

“Achieving gender balance and equitable geographical representation in the elections of members of the Committee”

Statement of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Adopted during the Committee’s seventeenth session (20 March-12 April 2017)

“The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expresses its full support for respect of Article 34(4) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which calls for States parties to give consideration to “equitable geographical distribution, representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems, balanced gender representation and participation of experts with disabilities” in the election of members.

The Committee welcomes the increase in disability diversity among members a result of the 2016 elections. However, the new composition of the Committee from 2017 includes only one woman. The Committee is concerned about this absence of gender parity, particularly given that one of the principles of the Convention which traverses all provisions and which guides the Committee’s work is equality between men and women. As highlighted in the Committee’s General Comment no 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities, there is a need for all actors at all levels to engage in the development, advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities.

The Committee is further concerned regarding the shifting geographical balance among the elected independent experts of the Committee. There is a need for securing equal inputs from across the globe to secure balanced inputs to the dialogue with The State Parties.

The Committee thus calls on States Parties to be mindful of the need to promote the geographical balance and the inclusion of women with disabilities in future elections of the Committee to secure equal geographical representation and restore gender balance, and more widely to promote their inclusion in other treaty bodies and international and regional mechanisms in line with General Assembly Resolution 68/286 (A/RES/68/268, 2014, para 13), all human rights instruments as well as Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Committee also refers to the Secretary General’s Biennial Report in which he reiterated his “extreme concern about the stark gender imbalance... in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies” (A/71/118, 2016, para 79), and his previous recommendation to States Parties to “ensure the equal representation of women and men through their considerate nomination of candidates and voting” (A/70/257, 2015, para 29). In the same vein, the Committee supports the remarks made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the occasion of the celebrations of the Convention’s 10th anniversary held on 1 September 2016, paying tribute to the women Committee members and calling on States to take steps to rectify the gender imbalance and secure geographic balance in future elections.”
