



# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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## Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### Fifth session

#### Summary record of the first part (public)\* of the 1st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 11 April 2011, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. McCallum

*later:* Mr. Salama (Director, Human Rights Treaties Division, Office of the  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights)

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\* The summary records of the second part (closed), third part (public), fourth part (closed) and fifth part  
(public) of the meeting appear as documents CRPD/C/5/SR.1/Add.1-4.

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consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Opening of the session**

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the fifth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, noting that the Committee would have its full complement of 18 members as from the current session and would conduct its first dialogue with a State party.

### **Solemn declaration by the newly elected members of the Committee**

2. **The Chairperson** invited the eight new members of the Committee to make the solemn declaration provided for in rule 14 of the Committee's rules of procedure.

3. **Ms. Degener, Mr. Gombos, Ms. Hadj-Salah, Mr. Kim Hyung Shik, Mr. Langvad, Ms. Quan-Chang, Mr. Ríos Espinosa and Mr. Tatić** made the following solemn declaration: "I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

### **Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the third and fifth sessions of the Committee (CRPD/C/5/5)**

4. **The Chairperson** introduced his report on activities undertaken between the third and fifth sessions of the Committee (CRPD/C/5/5), noting that, unfortunately, some members had not provided the necessary information for inclusion in the report.

5. *The report (CRPD/C/5/5) was adopted.*

### **Opening statement by the Director of the Research and Right to Development Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

6. **Ms. Kran** (Director, Research and Right to Development Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), welcoming the newly elected members, said that the expansion of the Committee came at an opportune time. The Convention had already been ratified by nearly 100 States, which meant that the workload of the Committee would increase significantly.

7. At the current session, the Committee would consider a State party report for the first time. Review of such reports was the core of the Committee's work. Its concluding observations and recommendations would play an essential part in improving respect for the rights of persons with disabilities, and she wished to encourage the Committee to make specific, clear and targeted observations and recommendations.

8. Lack of resources was being used by some States as a reason not to ratify the Convention. In order to prevent resource limitations from becoming an obstacle to ratification, the Committee should help to raise awareness of the concept of progressive realization, which allowed for incremental implementation to meet time-bound targets.

9. She wished to highlight four aspects of the work of the Research and Right to Development Division that were relevant to the work of the Committee: country engagement, partnerships, knowledge development and the development of implementation tools. More than 20 human rights field presences were currently promoting the Convention, and her Division was working closely with colleagues on projects in various countries in areas such as advocacy, law reform and training, as well as on a possible African protocol on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Division also co-chaired the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention, which sought to coordinate and increase activities related to the instrument. The Group had adopted a strategy and plan of action that included a pillar on support for the Committee's work. The Division was also helping to establish a

multi-donor trust fund to provide funds for programmes related to ratification and implementation of the Convention.

10. The Division prepared thematic studies every year for the Human Rights Council. The topic for 2011 was participation in political and public life, while the 2010 study had been on international cooperation under article 32 of the Convention. That study had shown that much needed to be done to ensure that the Convention was used as a guide for developing programming and humanitarian assistance. In that connection, she wished to encourage the Committee to consider how it could support the high-level meeting to be held by the General Assembly in 2012 on strengthening efforts to ensure accessibility for and inclusion of persons with disabilities in development efforts.

11. In 2011, the Division would be developing a legislation handbook aimed at promoting consistency of laws with the Convention. It would also develop training modules on the Convention for United Nations staff members, State representatives, national institutions, and persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

12. The principles of the Convention must be respected not only within States parties, but also within the United Nations itself, particularly with regard to accessibility. An interdepartmental task force on accessibility had been established to consider the issue, and the meetings of the Committee would serve as a pilot case to develop best practices. Access at the Palais Wilson had been improved to accommodate Committee sessions, and captioning and sign language services were now provided.

13. Since 2004, the number of human rights treaty bodies had almost doubled, and States had increased ratification of and reporting under international human rights instruments. While the treaty bodies had reviewed over 120 State party reports and over 120 individual complaints in 2010 alone, more than 250 State party reports and 511 individual complaints were still pending. Indeed, the treaty body system had become a victim of its own success. An intensive consultation process was under way to find ways to strengthen the treaty body system, and progress had been made in areas such as enhanced cooperation between national human rights institutions and treaty bodies and strengthening of follow-up to concluding observations. The recommendations made during the consultation process would be reflected in a report to be issued by the High Commissioner in 2012, which would serve as the basis for concrete measures to strengthen the treaty bodies.

14. Persons with disabilities often remained invisible and their rights ignored, so the Committee had a crucial role to play in shining light in an area that had too often been left in the shadows. Her Division would continue to follow closely and support the work of the Committee.

### **Election of the Chairperson and other officers of the Committee**

15. **The Chairperson** said that a member of the secretariat would preside over the election of the Chairperson and other officers.

16. *Mr. Salama (Director, Human Rights Treaties Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) took the Chair.*

17. **The Chairperson** thanked the Director of the Research and Right to Development Division of OHCHR for her statement and said that it served as a reminder of the great amount of research, mainstreaming and follow-up work conducted by other divisions of the Office. He reminded members that human rights work was about obligations and that they were the custodians of those obligations.

18. Turning to the elections, he recalled the provisions of rules 15 to 17 of the rules of procedure (CRPD/C/4/2) and invited nominations for the office of Chairperson.

19. **Mr. Al-Tarawneh** said that he wished to be a candidate.
20. **Ms. Degener** nominated Mr. McCallum.
21. **The Chairperson** said that, there being more than one candidate, the Committee would proceed to a vote following the adjournment of the public part of the meeting. However, he first wished to invite the two candidates, Mr. Al-Tarawneh and Mr. McCallum, to present themselves to the Committee.
22. **Mr. Al-Tarawneh** said that when he had been elected as the inaugural Chairperson, one of the key objectives of the Committee had been to promote the Convention widely as the embodiment of a human rights-based approach to disability issues. It had also sought to increase the number of signatories to and ratifications of the Convention, and had succeeded in doing so. He was pleased to note that the Committee was poised to start consideration of State party reports. A strong foundation had been established, and anything built on such a foundation would also be strong. All Committee members had worked hard to close the gaps between the Committee and other treaty bodies, although to do so completely would take more time.
23. **Mr. McCallum** said that he had decided to stand for election after much thought. Since being elected Chairperson by acclamation at the third session in February 2010, he had sought to be first among equals, to ensure the smooth running of the Committee's work and to operate in a fair and transparent manner. He had enjoyed the work and wished to continue to promote the Convention and good relations with States parties, United Nations agencies and organizations of persons with disabilities. He considered that it would be beneficial for the Committee's work if he were to continue in office for the following two years. He would not stand for re-election in 2013 out of respect for the principle of rotation.

*The first part (public) of the meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.*