Your Excellences, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a great honor for me to address you today on this occasion and discuss challenges regarding the implementation of article 27 of the UN CRPD Convention in Georgia. The right to work is one of the most important human right protected by Convention. Proper implementation of the right to work, as pre requisite for realization of social rights and especially right to live independently, is one of the most important obligations taken by State parties.

The Public Defender of Georgia has assessed the implementation of article 27 of the UN CRPD Convention by the State through the monitoring of state employment promotion programs. The Office of Public Defender of Georgia has actively been working to follow up with the implementation of recommendations reflected in the special monitoring report, by requesting relevant information from the State Agencies and introducing to the changes made to programs, or progress achieved through implementation of existing employment programs.

It should be mentioned that according to acting internal legislation, employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector restricts their right to receive a social package, which is given to persons because of their disability status. Persons with similar disabilities employed in the public and private sectors have equal needs and, therefore, their interests to receive a social package are equal. The discriminatory practice of refusing an allowance in exchange for employment in public sector, significantly hinders the realization of employment opportunities and desire of PWDs to be employed. According to official data only 51 persons with disabilities were employed in the Public sector during 2019. 29 persons were temporarily employed in the public sector during the same year.

Despite the existence of a number of programs and the State's declared will to ensure employment of persons with disabilities, the right of persons with disabilities to work cannot be properly realized due to the lack of complex approach, sufficient support, safeguards, practical efforts and enforcement mechanisms. Lack of funds and human resources in some cases, not enough duration of provided support in others and lack of sustainability of implemented programms are among main issues to be addressed by the state. Implementation of specific employment promotion programs are affected by systemic problems and barriers faced by PWDs in the country in terms of accessibility of physical environment. The economic profit received by persons with disabilities as a result of employment, due to extremely low wages, is very low, which together with other additional barriers, makes their labour non-profitable. The problem is well reflected in the statistics: there were overall 113 persons with disabilities employed within all employment promotion programs during 2019.

The measures envisaged by state programmes fail to fully consider complex aspects that are significant for promoting employment. **Persons with disabilities themselves name number of obstacles** in the employment process, including problems to access physical environment and quality information, discriminatory labour market, low awareness of public and employers, problems in communication, proper realization of the right to education, the lack of support from local self-governments, low involvement of persons with disabilities in the monitoring of the process of development and implementation of employment programmes and last, but not least, lack of interest and improper motivation of employers to employ PWDs - **no quota for PWDs employment or exemption from taxes or potential employers are applied as promotion tools.**

Thank you very much!