



**Convention on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities**

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

First session

Geneva, 23–27 February 2009

**Report of the Committee on the Rights of Persons
with Disabilities on its first session**

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I. Organizational and other matters

A. States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol

1. As at 27 February 2009, the closing date of the first session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there were 47 States parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and 29 States parties to its Optional Protocol. The Convention and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/611 of 13 December 2006 and opened for signature, ratification and accession on 30 March 2007. In accordance with its article 45, paragraph 1, the Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008. In accordance with its article 13, the Optional Protocol also entered into force on 3 May 2008, at the same time as the Convention.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention and to the Optional Protocol is contained in annex I of this report.

B. Opening of the first session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

3. The session was opened by the Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, who underlined the important focus of the work of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and assured the members of her commitment, and of that of her Office, to fully comply with the spirit of the Convention. She promised them the best possible support as they carried out their mandate which she considered key to guarantee equal protection to the rights of the persons with disabilities.

C. Solemn declaration by members of the Committee

4. At the opening of the first session, on 23 February 2009, the 12 members of the Committee made a solemn declaration reflecting the provisions of article 12 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Committee.

D. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

5. The Committee amended the draft provisional agenda (CRPD/C/1/1), to include key issues relating to its work.

6. The Committee postponed elections of its Bureau members to its second day of work, in order to be able to consider the provisional rule of procedure regarding the election of officers and composition of the Bureau (i.e. rules 13 to 18).

E. Membership of the Committee

7. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established in accordance with article 34, paragraph 1, of the Convention, with the first 12 members of the Committee being elected by the Conference of States parties on 3 November 2008.

8. A list of members of the Committee, indicating the duration of their terms of office, is contained in annex II of the present report. All members attended the session.

II. Action taken during the first session

A. Working methods

9. The Committee used the following as its working languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and French.

10. The Committee began its discussion of various issues related to working methods, including:

(a) The issue of ensuring the accessibility of information and material as a matter of priority, including for those people whose forms of disabilities are not represented by a member of the Committee, such as sign language;

(b) The creation of working groups to work on the draft rules of procedure;

(c) The creation of a pre-sessional working group;

(d) The possibility of holding one Committee session in New York;

(e) The need for exploring the possibilities for cooperating with States, if they should require advice from the Committee.

11. The Committee noted that there was insufficient time in the timetable for an examination of all of these important areas in detail. It resolved to return to these matters in exchanges among the members between sessions, and eventually hold a first meeting of the second session in a country willing to host the Committee, if the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is unable to provide funding for such a meeting. This would enable it to finish the discussion of these important issues at the time of the second meeting of the second session in October 2009.

B. Induction course

12. The Committee was provided with an induction course regarding the various aspects of the work of the Committee, and the work of OHCHR and ways it could support the Committee.

C. Election of the Committee Chairperson and its Bureau

13. The Committee has elected by consensus the following members to its Bureau for a term of two years in accordance with rules 13 and 15 (1) of the provisional rules of procedure. After a misunderstanding arose as to the meaning of “simple majority” under the provisional rules of procedure, under which Mr. Al-Tarawneh was elected, an agreement was proposed that Mr. Al-Tarawneh would perform as Chairperson during the first year and that Ms. Pelaez-Narvaez would act as Chairperson for the second year of the term, as they got respectively 5 and 4 votes in the Committee. By a further consensus, the composition of the Bureau was agreed to be as follows:

Chairperson: Mohamed Al-Tarawneh (Jordan) for 2009
Ana Pelaez-Narvaez (Spain) for 2010;

Vice-Chairperson: Ana Pelaez-Narvaez (Spain) for 2009
Mohamed Al-Tarawneh (Jordan) for 2010;

Vice-Chairperson: Edah. W. Maina (Kenya) for 2009
Lotfi Ben Lallahom (Tunisia) for 2010;

Vice-Chairperson:	Jia Yang (China) for 2009 Monsur A. Chowdhuri (Bangladesh) for 2010;
Vice-Chairperson:	Gyorgy Konczi (Hungary) for 2009 Cveto Ursic (Slovenia) for 2010;
Vice-Chairperson:	German X. Torres Correa (Ecuador) for 2009 Maria S. Cisternas Reyes (Chile) for 2010;
Rapporteur:	Ronald McCallum (Australia) (General issues)
Rapporteur:	Amna A. Al-Suwaidi (Qatar) (Optional Protocol)

14. Acting by consensus, the Committee elected its officers with a particular regard paid to geographical, disability and gender representation, and provided that officers will hold their positions alternately so as to ensure the widest representation. The members of the Bureau will hold the position of Vice-Chairperson on a rotating basis, respectively for a term of one year each.

D. Press conference

15. The Committee met with journalists during a press conference on the last day of the session, to brief them about the work of the new human rights treaty Committee and issued a press statement, entitled “First Declaration by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Looking forward”.¹

E. Other decisions

16. The Committee took a number of other decisions, which are listed below and in annex IV.

17. To ensure accessibility, the Committee decided to request the Secretariat to provide support in the form of hearing devices, sign language and visual captioning for its forthcoming sessions.

18. The Committee decided to establish three working groups, to work respectively on the rules of procedure; on the reporting guidelines; and on working methods other than reporting guidelines.

F. Future sessions

19. In accordance with the Calendar of Conferences adopted by the General Assembly, the Committee confirmed the date of its second session, to be held from 19 to 23 October 2009 in Geneva. It also encouraged the Secretariat to explore the possibility of convening informal meetings of the Committee or its working groups.

20. The Committee also requested the Secretariat to explore the possibility of having some of its sessions in New York.

21. For the second session, to be held in October 2009, the Committee decided on a provisional list of matters to be placed on the agenda (see annex V).

¹ See annex VI.

G. Accessibility of information

22. The Committee observed that information concerning it on the OHCHR website was not readily accessible, in particular to persons with visual impairments. The Committee hoped that more accessible information would be provided, including in a variety of languages and in a format which would be easily accessible to persons with disabilities.

III. Relations with other bodies

A. Cooperation with other United Nations organs

23. On 25 February 2009 (7th meeting), the Committee met with the representatives of other United Nations bodies and agencies, and discussed ways of cooperation, as provided by article 38 of the Convention.

B. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

24. On 26 February 2009 (8th meeting), the Committee met with representatives of several non-governmental organizations: Disabled People International; the European Disability Forum; International Disability Alliance and the Centre on Human Rights for People with Disabilities (see annex IV).

25. The Committee welcomed the contribution made by civil society both during the elaboration of the Convention and of its Optional Protocol and in encouraging its entry into force. The Committee expressed the hope that non-governmental organizations would continue to work with the Committee to promote further ratification of and accession to the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Annexes

Annex I

States parties to the Convention and to the Optional Protocol at the time of the session

<i>State party</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Formal confirmation (c), accession (a), ratification</i>
Algeria	30 March 2007	
Andorra	27 Apr. 2007	
Antigua and Barbuda	30 March 2007	
Argentina	30 March 2007	2 Sept. 2008
Armenia	30 March 2007	
Australia	30 March 2007	17 July 2008
Austria	30 March 2007	26 Sept. 2008
Azerbaijan	9 Jan. 2008	28 Jan. 2009
Bahrain	25 June 2007	
Bangladesh	9 May 2007	30 Nov. 2007
Barbados	19 July 2007	
Belgium	30 March 2007	
Benin	8 Feb. 2008	
Bolivia	13 Aug. 2007	
Brazil	30 March 2007	1 Aug. 2008
Brunei Darussalam	18 Dec. 2007	
Bulgaria	27 Sept. 2007	
Burkina Faso	23 May 2007	
Burundi	26 Apr. 2007	
Cambodia	1 Oct. 2007	
Cameroon	1 Oct. 2008	
Canada	30 March 2007	
Cape Verde	30 March 2007	
Central African Republic	9 May 2007	
Chile	30 March 2007	29 July 2008
China	30 March 2007	1 Aug. 2008
Colombia	30 March 2007	
Comoros	26 Sept. 2007	
Congo	30 March 2007	
Costa Rica	30 March 2007	1 Oct. 2008
Côte d'Ivoire	7 June 2007	
Croatia	30 March 2007	15 Aug. 2007
Cuba	26 Apr. 2007	6 Sept. 2007
Cyprus	30 March 2007	
Czech Republic	30 March 2007	

<i>State party</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Formal confirmation (c), accession (a), ratification</i>
Denmark	30 March 2007	
Dominica	30 March 2007	
Dominican Republic	30 March 2007	
Ecuador	30 March 2007	3 Apr. 2008
Egypt	4 Apr. 2007	14 Apr. 2008
El Salvador	30 March 2007	14 Dec. 2007
Estonia	25 Sept. 2007	
Ethiopia	30 March 2007	
European Community	30 March 2007	
Finland	30 March 2007	
France	30 March 2007	
Gabon	30 March 2007	1 Oct. 2007
Germany	30 March 2007	24 Feb. 2009
Ghana	30 March 2007	
Greece	30 March 2007	
Guatemala	30 March 2007	
Guinea	16 May 2007	8 Feb. 2008
Guyana	11 Apr. 2007	
Honduras	30 March 2007	14 Apr. 2008
Hungary	30 March 2007	20 July 2007
Iceland	30 March 2007	
India	30 March 2007	1 Oct. 2007
Indonesia	30 March 2007	
Ireland	30 March 2007	
Israel	30 March 2007	
Italy	30 March 2007	
Jamaica	30 March 2007	30 March 2007
Japan	28 Sept. 2007	
Jordan	30 March 2007	31 March 2008
Kazakhstan	11 Dec. 2008	
Kenya	30 March 2007	19 May 2008
Lao People's Democratic Republic	15 Jan. 2008	
Latvia	18 July 2008	
Lebanon	14 Jun. 2007	
Lesotho		2 Dec. 2008 ^a
Liberia	30 March 2007	
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	1 May 2008	
Lithuania	30 March 2007	
Luxembourg	30 March 2007	
Madagascar	25 Sept. 2007	

<i>State party</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Formal confirmation (c), accession (a), ratification</i>
Malawi	27 Sept. 2007	
Malaysia	8 Apr. 2008	
Maldives	2 Oct. 2007	
Mali	15 May 2007	7 Apr. 2008
Malta	30 March 2007	
Mauritius	25 Sept. 2007	
Mexico	30 March 2007	17 Dec. 2007
Montenegro	27 Sept. 2007	
Morocco	30 March 2007	
Mozambique	30 March 2007	
Namibia	25 Apr. 2007	4 Dec. 2007
Nepal	3 Jan. 2008	
Netherlands	30 March 2007	
New Zealand	30 March 2007	25 Sept. 2008
Nicaragua	30 March 2007	7 Dec. 2007
Niger	30 March 2007	24 June 2008
Nigeria	30 March 2007	
Norway	30 March 2007	
Oman	17 March 2008	6 Jan. 2009
Pakistan	25 Sept. 2008	
Panama	30 March 2007	7 Aug 2007
Paraguay	30 March 2007	3 Sept. 2008
Peru	30 March 2007	30 Jan. 2008
Philippines	25 Sept. 2007	15 Apr. 2008
Poland	30 March 2007	
Portugal	30 March 2007	
Qatar	9 July 2007	13 May 2008
Republic of Korea	30 March 2007	11 Dec. 2008
Republic of Moldova	30 March 2007	
Romania	26 Sept. 2007	
Russian Federation	24 Sept. 2008	
Rwanda		15 Dec. 2008 ^a
San Marino	30 March 2007	22 Feb. 2008
Saudi Arabia		24 June 2008 ^a
Senegal	25 Apr. 2007	
Serbia	17 Dec. 2007	
Seychelles	30 March 2007	
Sierra Leone	30 March 2007	
Slovakia	26 Sept. 2007	
Slovenia	30 March 2007	24 Apr. 2008

<i>State party</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Formal confirmation (c), accession (a), ratification</i>
Solomon Islands	23 Sept. 2008	
South Africa	30 March 2007	30 Nov. 2007
Spain	30 March 2007	3 Dec. 2007
Sri Lanka	30 March 2007	
Sudan	30 March 2007	
Suriname	30 March 2007	
Swaziland	25 Sept. 2007	
Sweden	30 March 2007	15 Dec. 2008
Syrian Arab Republic	30 March 2007	
Thailand	30 March 2007	29 July 2008
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	30 March 2007	
Togo	23 Sept. 2008	
Tonga	15 Nov. 2007	
Trinidad and Tobago	27 Sept. 2007	
Tunisia	30 March 2007	2 Apr. 2008
Turkey	30 March 2007	
Turkmenistan		4 Sept. 2008 ^a
Uganda	30 March 2007	25 Sept. 2008
Ukraine	24 Sept. 2008	
United Arab Emirates	8 Feb. 2008	
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	30 March 2007	
United Republic of Tanzania	30 March 2007	
Uruguay	3 Apr. 2007	11 Feb. 2009
Uzbekistan	27 Feb. 2009	
Vanuatu	17 May 2007	23 Oct. 2008
Viet Nam	22 Oct. 2007	
Yemen	30 March 2007	
Zambia	9 May 2008	

Annex II

Membership of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and terms of office

<i>Name of member</i>	<i>State party</i>	<i>Term of office Expires on 31 December</i>
Ms. Amna Ali Al Suweidi	Qatar	2012
Mr. Mohammed Al-Tarawneh	Jordan	2012
Mr. Lotfi Ben Lallohom	Tunisia	2010
Mr. Monsur Ahmed Chowdhuri	Bangladesh	2012
Ms. Maria Soledad Cisternas-Reyes	Chile	2012
Mr. György Könczei	Hungary	2010
Ms. Edah Wangechi Maina	Kenya	2010
Mr. Ronald McCallum	Australia	2010
Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez	Spain	2012
Mr. Germán Xavier Torres Correa	Ecuador	2010
Mr. Cveto Uršič	Slovenia	2010
Ms. Jia Yang	China	2012

Annex III

Provisional agenda of the first session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held February 2009

1. Opening of the session by the Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
2. Solemn declarations by the members of the Committee.
3. Election of the officers of the Committee.
4. Adoption of the agenda.
5. Induction course.
6. Draft provisional rules of procedure.
7. Cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies and other competent bodies.
8. Future meetings.
9. Other matters.

Annex IV

Decisions adopted by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during its first session

1. The Committee decided to adopt rules 1, 2 and 13 to 18 of the proposed draft rules of procedure subject to the amendments suggested by the Committee members. In rule 1 the wording “shall hold meetings as may be required” was changed into “shall hold meetings as required” and to the wording “in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” was added “and its Optional Protocol”. As for rule 2.1, the Committee suggested to replace the wording “The Committee shall normally hold two sessions per year” with “The Committee shall hold at least two regular sessions per year”. Rules 13, 14, 15 and 18 were approved without change. Similarly to rule 1, in rule 16 to the wording “conferred upon him by the Convention” was added “and its Optional Protocol”. In rule 17 (1) the wording “she or he shall designate another member of the Bureau to act in her or his place” was changed into “she or he shall designate a vice-president to act in her or his place”.
2. The Committee decided to work in the following languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese.
3. The Committee decided to request the secretariat to take measures to ensure that all persons with disabilities have full access to meetings of human rights mechanisms, and in particular the Committee’s future sessions. Drawing attention to article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee requested the secretariat to ensure that all aspects of accessibility were taken account of, including through training of staff and other stakeholders, the provision of signage in Braille and easy to read and understand forms, the provision of sign language interpreters and other appropriate forms of assistance and support, and relevant information, communications technologies and systems, including the website and extranet of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
4. The Committee decided to request the secretariat to explore the possibility of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities convening a pre-sessional working group meeting prior to its sessions from 2010.
5. The Committee decided to request the Secretariat to explore the possibility of the establishment of a voluntary fund to support the members in their intersessional work related to the Committee.
6. The Committee decided to request the Secretariat to consider as soon as it is feasible and practically possible, with due regard being paid to provisions of article 34, paragraph 12, of the Convention, that Committee members are given the means that can enable them to remunerate the work of the assistants in the work conducted for the Committee.
7. The Committee decided to request the Secretariat to consider the possibility of having some of its sessions in New York.
8. The Committee decided to establish a working group to prepare draft rules of procedure to govern all aspects of its work. The working group, which would be open-ended, would be coordinated by Ron McCallum.
9. The Committee decided to establish a working group to prepare draft reporting guidelines. The working group, which would be open-ended, would be coordinated by Ana Pelaez Narváez.

10. The Committee decided to establish a working group to prepare proposals to govern its working methods. The working group, which would be open-ended, would be coordinated by Maria Soledad Cisternas.
11. The Committee decided to convene a day of general discussion with the participation of all stakeholders on article 12 of the Convention on equal recognition before the law during its second session in October 2009.
12. The Committee decided on the matters to be placed on the provisional agenda of the second session of the Committee.
13. The Committee decided to issue a press statement on its last day of its first session, titled “First Declaration by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Looking Forward”.

Annex V

Draft agenda of the second session of the Committee

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the first and the second sessions of the Committee.
4. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee:
 - (a) Draft rules of procedure;
 - (b) Draft reporting guidelines and other working methods.
5. Day of general discussion on article 12.
6. Provisional agenda for the third session.
7. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its second session.

Annex VI

Text of the first declaration by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities “Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Looking forward”

In Geneva, on 27 February 2009, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (hereinafter the Committee):

1. Considering the provisions in article 34, paragraph 1 and paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention), the Committee has proceeded to its formal establishment, holding its first session between 23 and 27 February 2009;
2. Complying with the provisions of article 34 (10) of the Convention, the Committee has proceeded with the election of the Bureau of the Committee;
3. In a spirit of promoting, protecting and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities; with the aim of promoting respect for their inherent dignity, as set forth in article 1 of the Convention and in accordance with the principles set out in article 3; having particular regard to the situation of more than 650 million persons with disabilities around the world;
4. Acknowledging the importance of involving civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities in all matters that affect them, in conformity with article 4, paragraph 3, of the Convention and other relevant articles;
5. Emphasizing the need to raise awareness of persons with disabilities, and of enhancing the visibility of their rights and roles in society, in accordance with article 8 of the Convention.

The Committee hereby declares:

1. That it welcomes and considers the progress achieved by States Parties following the signature and ratification of the Convention. It calls on those States that have not yet ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocol that they do so as soon as possible and without reservations and/or declarations;
2. That it shall afford equal attention and priority to all persons with disabilities considering the specific conditions of those who are vulnerable, such as women; children; older persons; persons with disabilities in rural areas or in areas of armed conflict; persons with multiple disabilities, including those who require more intensive support; indigenous people; migrants and asylum-seekers and others;
3. That it recognizes the importance of immediate transition from the medical model to the human rights and social model of disability in accordance with the Convention. It shall endeavour to provide required support to States Parties in realizing this important transition;
4. That it acknowledges the importance of contributions by States Parties, regional integration organizations, specialized organs and other competent entities within and outside the United Nations system and of civil society entities of persons with disabilities. Each of these actors shall play a significant role, from their own perspective and following their own cooperation procedures and channels. At the same time, the Committee invites all relevant stakeholders to undertake strong efforts towards the implementation of the Convention at the national level;

5. That it considers of the utmost importance to consider and examine the situation of all persons with disabilities in order to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals for the eradication of poverty; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and to comply with other international plans of action, particularly the application of human development indexes, human poverty index and the disability and gender empowerment measure;

6. The fundamental importance of inclusive social development for the full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities and for the betterment of their quality of life. Due to this consideration States are invited to double their efforts in this area and to refrain from letting economic and financial instabilities — which by their nature are of a temporary character — affect the achievement of this objective. There can be no doubt that persons with disabilities are at particular risk in the current economic crisis and it is important that States pay special attention to the situation of persons with disabilities in the current situation. This is an obligation of each and every State, but it is also an issue in which international cooperation plays an important role, especially in regard to developing countries. The provisions of article 32 of the Convention are especially relevant in the current context;

7. That it shall request and enhance the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, and it shall be available to provide technical support to States parties, United Nations entities and international cooperation on different thematic areas of the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

The Committee calls on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that this declaration be disseminated as widely as possible in the United Nations official languages and in accessible formats.
