



**WORLD FEDERATION
OF THE DEAF**

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
32nd Session, 03 March 2025

Statement by the World Federation of the Deaf on equal participation at the CRPD Committee meetings for all members, including deaf members.

Good morning. I am Dr. Joseph J. Murray, President of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). I want to thank the UN CRPD Committee for the opportunity to speak today.

The WFD numbers national associations of deaf people from 137 countries in its membership. Our vision is a world where deaf people everywhere can sign anywhere. Over 70 million deaf use more than 200 distinct national sign languages. Without access to sign language, deaf people are denied basic human rights. When sign language interpreters are not provided in social and political spaces, deaf individuals are excluded.

This is why I stand before you today to remind you that the UN CRPD contains strong provisions recognising human rights are contingent on our access to sign languages. This access is essential for us to receive information, express our opinions, and make decisions on an equal basis with others.

The WFD is proud to congratulate Mr. Hiroshi Tamon on his election to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). He received 157 votes, a resounding endorsement from over 80% of UN Member States. We recognise Mr. Tamon's distinguished expertise and are confident that he will significantly contribute to the Committee's work in monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly those in the deaf community.

The World Federation of the Deaf strongly condemns the current situation in which the 32nd session of the CRPD Committee is meeting while Mr. Tamon does not have full access to the proceedings. Mr. Tamon has faced numerous challenges in ensuring his full and effective participation. This includes the necessity for full access via sign language interpretation in the sign languages of his choice during official sessions and all informal interactions with fellow Committee members and civil society. Providing this support is crucial to guarantee that he has equal opportunities alongside other CRPD Committee members.

The WFD has been working with Mr. Tamon, and the Japanese Federation of the Deaf for the United Nations Office in Geneva to understand their responsibility to provide equitable access to deaf people who use sign languages.

Currently, Mr. Tamon does not have CRPD-compliant access. By continuing its 32nd Session while a member does not have equitable access to the proceeding, the Committee is complicit in the United Nations Office in Geneva's prevention of Mr. Tamon's ability to fulfil his mandate.



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We would like to emphasise the following points:

1. The importance of ensuring equal treatment and non-discrimination among Committee members, as well as equal access to communication and information during their mandate.
2. The importance of continuing to advance the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, which is based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
3. The critical need to strengthen the participation and engagement of deaf individuals in their interactions with international mechanisms. Currently, deaf people are still being left behind. To achieve full and equal participation, UN agencies must always provide interpretation in sign languages.

We remind that in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) and Articles 9 and 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), United Nations entities must ensure the accessibility of their events and meetings for deaf individuals so that they can participate on an equal footing with other participants. Deaf people have the right to access information about their human rights and to communicate in national sign languages while interacting with United Nations representatives. Ensuring their full and effective participation will enhance deaf people's human rights advancements and decision-making processes regarding matters that affect their lives.

We strongly urge United Nations entities to ensure Mr. Hiroshi Tamon can participate as a CRPD Committee member in all events and meetings in a national sign language of his choice. Additionally, any event or meeting intended for a broad regional and/or international audience should provide International Sign interpretation to ensure accessibility for deaf participants from different countries. Furthermore, when a deaf participant requests interpretation in their national sign language, this request should be seriously considered by UN entities. Deaf individuals cannot participate fully in their country review process without the provision of national sign language interpreters for the sessions.

It is essential that the organising committee consults closely with and actively involves representatives from the national deaf organisation addressing the accessibility request in accordance with Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD. Deaf individuals must be the primary authorities regarding their accessibility needs, including language preferences, such as choosing between International Sign or their national sign language, and their preferences regarding sign language interpreters and/or service providers. By accommodating these needs, the organising committee will ensure the equal participation of deaf representatives on the same level as other participants. Denying reasonable accommodations for deaf individuals or conflating their needs with those of other persons with disabilities (like personal assistants) marginalises them and constitutes discrimination.



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The World Federation of the Deaf calls upon the Committee to take immediate action to support Mr Tamon's access needs. To ignore this problem, or to individualise this problem into Mr Tamon's responsibility, is to be complicit in this grave contravention of the CRPD itself. We stand ready to assist the CRPD Committee with further recommendations and guidance on how to fully realise the rights of deaf communities to participate on an equal basis with others during CRPD Committee sessions and any events and meetings organised under the auspices of the United Nations.

We look forward to an immediate and CRPD-compliant resolution to these matters. Thank you.