



Ten years of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities: taking stock and looking ahead

Side-event to the 55th session of the Human Rights Council

12 March 2024, 14:00 to 15.00 CET, Room XXVI, Palais des Nations

Description

2024 marks the 10th anniversary since the establishment of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities by the Human Rights Council. With this decision, the Human Rights Council recognized that persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society and to fully enjoy their human rights and freedoms without discrimination. The work of the mandate gave visibility and brought key topics to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the attention of the Human Rights Council. The mandate further injected a human rights-based disability perspective to other processes and discussions at different levels.

Over the last 10 years, the mandate focused on supporting practical implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by conducting studies and providing guidance on how to translate some of the key principles and rights into law- and policymaking, for instance with respect to legal capacity, participation, support services, social protection, and access to justice. It advocated for inclusion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in responses to global challenges, from sustainable development, to the impact of Artificial Intelligence and to the broad peace and security agenda. And it provided a key contribution to the development of a system-wide policy within the United Nations System for disability inclusion and mainstreaming.

This is reflected in 12 country visits; 18 reports presented to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly; just over 200 communications; numerous public statements, expert meetings, consultations, studies, and countless meetings and discussions. Throughout their work, mandate holders strived to ensure participation, inclusiveness, gender sensitivity and accessibility while building collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, including with other Special Procedures mandates and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

As such, the mandate established itself as a recognized and leading voice for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. This voice was particularly important during a decade of multiple crises which revealed how deeply rooted is the invisibility of persons with disabilities who

often remained perceived as passive subjects of welfare and charity, as observed across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the tenures of Ms. Catalina Devandas (2014-2020) and Mr. Gerard Quinn (2020-2023), Ms. Heba Hagrass assumed the role of the Special Rapporteur after being appointed by the Human Rights Council in October 2023. For her first report to the Human Rights Council, she took the opportunity of the 10th anniversary to reflect on the work and achievements over the past decade to inform her vision and priorities going forward.

Objectives

To mark the 10th anniversary since the creation of the mandate, the Special Rapporteur wishes to bring together her two predecessors, key partners, and friends of the mandate to take stock of the past decade. The focus will be on some of the key achievements of the first two mandate holders, how and why they were successful in generating positive change, and how to ensure follow up for a sustained impact in the future. In particular, the moderated discussion will consider the contribution of the first Special Rapporteur, Catalina Devandas, to the development of a system-wide policy on disability within the United Nations, and the thematic work of the second Special Rapporteur, Gerard Quinn, to raise the visibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities with regard to the protection of civilians during armed conflict and in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction more generally.

The event will further explore how the mandate can capitalize on past achievements to ensure influence and impact on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the future, including within the Human Rights Council, at a time when a new Special Rapporteur, Heba Hagrass, recently assumed the role.

Organizer and sponsors

Organizer

Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ms Heba Hagrass.

Co-sponsors

The Permanent Missions of Finland, Mexico, New Zealand and China.

OHCHR, UN CRPD Committee, UN Women, UNICEF, World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross.

International Disability Alliance, Disability Rights Fund/Disability Rights Advocacy Fund.

Background documents

- Mandate of the Special Rapporteur – [A/HRC/53/14](#)
- [HRC Vision report of the Special Rapporteur](#)

Agenda

Description		
9min	Opening remarks	Permanent Representative Mexico, H.E. Mrs. Francisca E. Méndez Escobar

		<p>Permanent Representative of Finland, H.E. Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox</p> <p>Permanent Representative of China, H.E. Mr. Chen Xu</p>
25min	Moderated discussion	Nawaf Kabbara, President of the International Disability Alliance
	<i>Mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities disability within the UN system to support transformative change.</i>	Catalina Devandas, former Special Rapporteur (2014-2020)
	<i>Connecting the Disability Rights Agenda to Broader Challenges Facing Humanity - the peace and security agenda</i>	Gerard Quinn, former Special Rapporteur (2020-2023)
	<i>Moving forward</i>	Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur
23min	Partner perspectives and Q&A /interventions from the floor (moderated discussion with panellists)	<p>Ms. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p> <p>Mr. Facundo Chavez Penillas, Human Rights and Disability Advisor, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</p> <p>Moderator</p>
3min	Closing remarks	Permanent Representative New Zealand, S.E. Mme Anna Louise Duncan