

June 15th, 2022

STATEMENT

**15th 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) I thank you for this opportunity to address the 15th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP).

As we stated to this conference in 2021, we live an Ableist world. This means persons with disabilities routinely experience significant inequities, which are exacerbated by situations of risk and humanitarian emergency, - no less so in the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus itself, inequitable access to healthcare or protective measures and a heavier impact from the public health management restrictions, have all had significant detrimental effects for persons with disabilities and these have deepened as the pandemic continues.

The rights and voices of persons with disabilities still too often remain in the margins. Persons with disabilities must be at the forefront of ongoing responses to the risks posed by the virus, by the containment measures, and by pre-existing social and economic inequities.

States in close partnerships with persons with disabilities and with disability organisations must:

- 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

To ensure we succeed in 'Building disability-inclusive and participatory societies in the COVID context and beyond, States must commit to fundamental structural change, to break the

mutually reinforcing cycle between invisibility and inequity. This is the time to invest in accessibility in its broadest sense and in affirmative actions that address the drivers of poor socio-economic outcomes.

- This includes but is not limited to the following infrastructures:
 - Physical, such as 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.

As a global community of national human rights institutions, with a broad human rights mandate and functions, we further call on States to:

- Address health inequities for example by prioritising access to services and vaccines; and maintaining continuity of essential supports
- Ensure that all pandemic related information and communication is in accessible formats and easily available.
- Ensure continuity of access to education however and wherever people feel safest to learn
- Incorporate reasonable accommodations at the public policy level where universal measures, are not practicable for persons with disabilities.

We must maximise the opportunity for life altering advances in realising the full human rights of persons with disabilities.