not practicable.
- Ensure State investments to stimulate recovery actively incorporate affirmative actions to increase accessible infrastructure including but not limited to:
  - Physical, such as housing, transport, education and health facilities.
  - Informational, technological and other communications.
  - social, citizenship participation and protection; and
  - economic, improved access to education and equalised employment opportunities and rights.

We must not squander the opportunity for significant life altering advances in realising the full human rights of persons with disabilities.

Paula Tesoriero MNZM Disability Rights Commissioner  
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Chair GANHRI WG RPD