

Annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities

Theme: Participation in sport under article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Concept note (as of 3 February 2021)

- Date and venue:** Friday, 5 March 2021, 4 to 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Assembly Hall, Geneva
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** This panel discussion will address the obligation under article 30(5) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter “Convention”) to enable persons with disabilities to participate in recreation, leisure and sports on an equal basis with others, including in mainstream and disability-specific sporting activities, in sporting, recreational, leisure and tourism venues, and in education. The objectives are:
- **To bring greater understanding** to the importance of physical activity and sports under article 30(5) of the Convention;
 - **To discuss attitudinal and environmental barriers and unequal recognition in laws and policies, investment, research and data collection on the participation of persons with disabilities in sport and physical activity**, leading to poorer health outcomes and impeding the inclusion and participation by persons with disabilities in sport, recreation and leisure;
 - **To provide guidance on a human rights-based approach to develop inclusive and disability-specific physical activities and sports** to assist States in implementing their obligations, including with respect to regulating and monitoring the private sector;
 - **To share experiences, lessons learned and good practices** in the implementation of article 30(5) of the Convention, drawing on experiences from the global and national levels;
 - **To propose strategies** to raise awareness and strengthen the participation of persons with disabilities, including women and girls, in physical activity and sports.
- Chair:** H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statement:** Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Panellists:**
- **Mr. Gerard Quinn**, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (*video message*)
 - **Ms. Rita van Driel**, Governing Board Member of the International Paralympic Committee (*video message*)
 - **Mr. Jaime Cruz Juscamaita**, Inclusion International (*video message*)
 - **Ms. Bodour Almeer**, Sustainability Director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 (*video message*)
- Outcome:** The debate seeks to bring greater understanding on the importance of physical activity and sports for persons with disabilities as a means to strengthen their participation and inclusion in society, with positive outcomes across health, education, employment and other areas of life. The debate will highlight implementation measures and identify good practices to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in physical activities and sports, including through international, regional and national efforts to ensure equal access and funding for inclusive and disability-specific sports, accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies and awareness-raising. An informal summary of the interactive debate will be prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and posted on the OHCHR website.

Mandate: In its resolution [43/23](#), the Human Rights Council decided that the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities to be held at its forty-sixth session would focus on participation in sport under article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and would have international sign interpretation and captioning. The Council requested the OHCHR to prepare the annual study on the rights of persons with disabilities for its forty-sixth session on participation in sport, in consultation with States and other relevant stakeholders, regional organizations, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, and national human rights institutions, requiring contributions to be submitted in an accessible format, and requested that such stakeholder contributions, the study and an easy-to-read-version of it, be made available on the website of the Office, in an accessible format, prior to the session.

To this end, OHCHR invited States and all the aforementioned stakeholders to provide responses to a set of questions concerning existing legislation, policies and practice enabling participation by persons with disabilities in physical activities and sport. OHCHR received 26 responses from States, 3 from intergovernmental organizations and 11 responses from civil society organizations.¹ These responses informed the report of OHCHR on physical activity and sports under article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (document A/HRC/46/49).

Format: The annual debate will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two segments. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, panellists' presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).

The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet.

Accessibility: In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, the interactive debate will be made accessible to persons with disabilities. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided and webcasted during the debate (during the event itself, participants can access live English captioning on the website <https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=CFI-UNOG>). The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities is available for further information on the HRC website (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Accessibility.aspx>).

Background: The present report includes recreational and leisure activities alongside more narrowly defined sporting activities, all covered in article 30(5) of the Convention. During the negotiations of the Convention, Member States had considered covering physical activity under this article. At the international level, "sport" has developed into a generic term comprising sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance, organized, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms (see the Kazan Action Plan adopted by UNESCO).² As such, the report addresses the participation of persons with disabilities in both physical activity and sport.

Persons with disabilities face several barriers to engaging in physical activity and sports, including inaccessible physical environments, attitudinal barriers, the lack of suitable equipment, support,

¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/Pages/Physical-activity-sports.aspx>

² See <https://en.unesco.org/mineps6/kazan-action-plan>

disability-specific knowledge, accessible information and the likelihood of extra costs. In addition, there are far fewer resources allocated to promote inclusive and disability-specific sports, recreation and leisure. As a result, persons with disabilities are more likely to be physically inactive and have poorer health outcomes. Over the years, there has been growing attention to the role of sports in promoting social inclusion and human rights for all members of society, including persons with disabilities. Article 30(5) of the Convention explicitly recognises the right of persons with disabilities to participate in physical activity and sports on an equal basis with others and calls on States to enable their participation, including by protecting against discrimination and dismantling structural inequalities in access and funding, in particular to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities and women and girls with disabilities.

Article 30(5) of the Convention addresses both mainstream and disability-specific sports, encompassing sports competitions, physical activity in education, and recreation and leisure. Persons with disabilities have rights, both as participants engaging in physical activities and sports, as well as in the role of spectators, consumers or organisers of activities. More widely, States have the obligation to actively involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in decision-making relevant to sports and physical activity.

In order to implement article 30(5) of the Convention, States should undertake steps to review legislation and regulations to ensure non-discrimination, equal access and equitable funding distribution for inclusive and disability-specific sports; invest in accessible infrastructure including through procurement policies; ensure the availability of assistive technologies and support, including grants to engage in inclusive and disability-specific sports; promote awareness-raising, research and data collection for more effective and tailored measures to increase engagement by persons with disabilities in physical activity and sport, particularly by women and girls with disabilities; and promote technical cooperation and exchange through international cooperation. While advances are being made globally for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the area of sport and physical activity, further efforts are needed to strengthen enforcement and accountability mechanisms to monitor resource allocation and track progress. In addition, States have a duty to regulate private actors to ensure non-discrimination against persons with disabilities and enable access to physical activity and sports; States should work with the private sector to support the development of inclusive practices.

Background documents:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 43/23](#) of 22 June 2020 on awareness-raising on the rights of persons with disabilities and habilitation and rehabilitation
- Report of OHCHR on physical activity and sport under article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([A/HRC/46/49](#))
- Report of the 2018 Social Forum on the possibilities of using sport and the Olympic ideal to promote human rights for all and to strengthen universal respect for them ([A/HRC/40/72](#))
- [Human Rights Council resolution 7/9](#) of 27 March 2008 on human rights of persons with disabilities
- OHCHR web page with [studies, reports and papers on the rights of persons with disabilities](#)