

Madam Chair,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

November 13<sup>th</sup>, 09

Notes on the connection between disability and effective participation of minorities:

The coverage of effective participation of minorities is extended to persons with disabilities, not only through the CRPD, but also a number of other human rights treaties, including the treaty on economic, social, and cultural rights. The CRPD was enacted to close the large gap between the still unequal treatment of persons with disabilities and the rights afforded by the ESCR and the Universal Declaration which generally use wording such as "all people" and "for everyone". The CRPD focuses with much more specificity to particular issues facing persons with disabilities.

Effective participation means that minorities shall be given a meaningful stake in society at all levels. This includes participation in areas such as public, cultural, religious, social, and economic, as well as conducting public affairs, voting, being elected, and accessing public services.

Participation in the political process also needs to be assured in accessible formats and programs for the encouragement of political engagement enacted.

Article 29 of the CRPD ensures that "States parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others". Further more, states parties must ensure that "voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible, and easy to understand and use."

Much of the information about voter turnout and disability comes from the United States. Statistics in this area suggest that even after adjusting for socio-economic factors, turnout for persons with disabilities in voting is significantly less than for persons without disabilities. Additionally persons with disabilities often face unreasonable barriers to participation in the political process, both in the developing and developed societies.

In order for legislation for persons with disabilities to improve they must be able to fully participate in the political process.

The social model of disability suggests that disability is not so much an attribute of the individual, as it is of the society in which he or she lives. It goes on to say that when the society is truly open and inclusive, that the instance of individual disability will be much less prominent, and disability will be recognized as a part of the diversity of humanity which it is. The social model of disability provides a goal to which we can direct our efforts, and an ideal that we should work towards. The political process is a clear example of how much work we still have to do in this area.

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