



**WORLD FEDERATION
OF THE DEAF**

Media Statement on the General Assembly Decision on the Host for the WFD XX World Congress 2027

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12 July 2023

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) convenes a World Congress every four years in conjunction with the WFD General Assembly. The WFD has 137 Ordinary Members and its General Assembly is the organisation's highest decision-making authority, deciding on its Action Plan, Board membership and the site of the next World Congress.

The WFD Statutes and the WFD World Congress Guidelines define the processes for selecting an Ordinary Member to host the next WFD World Congress. Our Guidelines clearly state that Congresses cover a variety of topics, including LGBTQIA+ topics. Bidders who submit bids are expected to follow our Guidelines. The Guidelines outline the purpose and expectations for bids and the processes for a Site Inspection Team to visit and assess the proposed sites' capacity to host the World Congress. The Site Inspection team consists of two WFD Board Members and one WFDYS Board Member who together assess each bid.

Earlier this year the Site Inspection team visited two of the bidding countries, Norway and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and held virtual meetings with the third bidding country, Nigeria, due to safety concerns.

The Site Inspection team's findings were shared with the WFD Board. Based on the assessment information, the WFD Board agreed that on sharing the assessment information with Ordinary Members it would include a recommendation that the UAE host the 2027 World Congress.

At the XXI WFD General Assembly in Jeju, South Korea, on 10th July, the three bidding countries were given an opportunity to present their bid to the General Assembly prior to voting. This process revealed some new information regarding the UAE's bid and raised concerns about Congress presenters speaking about LGBTQIA+ issues and the safety of LGBTQIA+ people. The WFD Board promptly withdrew its recommendation that the UAE host the 2027 World Congress. The General Assembly then voted on the location of the next Congress, as per our Statutes. The General Assembly voted for the UAE to host the 2027 World Congress.



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While recognising the executive authority of the WFD General Assembly, the WFD Board is deeply troubled by this decision causing distress and raising serious questions about inclusiveness, particularly the inclusion of deaf LGBTQIA+ topics.

The WFD wishes to reiterate that its philosophy is one of equality, human rights and respect for all people, regardless of race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual preference, age and all other differences. The WFD supports and promotes in its work the many United Nations conventions on human rights, with focus on deaf people who use sign languages, and their friends and family members. The WFD works with the aim of solidarity and unity to make the world a better place for everyone.

The WFD also recognises that deaf people can be subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, gender, sexuality, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, age or audist attitudes and actions. Deaf people from marginalized groups can also experience intersectional discrimination based on historical, social and political contexts.

Following the outcome of the General Assembly decision the WFD requested an urgent meeting with the UAE delegation and we are currently in bilateral dialogue to clarify the situation regarding the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ topics and people in the 2027 World Congress. The WFD Board will hold UAE OM accountable for the safety and inclusion of all deaf people in the Congress and WFDYS camp.

The WFD will provide an update as soon as we have more information.