

CRPD, CRPD/1/2 (2009)

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

¹ See annex VI.

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”.

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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.