# Statement **by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** on the International Day of Sign Languages

# Adopted during the Committee’s 19th session, held, from 14 February to 9 March 2018 in Geneva

The Committee calls upon States parties to recognise sign languages and provide support to the Deaf Communities in celebration of the International Day of Sign Languages.

Every day, deaf persons are denied the use of sign language as their mother tongue in all aspects of life. As a result, they are affected by isolation, feel abandoned and neglected in the community and cannot interact on an equal basis with others in the places where they live. However, these situations are not inevitable and the right to communicate in sign language should be recognised and promoted by States parties.

The Committee welcomes that the International Day of Sign Languages will be celebrated on 23 September 2018 for the first time as declared in the resolution adopted during the 72nd United Nations General Assembly on 19 December 2017 (A/C.3/72/L.36/Rev.1). The resolution was proposed by the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations and adopted by consensus the General Assembly.

According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, including the use of sign languages. States parties must facilitate the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of Deaf Communities, including sign languages and deaf culture. To realise these obligations in line with the Convention, the Committee urges States parties to take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education.

The Committee has been committed to contributing to the recognition and promotion of sign languages since its establishment on 23 February 2009. The Committee has consistently included the official recognition of sign languages and access to sign language interpretation in its constructive dialogues with States parties and in several concluding observations . In addition, the the right to access sign language interpretation and services is particularly highlighted in the Committee’s general comments No. 1 on equal recognition before the law; No. 2 on accessibility; and No. 5 on inclusive education.

The Committee also acknowledges the important role of the World Federation of the Deaf and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters over the years, in contributing to a wider recognition of sign languages and the Deaf Communities’ identity and culture all around the word.

The updated calendar of United Nations international days is available here http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/international-days/#Sep