

*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Committee on Petitions*

21 September 2023

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: *Report on the joint delegation of EMPL, LIBE and PETI committee members to the 16th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD COSP), United Nations, New York, 13-15 June 2023*

From Tuesday 13 June to Thursday 15 June 2023, a joint delegation of 7 MEPs - two Members each from the EMPL, LIBE and PETI Committees as well as MEP Dragoş PÎSLARU (EMPL Chair), attended the 16th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the COSP CRPD) that took place at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

The seven members participating were:

EMPL Committee:

Dragoş PÎSLARU, RENEW, Chair EMPL Committee and head of delegation

Katrin LANGENSIEPEN, Greens/EFA

Abir AL-SAHLANI, RENEW

LIBE Committee:

Janina OCHOJSKA, EPP

Maria GRAPINI, S&D

PETI Committee:

Rosa ESTARÀS FERRAGUT, EPP

Cristina MAESTRE MARTÍN DE ALMAGRO, S&D

Purpose of the mission

On 24 November 2022, the Conference of Presidents authorised a delegation of seven members of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Committee on Petitions to attend the 16th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the United Nations headquarters, New York. Members participating in the delegation took part in several official sessions of the Conference, several side events (including one organised by the EP), as well as in a series of bilateral meetings with UN officials, European and non-European governmental and non-governmental organisations working for the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities. The overarching theme of the 16th session of the conference on CRPD was “Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: achievements and challenges.” The main purpose of the delegation was to build on the well-established contacts of the previous year and to be kept informed about the under-going review process of the EU by the UN CRPD committee. It also aimed at involving Parliament on the same footing as Council and the Commission, which is the focal point to the UN, establishing a cooperation as “Team Europe”, and at guaranteeing Parliament oversight in the implementation and monitoring of the UN CRPD, thus underlining the parliamentary dimension.

Main findings

MEPs stressed the importance of parliamentary monitoring and supervision in the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities (PwD), while working together at the EU level with Commissioner Helena Dalli as “Team Europe”, to which important advances have been made in the past year and were reflected in the good cooperation at and around the week of COSP16, notably. This should be followed up in the further relations with the Commissioner and DG EMPL.

Members followed the interesting programme of the conference and participated at bilateral meetings and side events. They welcomed the possibility of being speakers in side events, in particular in the side event organised by the EP, which could serve as a precedent for future EP participation to UN events, in particular to COSP. Next time, the intention would be also to meet with congressmen active in the field.

Furthermore, in a bilateral meeting, Markus Schefer, Rapporteur of the UN CRPD Committee on the next report on the EU expected for 2025, confirmed that the EP could also provide an “alternative report”, i.e. its own report on the compliance of the EP with the UN CRPD. This could be thus done during the next mandate.

Programme

Members attended official conference programme events, which focussed on this year’s main topics: sexual and reproductive health services, digital accessibility and reaching the under-represented groups of persons with disabilities. The delegation held a number of bilateral meetings with high-ranking UN officials, diplomats, representatives of the civil society and other interlocutors, where they exchanged views and discussed possible ways to better implement the CRPD and advance the rights of persons with disabilities within the EU and worldwide.

MEPs Speakers in side events were:

- Chair: EU side event on “Developing skills for employment”; EP – Greece side event on “Building up a Disability-Inclusive Democracy: Innovative parliamentary policies and structures to advance rights for persons with disabilities”;

- Ms Langensiepen: EP – Greece side event on “Building up a Disability-Inclusive Democracy: Innovative parliamentary policies and structures to advance rights for persons with disabilities”;
- Ms Al-Sahlani: Promote democratic participation, ensure inclusive elections Side event of the Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN.

Programme in detail

Tuesday, 13 June 2023

8:00 - 9:20

Working breakfast co-hosted by the EU Delegation to the UN in New York and the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations (Members only)

Venue: EU Delegation to the UN¹

The event was attended by officials from Member States, MEPs, Commissioner Dalli and her cabinet, UN CRPD Rapporteur Markus Schefer as well as MEPs and the EU ambassador to the UN.

The Swedish presidency highlighted the EU’s leading role on implementing the UN CRPD and that it is up to the EU to assure and mainstream rights for Persons with Disabilities (PwD), also with regards to e.g. other countries such as Ukraine. The Swedish presidency will put emphasis on protection of children with disabilities, abolishing institutions. Commissioner Dalli focussed on the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030, especially its upcoming flagship initiative, the EU disability card and invites participants to reflect on how to work together to deliver.

Chair Pîslaru reported on recent actions in the EP to strengthen its structures, the EP CRPD Network and the Disability Rights Coordinator (DRC), bringing in the parliamentary dimension. He presented the EP - Greece side event, first event of the European Parliament ever set up in a UN set and thanked Greece for co-organising it. He underlined that the EP team and the EC are at COSP as team Europe.

Markus Schefer, UN CRPD Committee Rapporteur for the next report on the EU clarified the UN CRPD Committee’s role to review the EU. According to him, the report should be a tool to assist the UN CRPD to introduce fundamental changes and classify areas where change is most needed. Next steps will be the monitoring mechanism as well as contact to civil society organism. He informed of the structured dialogue in Geneva next year. He expressed concerns that he is not entirely convinced that all EU bureaucracy understood the exercise. He highlighted the importance of the individual complaints procedure laid down in the optional protocol as a highly effective tool and urges the EU in this aspect to ratify the optional protocol.

Representatives from Malta, Italy, France, Germany, Lithuania, Hungary, Spain and Romania took the floor and highlighted the importance of advancing the rights of PwD in their national policies and pointed at their side events: the incoming Spanish presidency announced high level meetings on 16 November in Palma de Mallorca and intends to declare 2024 the year of women with disabilities. The International Disability Alliance (IDA) and European Disability Forum (EDF) claimed that there should be more political leadership so that the EU can become a global leader and that political commitments should be translated into financial commitments.

¹ All bilateral meetings (except with Ms Minkara) and briefings took place at the EU Delegation to the UN premises.

10:00 - 13:00

Opening of the 16th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP)

Venue: UN Headquarters - General Assembly Hall²

The Members taking part in the delegation attended the opening of the 16th session of the Conference of State Parties (COSP).

Among the topics, digital accessibility and the situation of women with disability were raised. Gerard Quinn, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of PwD, stressed the need for disabled people to be active and present in key debates and transformation on artificial intelligence, in order for the social fabric of the future should take into account PwD. Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, took the view that women should be at the centre of the debate and called on feminist movements to include in their working agenda women with disabilities.

Following the opening of the Conference, the discussions turned to matters related to the implementation of the Convention (general debate).

For more details, see <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1d/k1dyacgm28>.

11:30 - 12:45

European Union - EU delegation in New York side event: “Developing skills for employment” (active participation of Chair Pîslaru as a panellist)

At the EU’s side event, Commissioner for Equality Dalli highlighted the challenges that still remained in closing the employment gap, i.e. early and adequate education, accessible support services and reasonable accommodation with individual approaches. Green and digital transition should be tailored for the needs of PwD. She mentioned all initiatives within the European Disability Strategy supporting the acquisition of digital skills. She underlined the need to work together on all European and national levels.

In his speech, the EMPL chair Mr. PÎSLARU mentioned the new approach in the EP, the CRPD Network and its Disability Rights Coordinator, which should be silo-breaking to pay tribute to the cross-cutting nature of policy making for PwD. He underlined how digital skills can help to bridge the gap between the high unemployment rate and access to the labour market. Policy makers should also make sure that digital tools are inclusive and accessible, especially for young people, and assistive technology developed so that no one should be left behind.

Speakers from the disability community however also highlighted the problems of digitalisation. On the one hand, it cuts PwD off social contacts which are essential for them but on the other hand, PwD side the need for digital skills to go to get a job and without digitalisation, there are no accessible products. Other members asked to end sheltered workshop and requested more support for PwD.

14:00 - 15:15

Bilateral meeting with the International Disability Alliance

Established in 1999, the International Disability Alliance is an umbrella organisation representing European Disability Forum (EDF), Down Syndrome International (DSI), African Disability Forum, Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, ASEAN Disability Forum, Pacific Disability Forum, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of Deafblind and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

² All COSP events, including side events, took place at the UN Headquarters

IDA recalled that its aim is to promote the effective and full implementation of the UN CRPD worldwide. EDF draw the attention to its latest study on the implementation of article 29 of the CRPD in the context of the EU elections.

In the exchange that followed, MEPs expressed their eagerness to work on the Commission proposal on the Disability Card to be published in September 2023, and warned at the same time that this proposal should be a first step and should not cement disability rights.

Other topics discussed included (i) the situation of women, especially deaf & blind women, and their difficulties to access to the labour market and transportation, (ii) the financial issue of the usage of special need assistants, as an example the sign language interpreters are highly educated, but get the same level of salary than the personal assistants; (iii) the lack of access to public transport, buildings; and (iv) the sexual life of persons with disabilities, including forced sterilisation.

5:30 - 16:15

Bilateral meeting with Mr Markus Schefer, member of the UN CRPD Committee and CRPD Rapporteur for the EU

In Mr Schefer's view, the EU works very professionally compared to other entities but the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 does not constitute a strong initiative for the years to come. In line with art.4.3 UN CRPD, he underlined the importance of consultations of persons with disabilities (PwD) and their organisations in law making and that Europe has very professional organisations, e.g. the EDF. Replying to MEPs' questions, he underlined that an EP own report on the list of issues besides the one of the European Commission issued in April 2023 would be very valuable to the UN CRPD committee to get a full picture on the EU's implementation. This could be still done in autumn 2024, as the EU Report will not be published before 2025. He mentioned that there was an issue concerning the EU monitoring framework as it is not based on law as the Council decision has never been published in the OJ. The UN CRPD Committee is awaiting the Commission's proposal but he said that there seems to be a lack of vision. The EP can be part of a monitoring mechanism in accordance with the Paris principles, which allow parliaments and its executives to participate in an advisory function. In line with the EP, Mr Schefer also underlined the importance of ratifying the optional protocol as it allows to make Member States respecting the UN CRPD e.g. in the case of Sweden blocking deportation of PwD. He believes that the EU report recommendations will promote the passing of the Anti-discrimination directive. As there is a great variety of implementation by Member States, the EU's and the national independent monitoring mechanisms to monitor areas where EU has powers are important. As to structural funding of institutions, EU does not support enough deinstitutionalisation, e.g. in Hungary and Rumania.

Mr Schefer stressed that the UN CRPD is binding on the EU and all its Member States and its implementation is an aspect of rule of law, which means that even social rights are binding.

16:30 - 17:15

Bilateral meeting with Mr Rio Hada, chief of equality, development and rule of law in the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr Hada expressed his appreciation for the intersectional approach of the EP CRPD network. According to him, focus should be put on women with disabilities and elderly persons. Discussion on elderly person's convention are ongoing for the past 10 years. Promoting the CRPD at New York level means promoting a care & support agenda at the SDG summit, He esteems that more needs to be done and international support is needed. Lots of lessons can be learnt from the UN CRPD, how to expand into other HR conventions but there is no clear political consensus, also not in the EU.

Mr Hada added that as part of new multilateralism, the secretary general is working a lot with local governments and cities. He is collaborating with inter-parliamentarian union as parliaments have an important role in adopting budget. The UN is willing to collaborate in many aspects and to learn from work at EU level.

Wednesday 14 June 2023

8.15 - 9.30

Side event: Easy-to-understand communication for accessibility: Good practices and Recommendations, organised by Poland

Accessible communication is a human right according to article 9 of the CRPD. Persons with intellectual disability are often prevented from exercising their rights, participating in public life or even from making their own life decisions due to the lack of accessible information. For example, understanding a need and risks of an intervention and the patients' right in hospitals are quite difficult, as the information and the legislation available are often complex legal texts. This also happens during election campaigns.

Easy-to-understand communication means short sentences, clean and plain language and - if verbal communication - speaking slowly. Easy and clear communication is beneficiary not just to PwD, but also to marginalised groups.

Good examples for accessible communications such as awareness raising book on sexual abuses for children with disabilities by Patricia Almeida, Representative, Delegation of Brazil, an application developed in Australia to help to create easy-to-understand job descriptions, the Accessible Canada Act, which aims at making Canada accessible by 2024 are promising. State Parties of the CRPD should understand that the CRPD cannot become a reality without easy-to-understand standards.

9:00 - 9:45

Briefing to the joint EMPL, LIBE and PETI Delegation by Mr Olof Skoog, Ambassador, Head of EU Delegation to the UN in New York

Ambassador Skoog presented the situation in Ukraine from a UN perspective, explaining the geopolitical situation reflected in the discussions carried out in the UN. He noted that the UN was perceived in this period of accumulation of crises (climate situation, humanitarian crisis, etc.) and international tensions, countries as the most legitimate organisation by the African and Latin American, as each country has a seat (equality). Mr Skoog underlined the sustainable development goals, which are a priority, and informed of the UN summit on Sustainable Development Goals ("SDG summit") in September 2023.

During the discussion, questions about the "forgotten conflicts" (Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Syria), the UN action on trade and the competition in state subsidies, how to support human rights defenders and democracy internationally, and about Japan as a partner in the UN were raised.

10:00 - 10:45

Bilateral meeting with Ms Ruvendrini Menikidwela, Director of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in New York, accompanied by Ms Kristina Zitnanova, Senior Policy Officer

Ms Menikidwela presented the situation of persons with disabilities (PwD) in refugee situation and the work with asylum seekers worldwide. The discussion focused on the situation in Ukraine and the use of the Temporary Protection Directive and its application to all refugees and not only to Ukrainians. Ms Menikidwela explained the introduction by the UNHCR of the

disability criteria in the registration processes to identify the PwD and the work to convince host countries to include in programme the disability question. MEPs asked for data and what possible solutions on the situation of women and girls with disabilities in different regions (including forgotten conflicts - Syria, Afghanistan) could be. The discussion dealt with forgotten crises: according to the UNHCR, women becoming more and more victims of gender violence, forced marriage, consequences of lack of funding and lack of assistance in those forgotten countries ('underfunded crises'). Host countries are also emerging from their own crises, which explains their difficulty in addressing the needs of refugees with disabilities. Ms Menikidwela explained the UNHCR's work on the situation of pregnant women who have been raped in situations of conflict, which is common in mass refugee situations. The discussion also touched upon the EU migration package currently under negotiation, as well as Poland and refugee policy.

11.30 - 12.45

Side Event Norway: Promote democratic participation, ensure inclusive elections (Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN) - Ms Abir Al-Sahlani as active panellist

Participation in public and political life is a fundamental right. The Article 29 of the CRPD convention reconfirms this and obliges state parties to guarantee to persons with disabilities (PwD) to participate in elections, stand as candidates at elections and participate in public life such as forming and joining non-governmental organisations. The presentations discussed the implementation of this article from the policy point-of-view and through personal testimonies.

Norway and Sweden are quite advanced in the implementation of Art. 29. Norway has introduced several laws to improve the situation; every municipality must create a council for PwD helping them with all their public cases and it also changed the election law in 2021: PwD can bring their assistant to the voting polls. In Sweden, the so-called 'My vote' project attempts to involve more persons with intellectual disabilities in votes by explaining the procedures and their rights.

European Disability Forum (EDF) presented a report published in 2022 on the implementation of Art. 29 in the context of the EU elections. The report looks at the legal and practical barriers for PwD to participate in public life. In many EU Member States still a lot of PwD are not allowed to vote and only in eight Member States they are allowed to stand at elections. Also in the European Parliament, only five Members have visible disability out of 705. PwD face many practical difficulties, in some countries, the ballots are too difficult to fill, and polling stations are not accessible. To mention the positive examples, several Member States provide tools - e.g. magnifiers, IT tools to ensure PwD to exercise their rights.

NGO speakers criticized the low level of involvement of youth living with disabilities in the political life. A personal testimony showed how the lack of training of election officers can lead to discrimination against PwD.

Abir Al-Sahlani, Swedish Member of the European Parliament gave her thoughts about how to close the human rights gaps. She emphasised that the rule of law and liberal democracies are the best placed to defend human rights, and that the less developed a country is the less the rights of PwD are protected and promoted.

To further improve the implementation of article 29, the panellists agreed that education from early age on political participation can strengthen the weight of PwD at the public issues. In addition, they called for politicians and political parties to involve more PwD by practical means, such as ensuring accessibility to meetings, information and also being more inclusive. Both in legal and in practical terms, there is still room for improvement in this field.

12:30 - 13:00

Bilateral meeting with Sara Minkara, Special Advisor on International disability rights, U.S: Department of State, supported by Hanah Nasri, Special assistant, Office of Int. Disability rights

Ms Minkara welcomed the first ever EP side event at the UN and emphasised that this should become a permanent one. On the chair's proposal to meet congressmen during the next delegations to COSP, Ms Minkara suggested Senator Tammy Duckworth. She confirmed the intention of the Biden presidency to promote rights of PwD. She mentioned a G7/20 summit on disability and COP 29 in 2024 where climate action should be discussed together with disability, bringing innovation and solution, meeting with like-minded Member States. She confirmed that Ukraine should not go back to institutionalisation, it is now an opportunity to make Ukraine more inclusive and give tangible input, with the EU as an example. She also mentioned the care agenda as a chance for carers and caregivers.

Members agreed to focus on the following points for future meetings and delegations:

- 1) Summit of democracy / COHORT
- 2) Connect to members of congress, i.a. Senator Duckworth

17:15 - 18:00

Bilateral meeting with Ms Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility

Ms Cisternas Reyes spoke about the situation of women with disabilities. She addressed a wide range of topics, such as the inclusion policies in relation to smart cities ("right to cities"), inclusive education and the maternity of women with disabilities. A debate on forced sterilisation took place, as it was reported that many families who have girls with severe disability are in favour of sterilisation. Participants also exchanged views on the inclusion in less populated areas, which face many more difficulties than in cities. Employment and the benefits of technology, which is a valuable support to person with disabilities, was also mentioned. Ms Cisternas Reyes invited the movements fighting for equality to better cooperate and set up joint agenda with women with disabilities, who share common concerns such as the respect of diversity and non-discrimination.

Thursday 15 June 2023

09.00 - 09.45

Bilateral meeting with Mr Gopal Mitra, UNICEF Global Lead on Disability, together with Asma Maladwala, Inclusion education specialist, Alexandre COTE, Inclusions Social Policy specialist, Jasmina Acimovic, programme specialist, and Anne Lubell, public partnership manager

Gopal Mitra is the Global Lead on Disability and Development in Programme Group, praised the European Child Guarantee and claimed the European Union as a valuable partner of UNICEF. Thanks to CRPD, UNICEF has collected data on children with disabilities and also managed to reach out 4,5 million children with disabilities in 2022. UNICEF has a comprehensive approach to support children through sectoral programmes: (i) fighting against violence, (ii) facilitating accessible services and infrastructure, (iii) strengthening community based support for children with disabilities, (iv) developing and providing assisting devices, (v) inclusive education and (vi) encouraging active participation in the public life.

During the exchange with Members, Mr Mitra expressed his concern that governments often underestimate the costs of families having a disabled child, therefore UNICEF is trying to

convince state parties to look at the support of these families as investment and not as aid and to allocate more resources. UNICEF is collecting data on the costs of families and governments. In relation to the Polish example, he agreed that health insurance should cover the support devices and ensured that UNICEF is working together with the national health insurance systems to ensure better help. He welcomed that the European Parliament is pushing to recognise that supporting children is not a social issue, but also an investment in the future. He recalled that we need to fight against the stigmatisation and emphasised the role of assisting technology.

10:30 - 11:15

Bilateral meeting Maria Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs

Ms Spatolisano underlined the importance of SDGs realisation, leaving no one behind.

25% are realised compared to 19% in 2019 but the latest SDG report shows only 12% progress on targets. She is grateful to the EU, in particular the EP, for introducing legislation to support PwD.

The UN Secretary General proposed a world social summit in 2025 and she mentioned that the EP should participate as it has a lot to say and support this initiative. UNDESA will take leadership and include EP in reflection process. She does not have numbers of PwD working in the UN, she will get back to it. But compared to 2019, the UN General Assembly is now accessible with permanent ramp and there is a process of reasonable accommodation, UN DIS started a UN accessibility and inclusion policy.

11:30-12:00

Bilateral meeting with Mr Li Junhua, UN Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Mr Li Junhua spoke about the SDG Summit in September, which is the high-level political dialogue event on financing. He recalled the goals to be achieved and the challenges: gender equality, the need for physical space for developing countries, climate change. According to him, we should not forget the social dimension: the social pillar is essential to the strategy. He confirmed that the UN is very committed to improving accessibility or social inclusion of people with disabilities, which requires additional investment, and asked MEPs to call on Member States to support the UN.

In the discussion, the need for a stronger parliamentary dimension to support structural reforms (rather than a project-based approach) and more cooperation between parliamentarians and the UN was emphasised. Other topics included the role of artificial intelligence, female genital mutilation, the political climate, access to water and the national commitments.

13:15-15:30

Greece – European Parliament side event “Building up a Disability-Inclusive Democracy: Innovative parliamentary policies and structures to advance rights for persons with disabilities” (Programme in annex)

The delegation spearheaded the first-of-its-kind side event at the UN, co-organised by the European Parliament and the permanent Mission of Greece to UN, entitled “Building up a disability-inclusive democracy: innovative parliamentary policies and structures to advance rights for persons with disabilities.” In his introductory remarks, EMPL Chair Pislaru stressed the will of the EP and its members to improve on implementing the rights of PwD on political level, including for children with disabilities. The parliamentary dimension is of utmost importance in that respect, on European and national level and therefore, most recently, the EP

took action to strengthen its structures for a real focal point, by revamping the cross-committee EP CRPD Network and renaming its chair the Disability Rights Coordinator (DRC). Mr Schefer underlined the importance of including PwD on equal footing on political level, since equal participation is laid down in Art.4.3, 33.2, Art.29 of the CRPD. As the EU is very complex, a silo breaking approach is needed. Pat Clarke from EDF stressed that the subject comes very timely ahead of the 2024 European elections as possibilities arise to rethink and revamp structures for political participation of PwD. In the last EDF benchmarking report from December 2022, still 14 countries oppose the right to vote for millions of PwD under guardianship. Initiatives should be taken to improve the accessibility of parliaments, with regard to websites, meetings etc. Easy to read, braille and sign language should be promoted as well as citizens' initiatives and petitions, setting up of internal mechanisms to respect the CRPD and a focal point (FP) in the EP. In Greece, Spain and Ireland, disability rights committees are set up as FP to bring up and draft legislation. EDF has developed for the OSCE an inter-active tool for parliaments and political parties to make them more disability inclusive.

Mr Stephanidis underlined the importance of health care, employment and full access to political rights. New appropriate legislation should be adopted to address digital challenges and interplay of technological progress and the EP is at the forefront.

The Georgian MP Mr Ionatamishvili shared his experience of 7 years in the Georgian Parliament and as an activist. All Communication is now printed in accessible formats and it is the first public institution to have accessible buildings.

MEP Katrin Langensiepen stressed the importance of political participation of PwD, the right to vote but also to be elected. She criticised the small number (four) of MEPs with a visible handicap in the current legislature as still too low compared to millions of European citizens living with a disability. She described the measures taken in the EP to comply with the UN CRPD and to create a focal point, i.e. the CRPD network and the Disability rights coordinator.

Speakers and participants agreed that also political parties should introduce quota for PwD and positive discrimination. All speakers underlined the importance of the event for stressing the parliamentary dimension. The event was well attended and gave further visibility to the EP's action to advance the rights of PwD.

Detailed information on the event is available here:

<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1s/k1ss4z4ozz>

Annex

Programme of the side event



The Permanent Mission of Greece to UN, in cooperation with *the European Parliament*, will convene a side event on the occasion of COSP16

on

“BUILDING UP A DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY: INNOVATIVE PARLIAMENTARY POLICIES AND STRUCTURES TO ADVANCE RIGHTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES”

When: Thursday, 15 June 2023, 1.15pm-2.30pm

Venue: CR4, UN HQ

RSVP: <https://forms.gle/wZDDnGSqbAs8KoGE7>

Welcoming remarks

[H.E. Evangelos C. Sekeris](#), Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations

[Dragos Pîslaru](#), MEP, Chair Parliamentary Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Panelists

Moderator: [Markus Schefer](#), Member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and CRPD rapporteur for the EU

[Pat Clarke](#), EDA VP, representing the International Disability Alliance (IDA)

[Rati Ionatamishvili](#), Member of the Parliament of Georgia

[Katrín Langensiepen](#), MEP and Disability Rights Coordinator (DRC) in the European Parliament

[Constantine Stephanidis](#), President of the National Accessibility Authority of Greece

[Francisco Undurraga](#), Member of Parliament from Chile

Concept

The Permanent Mission of Greece, in cooperation with the European Parliament, will convene a side event on “Building up a Disability-Inclusive Democracy: Innovative parliamentary policies and structures to advance the rights for persons with disabilities.”

This side event will look at innovative approaches and common challenges for national and supra-national parliamentary structures in promoting democracy that is disability-inclusive.

Policy makers on national and supra-national level will exchange views on how to improve law making and mainstream disability rights throughout all policy areas via effective parliamentary policies and

structures in accordance with art.33.1 of the UN CRPD³ and how to involve persons with disabilities in the process.

Legislators and representatives of persons with disabilities will further explore, share good practices on success factors and exchange knowledge on strategies and action plans that enable legislators to add real value.

³ [Article 33](#) – National implementation and monitoring, states »States Parties, in accordance with their system of organization, shall designate one or more focal points within government for matters relating to the implementation of the present Convention, and shall give due consideration to the establishment or designation of a coordination mechanism within government to facilitate related action in different sectors and at different levels«