

Statement on Accessibility Violations at the United Nations

Wednesday 11 February 2026

The World Federation of the Deaf expresses its deep concern regarding recent developments within the United Nations system that have resulted in the denial of accessibility and reasonable accommodation to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Committee, including the suspension of International Sign interpretation and captioning services. 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 fully. 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.

The WFD points to the Statement issued by the CRPD Committee released on January 31st, 2026, regarding the discriminatory impact of these measures. The denial of sign language interpretation and other accessibility services constitutes a clear violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Articles 9, 21, 29 and 33, and undermines the ability of the Committee to effectively carry out its mandate.

Accessibility is a binding obligation, not an option, even in United Nations

As the global organisation representing deaf people and national associations of deaf people worldwide, for decades, the WFD has worked closely with the United Nations to advance accessibility, linguistic rights, and the meaningful participation of deaf persons in international human rights processes. The presence and full participation of deaf experts, including deaf members of UN treaty bodies, is not symbolic, it is a legal requirement flowing directly from the Convention and from relevant General Assembly resolutions.



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The justification of budgetary or financial constraints cannot excuse the denial of reasonable accommodation. Such measures result in institutional discrimination, putting persons with disabilities—and the CRPD Committee itself— in a disadvantaged position compared to other UN human rights mechanisms. This sets a dangerous precedent for the inclusion of persons with disabilities across the UN system.

The WFD is particularly alarmed that these developments are occurring in 2026, the year marking the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At a time when the international community should be strengthening its commitment to disability inclusion, these actions represent a significant regression.

The WFD therefore calls upon the Secretary-General and all relevant UN departments, units and entities to urgently ensure that:

- Ensure that CRPD Member Mr Hiroshi Tamon has full access to all CRPD Committee meetings and informal discussions by providing him with a national sign language interpreter of his choice.
- Guarantee that all UN proceedings provide sign language interpretation in both national sign languages and International Sign when requested by parties before the Committee.
- Eliminate barriers preventing UN Member States from ensuring sign language accessibility during their country reviews.
- International Sign interpretation and captioning services are guaranteed for all meetings and participants.
- Financial or administrative measures do not disproportionately or discriminatorily affect persons with disabilities or UN human rights mechanisms dedicated to disability rights.

Access is not an option. It is a binding human rights obligation. The credibility of the UN human rights system depends on its own compliance with the principles it is mandated to uphold.

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