New Zealand Permanent Mission
to the United Nations
Te Māngai o Aotearoa

Seventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Statement delivered by
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Minister for Disability Issues and Whanau Ora
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Ka rere atu nga mihi ki te hau kainga, te tangata whenua, tena koutou katoa.

I am delighted to be representing New Zealand at this Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. New Zealand strongly reaffirms its support for the full implementation of the Convention.

New Zealand is proud of our longstanding commitment to the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities. New Zealand played an integral role in the drafting of the Convention and helped to ensure that disabled persons and the organisations which represented them were involved in the drafting process.

People with disabilities frequently tell us, 'nothing about us, without us' – it is a calling towards inclusivity and participation that we take very seriously.

The New Zealand Government recently developed a four year Disability Action Plan in partnership with Disabled People's Organisations. Focus areas include increasing employment and education opportunities, ensuring personal safety, increasing access in all areas of life and transforming our disability support system. The inclusion of Disabled People's Organisations in its development was essential in order to produce a well-informed and comprehensive plan and they will continue to play a role in on-going development and monitoring.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend Disabled People's Organisations throughout the world for their tireless work and to specifically acknowledge their role in empowering persons with disabilities. In New Zealand, they undertake a variety of functions, including independent monitoring of issues related to the Convention which are of concern to them.
There are two particular groups of disabled persons that I wish to highlight briefly in my statement today – Youth and Indigenous persons with disabilities. They are two very important, but often less heard from groups.

Youth are important in every society. In New Zealand, I’m proud to say that most young persons with disabilities are now growing up in an environment where they have the reasonable expectation that they have the same rights as everyone else – they can to go to a mainstream school, have a job, leave home and have a relationship. There are still challenges, but I think that the fact that young disabled persons now expect equality and speak up when their rights are not met is a very positive thing. It is a step in the right direction and a result of changes in policy and practice in New Zealand.

New Zealand’s indigenous people, Māori, are disproportionately affected by disability. A report released in 2006 showed that more than 95000 disabled citizens in New Zealand are indigenous. It also revealed that Māori uptake of some disability supports lag behind that of non-Māori.

In 2010, New Zealand Government adopted the Whānau Ora approach – an approach which empowers families to take charge of their own lives and requires government agencies to work holistically to support them. Māori who live with disability have the right to live as Māori, to participate in their communities and have the same access to opportunities as everyone else.

The international community needs to ensure that processes and policies are in place to enable all persons with disabilities to grow and develop, and to be valued members of equal and inclusive societies.
An inclusive and ambitious post 2015 development agenda is critical to achieving this objective. New Zealand is committed to ensuring that all voices are heard in the consultation process, and that the post-2015 development agenda is inclusive of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately represented among those left behind under the Millennium Development Goals. We cannot let this happen again.

Chairperson,

I am delighted to announce today that New Zealand will put forward a candidate for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the 2017 – 2020 term, Robert Martin.

Robert is an exceptional candidate. He was placed in a range of institutional care options and foster homes when he was very young. In Robert’s own words, he had no choice in these environments. Robert has created a life where he has moved gradually from limited choice and control and having people do many things for him, to where he is a highly respected member of his local community.

Robert has shown a strong commitment to the rights of people with an intellectual disability worldwide through his involvement with Inclusion International and as an advocate and international speaker on disability issues.

Chairperson,

I wish to conclude by reiterating New Zealand’s commitment to the full realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the principles of inclusion and equality that underpin those rights.