



## General Assembly

Twelfth Session

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### Third Committee – Social, Humanitarian & Cultural

This group focuses on the rights people. It wants all people to be free to make their own choices. They believe human rights are important and apply to every person in the world.

The members of this committee discuss human rights. They encourage states to respect the rights of citizens. During the year, they hear a lot of reports from experts and groups about the human rights records of states. Social issues are important to this committee. Questions of crime prevention, drug control, youth, elderly and others are discussed.

This committee works closely with the Human Rights Council. They passed resolutions on the protection of children, how refugees should be treated, and ending racism.

### Agenda Item 26.A – Social development including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

#### Background – People with Disabilities

This is an agenda item that covers many issues. States often divide this agenda item into four topics. The topics are youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family. At the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the UN, they passed 3 resolutions. For simplicity, you will focus on people with disabilities. Create a resolution to help people with disabilities.

The term “persons with disabilities” covers a wide range. One of the definitions the UN uses is “those who have long-term physical, mental intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” A person can be born with a disability. Or, they can have an injury or disease that causes a disability. Or, they develop a disability over time. As people grow older they often develop disabilities. This why disability activists argue this topic should be important to all people.

The disability is not in the person – it is in the society which does not allow the person to enjoy equal rights. Treating people the same does not mean everyone is being treated equally. People with disabilities often need supports to engage with society. This can be as simple as making sidewalks with curb cuts. This helps people with physical disabilities get around easier.

In the past persons with disabilities faced legal bias. In the United States, many cities had “ugly laws”. This made it illegal for “unsightly” or “unseemly” people to be in public. It was not until the 1970s that many of these laws were stopped. Around the world, people with disabilities continue to be victimized. What can be done to ensure they enjoy their human rights?

- The UN made 1981 the *International Year of Disabled Persons*. This brought attention to the problems people with disabilities face. Encouraged, the UN created the *World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons*.
- 1983-1992 was the *Decade of Disabled Persons*. This got many states to improve the situation for people with disabilities. Every year, December 3<sup>rd</sup> is the *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*.
- The language used to describe people with disabilities is important. Some groups suggest person-first language. For example, you would say person with autism instead of autistic person.
- Some groups reject person-first language. The Deaf community prefers the term deaf person. They see deafness as a source of pride.
- There were many words for people with disabilities that are now offensive. Some examples are handicapped, deaf and dumb, lame, or midget. These terms should never be used. However, some people have trouble not using terms they learned when they were young.
- It is important to use the language people with disabilities choose for themselves.
- The SDGs will directly impact people with disabilities. Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 8 (decent work), Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), Goal 11 (inclusive cities) and Goal 17 (global partnership) mention disabilities.
- In Canada, a woman was not allowed to accuse her abuser. She had a mental disability and did not know what an oath was. The case went to the Supreme Court. In 2012, they decided people with mental disabilities can be trusted to tell the truth in court.
- Women with disabilities are more likely to be victims of abuse.

### **World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons**

- ✓ This programme was developed in 1982. It asks states to look at disabilities from a human rights perspective.
- ✓ People with disabilities were looked at as things that needed to be “fixed”. Instead, society needs to fix itself. All people need to enjoy human rights.
- ✓ It provides states with a lot of information about how they can become more inclusive.

### **Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

- ✓ This convention was adopted on 13 December 2006.
- ✓ It encourages people to recognize that people with disabilities are people. They have rights and can make decisions.
- ✓ Highlights areas where the rights of persons with disabilities need to be protected. Examples are in the workforce and during natural disasters.
- ✓ 170 states ratified the convention. It entered into force on 3 May 2008.

**Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

- ✓ This is a group of independent experts. They watch to make sure states who signed the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* are making the right changes.
- ✓ States write reports every four years on what they are doing. The Committee makes suggestions on how they can improve.
- ✓ Investigates complaints made by people against a state. The government must protect the rights of people with disabilities.
- ✓ They meet in Geneva Switzerland twice per year.

**Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities**

- ✓ The Human Rights Council passed a resolution to create this job.
- ✓ The Special Rapporteur works with states to promote good practices to help people with disabilities realize their rights.
- ✓ Raises awareness about the rights of people with disabilities. Makes suggestions on how things can be improved.
- ✓ On 1 December 2014 Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar was appointed to be the first person to fill this position.

**Disability Statistics**

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## Guiding Questions

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1. Research the people with disabilities rights movement in your state. When did your state begin to address these rights?
2. Does your state have problems with discrimination against people with disabilities? What laws does it have to protect people with disabilities?
3. How can states work together to protect the rights of people with disabilities?
4. Read this plain language version of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons: <https://tinyurl.com/j7bx9oh> . Why do the rights of people with disabilities need to so specific?
5. How can states make it easier for people with disabilities to access to technology? How can it improve their lives?
6. One of the reasons for discrimination against people with disabilities is because of stereotypes. How can governments help to stop the stereotyping of people with disabilities?
7. People with disabilities is a diverse group. How might different disabilities require different accommodations in society? What accommodations do you see around you every day?
8. Does the problem exist in your community?
9. How does being a delegate from a different state help you understand this problem in your community?
10. How do the choices you make in your life help resolve this problem?

## Resources

Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<b><i>The National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth</i></b>	<a href="http://www.nclcd-youth.info/index.php?id=01">http://www.nclcd-youth.info/index.php?id=01</a>	A website aimed at youth and focusing on disability education.
<b><i>Division for Social Policy and Development Disability</i></b>	<a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/">https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/</a>	Official website of the United Nations for disability issues.
<b><i>Disability-Inclusive: Sustainable Development Goals</i></b>	<a href="http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf">http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf</a>	A poster showing the SDGs that work to improve the lives of people with disabilities.
<b><i>Disability Rights Around the World: from 1944 to the Present Day</i></b>	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/ng-interactive/2016/jun/22/disability-rights-around-the-world-from-1944-to-the-present-day">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/ng-interactive/2016/jun/22/disability-rights-around-the-world-from-1944-to-the-present-day</a>	A Guardian newspaper timeline of all the main disability milestones of the last 73 years.
<b><i>Disability Statistics</i></b>	<a href="https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/">https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/</a>	An overview of disability statistics from the World Health Organization
<b><i>Respectful Disability Language: Here's What's Up!</i></b>	<a href="http://www.miusa.org/sites/default/files/documents/resource/Respectful%20Disability%20Language.pdf">http://www.miusa.org/sites/default/files/documents/resource/Respectful%20Disability%20Language.pdf</a>	A document created by the National Youth Leadership Network to discuss how to use respectful disability language.
<b><i>International Day of Persons with Disabilities</i></b>	<a href="http://www.un.org/en/events/disabilitiesday/">http://www.un.org/en/events/disabilitiesday/</a>	The official website for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
<b><i>Disability and Rehabilitation</i></b>	<a href="http://www.who.int/disabilities/en/">http://www.who.int/disabilities/en/</a>	The World Health Organization's site about people with disabilities.
<b><i>It's About Ability</i></b>	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_final_.pdf">https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_final_.pdf</a>	A UNICEF booklet that explains the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities