



CONCEPT NOTE

“SIGN LANGUAGES FOR ALL”

Panel discussion on the International Day of Sign Languages

A side event of the 42nd session of the HRC

19 September 2019, 13:15-14:15 – Room XVII, Palais des Nations

Background

On 19 December 2017, the General Assembly adopted the resolution 72/161, which proclaimed 23 September as the International Day of Sign Languages, to be observed each year beginning in 2018, in order to raise awareness of the importance of sign language in the full realization of the human rights of people who are deaf.

According to the General Assembly, Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations sets multilingualism as a core value of the Organization. It is therefore important to preserve sign languages as part of linguistic and cultural diversity. As the aforementioned resolution affirms, multilingualism contributes to the achievement of the goals of the UN while improving its efficiency, performance, and transparency.

The resolution recalls that early access to sign language and services in sign language, including quality education available in sign language, is vital to the growth and development of the deaf individual and critical to the achievement of the internationally agreed sustainable development goals.

The General Assembly resolution also refers to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states that sign languages are equal to spoken languages and that States parties to the Convention undertake to recognize, accept and promote the use of sign languages. This commitment is aligned to the general principles of the Convention, which include non-discrimination, accessibility, equality of opportunity, full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

Following the general obligations established by the Convention, the human rights of persons with disabilities must be taken into account in all policies and programs. States parties also agreed to perform the adoption, modification or abolition of legislative, administrative and other measures, as well as to abolish discriminatory customs and practices.

The Convention further establishes that States parties will ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others.

In this sense, information intended for the general public should be provided to persons with disabilities in accessible formats in a timely manner and without additional cost. It includes the mass media and internet services.

As mentioned, recognizing, accepting, facilitating, and promoting the use of sign languages are necessary steps for the full realization of the human rights of people who are deaf.

Objectives

1. To raise awareness of the importance of sign language in the full realization of the human rights of people who are deaf;
2. To share good practices in the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities related to the usage of sign language, bearing in mind the principle of “nothing about us without us”;
3. To identify and discuss challenges with regard to the recognition and promotion of the use of sign languages.

Audience

The target audiences of the interactive panel discussion are diplomatic missions, relevant UN offices, NGOs and civil society, academia and think tanks, among other stakeholders.

Format

The interactive panel discussion will last 1 hour. During the first 20 minutes, the panelists will address the main issue according to their expertise. The following 40 minutes will be dedicated to questions from the floor and comments from the panelists.

Draft Program

Time	Speaker
20 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Moderator: H. E. Ambassador Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo, Permanent Representative of Brazil- Panelists presentations: Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, SR on the rights of persons with disabilities Mr. Dmitry Rebrov, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Mr. Joseph Murray, President of the World Association of the Deaf Ms. Daniele Morais, University of Geneva / State University of Campinas (Unicamp) / University of Brasilia (UnB)
40 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Interactive dialogue

Light refreshments will be available before the event.

Organization:

Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN in Geneva

With the support of:

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CRPD

International Disability Alliance – IDA

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR

Permanent Mission of Israel to the UN at Geneva

United Nations Office at Geneva – UNOG