



BELGIUM

**Eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention
on the Rights for People with Disabilities**
Opening of the Conference

DECLARATION OF BELGIUM

12 - 14 June 2018

Mr. President,
Honourable members of the Bureau,
Distinguished delegates,

I congratulate the Conference of State Parties on the choice of the overarching theme for this 11th Conference. Indeed, nobody should be left behind and that is what the CRPD as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aspire to achieve. It is an objective that is fully shared by Belgium.

To fulfill the human rights of persons with disabilities, it is crucial to take into account the disability dimension in all aspects of society. This is why Belgium applies a “Handistreaming strategy”, the mainstreaming of disability in its different policies, at all levels. A systematic impact assessment of decisions on disability remains a challenge.

Sufficient investments and political commitment are critical success factors to achieve the objective of full participation in society. The different governments in Belgium therefore invest in the support of people with disabilities, by means of i.a. social protection schemes, financial and fiscal advantages, assistance and support in education, employment and leisure.

Raising awareness for disability issues can also be achieved by increasing the political participation of people with disabilities. With the upcoming local elections in October this year and European, federal and regional elections in 2019, this is an important challenge for Belgium. The National High Council for Persons with Disabilities has recently elaborated a position paper on elections and for the first time, people with visual impairment will be able to vote independently, thanks to an audio module.

A lot of domains need attention, like adapted environment and accessibility. And if we want everyone to fully participate in society, we have to pay extra attention to women and girls with disabilities, who often face multiple forms of discrimination and are twice as likely to face violent situations and encounter sexual abuse.

Belgium co-organises a side event on this topic, where I will address sexual and reproductive health and rights.

With the election of nine members of the CRPD Committee, we can make sure that qualified independent experts can take part in the Committee. The Committee must count a fair amount of persons with disabilities and ensure a gender balance. Belgium wishes the new Committee members the best of success in their new mandate.

The work of the Committee is of high importance for the implementation of the Convention, i.a. in considering reports of States parties. Belgium is preparing its second report and welcomes the introduction of the simplified reporting. The evaluation of our State report by the Committee, as well as the contributions from civil society and the independent mechanism will give us important insights on how further implement the innovative principles of the UNCRPD.

Mr. President, important topics are on the agenda of this Conference and Belgium looks forward to engaging in these interesting debates.