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 Agenda item 3 (b), Education  
 Statement of Disability Caucus

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Thank you Mr. Chair. I am speaking on behalf of the disability caucus.  
 Indigenous persons with disabilities today face many barriers with regard to the right to education.

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD) sets forth extensive obligations on education of persons with disabilities, while the UNDRIP contains a range of relevant articles and sets forth a dual approach mentioning the right of indigenous peoples to establish and have their own educational systems and institutions and culturally appropriate methods. It also provides that indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination. While indigenous children face challenges in gaining access to appropriate education in their communities, indigenous children with disabilities face further barriers.

Specifically, there is a lack of prioritization of education of children with disabilities by their parents, resulting from the lack of awareness of and support by States. Although there is a lack of empirical data, anecdotal evidence suggests that a disproportionately high number of indigenous children with disabilities may be out of school altogether. In New Zealand, in 2006, 42 per cent of Maori persons with disabilities had no educational qualifications, compared with 34 per cent of non-Maori persons with disabilities.<sup>3</sup> It may also be the case that, when indigenous children with disabilities are able to gain access to education, special education is the main option.

The CRPD clearly establishes that all children with disabilities have the right to be part of the general education system, requiring that children with disabilities be provided with the necessary reasonable accommodation. For indigenous children with disabilities who live in their communities, this means that the indigenous education system must provide them with the required support.

There is a lack of sign language education meaning that deaf children are excluded from education, some never learning any full language. This is the case in Greenland where this can also lead to sadness and depression among deaf persons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We would like to submit the following recommendations.

1. State donors and development partners are encouraged to implement article 32 of the Convention inclusively of indigenous persons with disabilities, and in particular international cooperation on education should include education of indigenous persons with disabilities.
2. States should make sign language education available for deaf indigenous persons with disabilities and respect relevant cultural rights in the Convention and the Declaration. They should consult deaf indigenous persons on their issues, needs and preferences. They should pay attention to the unique contribution that deaf indigenous persons make to the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples and of the world.
3. Human rights education on the rights of persons with disabilities, as protected in the UNDRIP and the CRPD, should be implemented.

Thank you.