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An Comhchoiste um na Nithe a bhaineann le Míchumas

Freastal ar an 16ú seisiún de Chomhdháil na Stát is Páirtithe
sa Choinbhinsiún ar Chearta Daoine faoi Mhíchumas (CCDM),
Meitheamh 2023

Márta 2024

Joint Committee on Disability Matters

Attendance at the 16th session of the
Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, June 2023

March 2024

Membership

- Seán Canney T.D., Independent
- Dessie Ellis T.D., Sinn Féin
- Frankie Feighan T.D., Fine Gael
- Gary Gannon T.D., Green Party
- Emer Higgins T.D., Fine Gael
- Brian Leddin T.D., Green Party
- Michael Moynihan T.D., Fianna Fáil, (Cathaoirleach)
- Jennifer Murnane O'Connor T.D., Fianna Fáil
- Pauline Tully T.D., Sinn Féin, (Leas-Chathaoirleach)
- Senator Tom Clonan, Independent
- Senator Eileen Flynn, Independent
- Senator Erin McGreehan, Fianna Fáil
- Senator Fiona O'Loughlin, Fianna Fáil
- Senator Mary Seery Kearney, Fine Gael

Joint Committee on Disability Matters



Seán Canney T.D.,
Independent



Dessie Ellis T.D.,
Sinn Féin



Frankie Feighan
T.D., *Fianna Fáil*



Gary Gannon T.D.,
Social Democrats



Emer Higgins T.D.,
Fine Gael



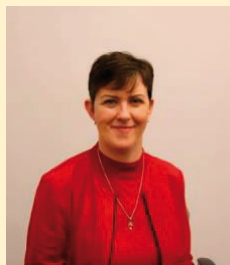
Brian Leddin T.D.,
Green Party



Michael Moynihan
T.D., *Fianna Fáil*,
Cathaoirleach



Jennifer Murnane
O'Connor T.D.,
Fianna Fáil



Pauline Tully T.D.,
Sinn Féin,
Leas-Chathaoirleach



Senator Tom Clonan,
Independent



Senator Eileen
Flynn, *Independent*



Senator Erin
McGreehan
Fianna Fáil



Senator Fiona
O'Loughlin,
Fianna Fáil



Senator Mary Seery
Kearney,
Fine Gael

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Introduction

1. The role of the Joint Committee on Disability Matters (the Committee) is to monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Committee's Work Programme 2023 was developed in line with the emerging themes from the UNCRPD.
2. The Committee is one of the first parliaments in the world to monitor the UNCRPD and is therefore able to highlight their work in this regard at the Conference of State Parties (COSP16), meeting other national parliaments who are undertaking this work as well.

Conference of state parties

3. The Conference of State Parties is an annual event organised by the United Nations. During the Conference, participants discuss the implementation of the UNCRPD. The Conference was established by [article 40 of the Convention](#).
4. Participants include representatives of the State Parties (countries and regional organisations that ratified the Convention), civil society organisations (such as organisations of persons with disabilities) and disability rights experts (such as the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities and academics). The conference, and its side events, usually take place during June at the UN headquarters in New York.
5. The 16th session of COSP took place at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 13 to 15 June 2023. The overarching theme was **Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: achievements and challenges**.

Sub theme 1: Ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities

Sub theme 2: Digital accessibility for persons with disabilities

Sub theme 3: Reaching the under-represented groups of persons with disabilities.

Committee delegation

6. The conference was attended by the following members of the Committee:

Deputy Michael Moynihan.

Deputy Sean Canney

The delegation was accompanied by one member of staff from the Committee Secretariate.



Proceedings of COSP16

13 June 2023 Opening of Conference

7. Conference opened by Mr. Li Junhua, Under Secretary General.

Adoption of the agenda

Organisation of the work

Delegation lunch was hosted by Deputy Permanent Representative Ambassador Donal Kenneally.

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention – a general debate.

14 June 2023

Roundtable 1 – Ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities.

8. Co-chaired by Mr. Tasos Kezas, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Greece, Vice President of the Conference and Ms. Savaira Tinaivunivalu, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation.

9. The Convention is the first international treaty in which persons with disabilities are specifically recognised as having the right to highest attainable standard of health care, including sexual and reproductive health. Similarly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for access to sexual and reproductive health care services, information, and education for all people, including persons with disabilities. This is the first time COSP has convened a roundtable discussion focussing on sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities.

10. COSP16 highlighted the growing body of data which confirms that persons with disabilities are as sexually active as their peers without disabilities (*World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank, World Report on Disability (Geneva, 2011)*) and have the same needs for and right to have access to sexual and reproductive health care and services on an equal basis with others.
11. A range of barriers are faced by persons with disabilities accessing and using sexual and reproductive health services. Barriers include physical access to the health facilities, location of the nearest health facility and access to public transport which may be limited, unreliable and often inaccessible, private transport might also be limited or unaffordable. Information and communication can also create a barrier; for example, sign language services are most often not available for deaf clients. Economic accessibility or affordability is an important factor as many persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented in the population in poverty. Stigma, discrimination and negative attitudes still exist in the community as well as in the health care sector which can contribute significantly to the exclusion of persons with disabilities accessing sexual and reproductive health services.
12. Additional studies show that women with disabilities are up to ten times more likely to experience gender-based violence. For women with disabilities, genderbased violence is often compounded by disability-specific violence such as caregivers withholding or removing assistive devices or refusing to assist with daily living. Girls and boys with disabilities are nearly three times more likely to be subjected to sexual violence, with girls at the greatest risk. In addition, support services, including access to justice, for persons with disabilities, including women and youth with disabilities experiencing violence, tend to be inaccessible and respond inadequately to their specific needs.
13. The following actions should be considered to promote and ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to sexual and reproductive health services.
 - a. Strengthening national legislation and policy frameworks
 - b. Removing environmental barriers

- c. Enhancing the health sector and its service capacities
- d. Education
- e. Implementing awareness raising programmes.
- f. Establishing or strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- g. Conducting research, data collection and analysis to inform policy making and monitoring.

Roundtable 2 – Digital accessibility for persons with disabilities

14. Co-chaired by Mr. Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka and Vice President of the Conference and Mr. Mohammed Ali Loutfy, Director for Capacity Building and Advocacy G3ICT.
15. The session considered how assistive technologies can contribute to the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and noted that these technologies should be designed in consultation with persons with disabilities and with appropriate safeguards to protect their rights. A digital world designed without the perspectives of persons with disabilities will lead to their exclusion.
16. The Convention recognises the critical role of digital accessibility. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains a crucial target for digital inclusion, Goal 9 is to significantly increase access to ICT and strive to provide universal access to the Internet.
17. An increasing number of laws, policies and programmes have been introduced to enhance digital accessibility for person with disabilities. Several countries have adopted accessibility requirements in public procurement, influencing digital accessibility in government services and promoting overall digital accessibility.
18. Websites are one of the more important methods for persons with disabilities to access education, health, employment, and other government services. Lack of accessibility and other barriers have created significant gaps across categories of people accessing the internet. Older persons with disabilities, women and girls with

disabilities, persons living in rural areas and those who are vulnerable or in vulnerable situations have reduced or no access to the Internet.

19. During the pandemic, the use of telehealth services increased substantially in many countries. Many persons with disabilities experience difficulties access and using these services and are often forgotten in the design of these services.
20. Under the Convention, States parties are urged to taking active measures to deliver on their obligations, such as undertaking or promoting research and development of technological products and systems, and promoting the availability and use of new technologies, including ICT, mobility aids, devices, and assistive technologies, that are suitable for persons with disabilities, giving priority to technologies at an affordable cost.

15 June 2023

Round Table 3 – Reaching under-represented groups of persons with disabilities.

21. Co-chaired by Ms. Iris Gonzalez de Valenzuela, Director of the National Secretariate on Disability (SENADIS), Panama and Vice President of the Conference and Ms. Ana Ivonia, The Leprosy Mission, Timor-Leste
22. This session discussed how the significant groups of persons with disabilities who remain under-represented in society, their voices are still largely excluded from the decision-making process at all levels. Under-represented groups tend to be marginalised in terms of law, policy, and practise. Often members from these groups face disproportionately high levels of discrimination.
23. Disability is recognised as a cross cutting issue across the Sustainable Development Goals and importantly the 2030 Agenda must align with the rights and standards as set out in the CRPD.

24. The discussion highlighted five groups (non exhaustive list) as there is existing data and some research; women and girls with disabilities, persons with actual or perceived psychosocial disabilities, indigenous persons with disabilities, children with disabilities and older persons with disabilities.
25. Women and girls with disabilities face barriers in many aspects of their lives, the historic unequal relations between men and women as well as attitudinal and environmental barriers impact their rights under the CRPD.
26. Persons with actual or perceived psychosocial disabilities continue to face stigma and are regularly excluded from participating in many aspects of life because of laws which permit their segregation and discrimination. Evidence suggests that in most countries, people with psychosocial disabilities are predominantly institutionalised rather than accepted into their own community and provided with support.
27. Higher levels of poverty, increased exposure to environmental degradation impacts indigenous persons with disabilities. Health care, education, justice, and social protection are often not accessible or culturally inappropriate and place indigenous persons with disabilities at a heightened disadvantage compared with their non-indigenous people with disabilities.
28. Nearly 240 million children worldwide (1 in 10) have some form of disability (*Seen, Counted, included: using data to shed light on the wellbeing of children with disabilities UNICEF Nov 2021*). Children with disabilities face barriers accessing education, quality healthcare and social services which can have a long-term impact. Overall, their opinions and wishes are not treated with the weight and seriousness they demand considering the long-term implications.
29. Several challenges have been identified affecting older persons with disabilities; stereotypes, discrimination, denial of legal capacity, violence and abuse, institutionalism and inadequate social protection. Capacity building and alliances within civil society will also support and promote the rights of persons with disabilities across many groups.

Interactive dialogue on the implementation of the CRPD

30. Chaired by H.E. Mr Tarek Ladeb, President of the Conference

Close of the conference

31. The programme for the 16th session of COSP is attached at appendix 2.

COSP16 side events

32. In addition to the main conference, there was a very significant number of side events, over 80 listed for this year's event. Only Governments, UN agencies, and accredited civil society organizations (CSOs) can conduct side-events at sessions of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD.

33. The side events are closely related to the work of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD and have as the focus the theme for the session.

34. The delegation participated in several side events including

- **Inclusive Education:** an imperative for advancing human rights and sustainable development (UNESCO)
- **Accelerating Inclusive Sustainable Development:** prioritising support and care systems for the community inclusion of persons with disabilities (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)
- **From Rights to Reality:** dialogue on best funding modalities to support countries towards CRPD implementation (Permanent Mission of Ireland to UN)
- **100 Days to the SDG Summit:** grasping the opportunity to ensure people with disabilities are central to the transformative change and the 'leave no one behind' promise (Permanent Missions of Ghana and Ireland to UN)

- **Reframing Recovery in Enduring Mental Health Difficulties:** achievements, challenges and lived experiences (Permanent Mission of Ireland to UN)
- **Living Independently:** the network model for persons with autism in adulthood (Permanent Missions of Cuba and Italy to UN)
- **Digital Participation of persons with intellectual disabilities** (Permanent Mission of Germany to UN)
- **Building up a Disability Inclusive Democracy:** Innovative parliamentary policies and structures to advance the rights for persons with disabilities (Permanent Mission of Greece to UN and the European Parliament)

Conclusion

The Committee wish to thank Deputy Ambassador and the staff of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations for all their assistance.

The Committee will continue to explore this further under its Work Programme.

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Terms of reference of the Joint Committee

Orders of Reference - Dáil Éireann

- (1) That a Select Committee consisting of 9 Members be appointed by Dáil Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Disability Matters to consider all disability matters including monitoring the implementation (by Ireland) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
- (2) That the Select Committee on Disability Matters shall consider and report on-
- (a) the 'Implementation Plan' for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and national strategies including the National Disability Inclusion Strategy and sector strategies for the purpose of-
 - (i) ensuring implementation plans are configured to advance the UNCRPD while delivering outcomes for persons with disabilities in their lived experience and planning into the future.
 - (ii) making recommendations which align the plans and strategies of Ireland's international obligations.
 - (iii) monitoring progress of the drafting and initiation of required and relevant legislation.
 - (iv) engaging with Ministers and the Secretaries General of relevant Government departments regarding implementation measures and budgetary measures.
 - (v) aligning the UN Sustainable Development Goals with the provisions of the UNCRPD.
 - (vi) supporting the embedding of a rights-based approach to disability as provided by the UNCRPD within Ireland's economy, society, and culture.
 - (vii) reviewing Ireland's Report/s to the UNCRPD Committee.
 - (viii) monitoring and ensuring the timely implementation of the Optional Protocol of the UNCRPD.

- (b) the effectiveness of-
 - (i) all national processes established to implement the UNCRPD.
 - (ii) the National Framework for Monitoring the implementation of the Convention including engagement with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the National Disability Authority.
- (3) For the purposes of paragraph (2) the Committee shall-
 - (a) engage with persons with disabilities, family carers, Disabled Persons Organisations, service providers and advocates in the Committee's work.
 - (b) consider other topics that the disability community identifies as key as agreed by the Committee.
 - (c) have regard to Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN Committee) with respect to Ireland's periodic reports, review the Government response to the Observations of the UN Committee and make its own recommendations with respect to same.
- (4) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 96, other than paragraphs (3) to (9) inclusive thereof.
- (5) The Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee

Orders of Reference - Seanad Éireann

(1) That a Select Committee consisting of 5 Members to be appointed by Seanad Éireann to form the Joint Committee on Disability Matters to consider all disability matters including monitoring the implementation (by Ireland) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

(2) That the Select Committee on Disability Matters shall consider and report on-

(a) the 'Implementation Plan' for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and national strategies including the National Disability Inclusion Strategy and sector strategies for the purpose of-

(i) ensuring implementation plans are configured to advance the UNCRPD while delivering outcomes for persons with disabilities in their lived experience and planning into the future.

(ii) making recommendations which align the plans and strategies of Ireland's international obligations.

(iii) monitoring progress of the drafting and initiation of required and relevant legislation.

(iv) engaging with Ministers and the Secretaries General of relevant Government departments regarding implementation measures and budgetary measures.

(v) aligning the UN Sustainable Development Goals with the provisions of the UNCRPD.

(vi) supporting the embedding of a rights-based approach to disability as provided by the UNCRPD within Ireland's economy, society, and culture.

(vii) reviewing Ireland's Report/s to the UNCRPD Committee.

(viii) monitoring and ensuring the timely implementation of the Optional Protocol of the UNCRPD.

(b) the effectiveness of-

- (i) all national processes established to implement the UNCRPD.
- (ii) the National Framework for Monitoring the implementation of the Convention including engagement with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the National Disability Authority.

(3) For the purposes of paragraph (2) the Committee shall-

- (a) engage with persons with disabilities, family carers, Disabled Persons Organisations, service providers and advocates in the Committee's work.
- (b) consider other topics that the disability community identifies as key as agreed by the Committee.
- (c) have regard to Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN Committee) with respect to Ireland's periodic reports, review the Government response to the Observations of the UN Committee and make its own recommendations with respect to same.

(4) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 72, other than paragraphs (3) to (9) inclusive thereof.

(5) The Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee

Appendix 2 - Programme of the 16th Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

[Programme of the 16th Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities link here.](#)

Houses of the Oireachtas

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

Do2 XR20

www.oireachtas.ie

Tel: +353 (0)1 6183000

Twitter: @OireachtasNews

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