

## **18th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSP18)**

### **Belgian Declaration**

Dear President,

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guides us towards more inclusive societies for persons with disabilities. Yet, in times when we are witnessing a pushback against the values of equality and inclusion, and that the UN system is being put under pressure, it is essential to keep human rights at the centre of our actions. This is what Belgium aspires to do.

In an increasingly complex world undergoing fundamental changes, additional efforts are needed to ensure that no one is left behind. The overarching theme of this 18<sup>th</sup> conference is highly relevant in this context. The topics of the Second World Summit for Social Development - poverty eradication, employment and decent work, and social inclusion - are essential to achieve the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in our societies.

Mr President,

Belgium recently received the Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee, following our constructive dialogue in August last year. I would first like to emphasise that Belgium highly values such review processes by independent experts within the UN system.

The recommendations came at a highly opportune moment in our political cycle, as we are at the start of a new legislature across all levels of government. The timing is ideal to launch new initiatives and anchor policy choices in line with the Committee's recommendations.

I am pleased to share that steps have already been taken to ensure follow-up of the recommendations. We have also held discussions with representative organisations of persons with disabilities to identify potential initiatives for the next 5 years.

Yet continued action is needed to progressively tackle the barriers that persons with disabilities experience in their daily lives, both figuratively and often literally. An important aspect in this regard is that people are aware of their rights and that governments apply the human rights model of disability. More efforts are needed to raise awareness of the UN Convention throughout our country. I plan to work on this in the coming legislature, in collaboration with the other levels of government.

Belgium reaffirms its strong commitment to the Convention and to building a more inclusive society – together with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, across all levels of policy.

I thank you.

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