



**Convention on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities**

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General comment on Article 9: Accessibility

Draft prepared by the Committee

The draft general comment on Article 9 on accessibility was prepared by the Committee pursuant to Rule 47, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure (CRPD/C/4/2) and paragraph 54 of the Committee's Working Methods (CRPD/C/5/4).

I. Introduction

1. Accessibility is a precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. Without access to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communication, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, persons with disabilities would not have equal opportunities for participation in their respective societies. It is no coincidence that accessibility is one of the principles on which the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is based (art. 3 (f)). Historically, the persons with disabilities movement has argued that access to the physical environment and public transport for persons with disabilities is a precondition for freedom of movement, as guaranteed under article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Similarly, access to information and communication is seen as a precondition for freedom of opinion and expression, as guaranteed under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 19, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

2. Article 25 (c) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enshrines the right of every citizen to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his or her country. The provisions of this article could serve as a basis to incorporate the right of access into the core human rights treaties.

3. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination guarantees everyone the right of access to any place or service intended for use by the general public, such as transport hotels, restaurants, cafes, theatres and parks (art. 5 (f)). Thus, a precedent has been established in the international human rights legal framework for viewing the right to access as a right per se. Admittedly, for members of different racial or ethnic groups, the barriers to free access to places and services open to the public were the result of prejudicial attitudes and a readiness to use force in preventing access to spaces that were physically accessible. However, persons with disabilities face technical barriers such as staircases at the entrances of buildings, the absence of lifts in multi-floor buildings and a lack of information in accessible formats. Such barriers are often the result of a lack of information and technical know-how rather than a conscious will to prevent persons with disabilities from accessing places or services intended for use by the general public.

4. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination clearly establish the right of access as part of international human rights law. Accessibility should be viewed as a disability-specific reaffirmation of the right of access. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes accessibility as one of its key underlying principles — a vital precondition for the effective and equal enjoyment of different civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by persons with disabilities. Accessibility should be viewed in the context of equality and non-discrimination.

5. In its general comment No. 5 (1994), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights evoked the duty of States parties to implement the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The Standard Rules also highlight the significance of the accessibility of the physical environment, transport, information and communication for the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The concept is developed in rule No. 5, in which accessibility to the physical environment, information and communication are targeted as areas for priority

actions for States. In its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the fact that the physical inaccessibility of public transportation and other facilities, including governmental buildings, shopping areas and recreational facilities, is a major factor in the marginalization and exclusion of children with disabilities and markedly compromises their access to services, including health and education. The importance of accessibility was reiterated by that Committee in its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31).

6. The *World Report on Disability* (2011), published by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, stresses that the built environment, transport systems and information and communication are often inaccessible to persons with disabilities (*World Disability Report: Summary*, p. 10). Persons with disabilities are prevented from enjoying some of their basic rights, such as the right to seek employment or the right to health care, due to a lack of accessible transport. The level of implementation of accessibility laws remains low in many countries and persons with disabilities are often denied their right to freedom of expression due to inaccessible information and communication. Even in countries where sign language interpretation services exist for deaf persons, the number of qualified interpreters is usually too low to meet the demand for their services.

7. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has considered accessibility as one of the key issues in each of the ten dialogues it has held to date with States parties to consider their initial reports. The concluding observations have all contained recommendations concerning accessibility. One common challenge has been the lack of an adequate monitoring mechanism to ensure the practical implementation of accessibility standards and relevant legislation. In some States parties, monitoring was the responsibility of local authorities that lacked the technical knowledge and the human and material resources to ensure effective implementation. Another common challenge has been the lack of training provided to the relevant stakeholders and insufficient involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the process of ensuring access to the physical environment, transport, information and communication.

8. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has also addressed the issue of accessibility in its jurisprudence. In the case of Szilvia Nyusti, Péter Takács and Tamás Fazekas v. Hungary (communication No. 1/2010, Views adopted on 16 April 2013), the Committee was of the view that that all services open or provided to the public must be accessible in accordance with the provisions of article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The State party was called upon to ensure that blind persons had access to automatic teller machines (ATMs). The Committee recommended, inter alia, that the State party should establish “minimum standards for the accessibility of banking services provided by private financial institutions for persons with visual and other types of impairments”, “create a legislative framework with concrete, enforceable and time-bound benchmarks for monitoring and assessing the gradual modification and adjustment by private financial institutions of previously inaccessible banking services provided by them into accessible ones” and “ensure that all newly procured ATMs and other banking services are fully accessible for persons with disabilities” (para. 10.2 (a)).

[One Committee expert proposed the deletion of paragraph 8 of the draft general comment on article 9, since the Committee “does not have an established practice, in terms of Convention jurisprudence, to cite or refer to only very few cases (actually, one) the Committee has dealt with so far”. The Committee could refer to specific cases in more detail once it has covered most aspects of accessibility-related services and products, but should not refer to one case related to a specific service in a given State party.]

9. Given these precedents and the fact that accessibility is indeed a vital precondition for persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in society and effectively enjoy

all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Committee finds it necessary to adopt a general comment on article 9 of the Convention on accessibility, in accordance with its rules of procedure and the established practice of the human rights treaty bodies.

II. Normative content

10. Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that, “to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas”. It is important that accessibility is addressed in all its complexity, encompassing the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services. The focus is no longer on legal personality and the public or private nature of those who own buildings, transport infrastructure, vehicles, information and communication, and services. As long as goods, products and services are open or provided to the public, they must be accessible to all, regardless of whether they are owned and/or provided by a public authority or a private enterprise. Persons with disabilities should have equal access to all goods, products and services that are open or provided to the public in a manner that ensures their effective and equal access and respects their dignity. This approach stems from the prohibition against discrimination; denial of access should be considered to constitute a discriminatory act, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a public or private entity. Accessibility should be provided to all persons with disabilities, regardless of the type of impairment, their legal or social status, gender or age. Accessibility should take into account the gender and age perspectives for persons with disabilities.

11. Article 9 of the Convention clearly enshrines accessibility as the precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently, participate fully and equally in society, and have unrestricted enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. The Convention does not create any new rights; indeed, accessibility should not be viewed as a new right. As indicated in the introduction, some of the core human rights instruments recognize the right to access: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 25 (c)) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (art. 5 (f)). Accessibility should therefore be considered in the context of the right to access, seen from the specific perspective of disability. This is a widely accepted approach in comparative law and is applied in different national laws on equal opportunities and the prevention of disability-based discrimination.

[Alternative text: 11. Although reference was made during the negotiations on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the fact that the intention was not to create new rights, reading the text of article 9 in conjunction with the general rule of interpretation in article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, one could conclude that accessibility is in fact a new right. Reading the text in accordance with the ordinary meaning of the terms of the Convention, it is clear that it establishes binding obligations for States and consequently, rights for persons with disabilities that are not included in the other core human rights treaties, although article 25 (c) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 5 (f) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination do contain important precedents.]

12. The strict application of universal design to all new goods, products, facilities, technologies and services should ensure full, equal and unrestricted access for all potential

consumers, including persons with disabilities, in a way that takes full account of their inherent dignity and diversity. It should contribute to the creation of an unrestricted chain of movement for an individual from one space to another, including movement inside particular spaces, with no barriers. Persons with disabilities and other users should be able to move in barrier-free streets, enter accessible low-floor vehicles, access information and communication, and enter and move inside universally designed buildings, using technical aids and live assistance where necessary. The application of universal design does not automatically eliminate the need for technical aids. Its application to a building from the initial design stage helps to make construction much less costly: making a building accessible from the outset might increase the total cost of construction up to 0.5 per cent (or not at all, in many cases), while the cost of subsequent adaptations in order to make a building accessible could in some cases amount to one third of the total construction cost. Accessibility of information and communication, including information and communications technology (ICT), should also be achieved from the outset because subsequent adaptations to the Internet and ICT may increase costs. It is therefore more economical to incorporate mandatory ICT accessibility features from the earliest stages of design and construction.

13. It is also significant that article 9 explicitly imposes on States parties the duty to ensure accessibility both in urban and in rural areas. Experience has shown that accessibility is usually better in bigger cities than in remote rural areas, although extensive urbanization can sometimes also create barriers that prevent access for persons with disabilities, in particular to the built environment, transport and services in heavily populated, bustling urban areas.

14. Article 9, paragraph 1, requires States parties to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility, *inter alia*, to:

(a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces;

(b) Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

15. Article 9, paragraph 2, stipulates the measures States parties must take in order to develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum national standards for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public. States parties are also required to take measures to ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services that are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities (art. 9, para. 2 (b)).

16. Since a lack of accessibility is often the result of insufficient awareness and technical know-how, article 9 requires that States parties provide training to all stakeholders on accessibility for persons with disabilities (para. 2 (c)). Article 9 does not attempt to enumerate the relevant stakeholders: any exhaustive list should include the authorities that issue building permits, broadcasting boards, chambers of engineers, designers, architects, urban planners, transport authorities, service providers, members of the academic community and persons with disabilities. Training should be provided not just to those designing goods, services and products, but also to those who actually produce them. Ultimately, it is the builders on the construction site who make a building accessible or not. It is important to put in place training and monitoring systems for all these groups in order to ensure the practical application of accessibility standards.

17. Movement and orientation in buildings and other places open to the public can be a challenge for some persons with disabilities if there is no adequate signage, accessible information and communication or support services. Article 9, paragraphs 2 (d) and (e), therefore provide that buildings and other places open to the public should have signage in

Braille and in easy-to-read and understand forms, and that live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign-language interpreters should be provided to facilitate accessibility. Without such signage, accessible information and communication and support services, orientation and movement in and through buildings may become impossible for many persons with disabilities, especially those experiencing cognitive fatigue.

18. Without access to information and communication, persons with disabilities cannot enjoy freedom of thought and expression and many other basic rights and freedoms. Article 9, paragraphs 2 (f) and (g), of the Convention therefore provide that States parties should promote live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters (section (e)), promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information, and promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet, through the application of mandatory accessibility standards.

19. New technologies can be used to promote the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society, but only if they are designed and produced in a way that ensures their accessibility. New investments, research and production should contribute to eliminating inequality, not to the creation of new barriers. Article 9, paragraph 2 (h), therefore calls on States parties to promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.

20. Since accessibility is a precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently, as provided for in article 19 of the Convention, and to participate fully and equally in society, denial of access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services open to the general public should be viewed in the context of discrimination. Taking “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities” (art. 4, para. 1 (b)) constitutes the main general obligation for all States parties. “States parties shall prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds” (art. 5, para. 2). “In order to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, States parties shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided” (art. 5, para. 3). “Reasonable accommodation” means “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms” (art. 2).

21. A clear distinction should be drawn between the obligation to ensure access to all newly designed, built or produced objects, infrastructure, goods, products and services and the obligation to remove barriers and ensure access to the existing physical environment and existing transportation, information and communication, and services open to the general public. Another of the States parties’ general obligations is to “undertake or promote research and development of universally designed goods, services, equipment and facilities, as defined in article 2 of the Convention, which should require the minimum possible adaptation and the least cost to meet the specific needs of a person with disabilities, to promote their availability and use, and to promote universal design in the development of standards and guidelines” (art. 4, para. 4 (f)). All new objects, infrastructure, facilities, goods, products and services have to be designed in a way that makes them fully accessible for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the principles of universal design. States parties are obliged to ensure that persons with disabilities have

access to the existing physical environment and existing transportation, information and communication, and services open to the general public. However, as this obligation is to be implemented gradually, States parties should establish definite time frames and allocate adequate resources for the removal of existing barriers.

22. Accessibility is related to groups, whereas reasonable accommodation is related to individuals. This means that the duty to provide accessibility is an *ex ante* duty. States parties therefore have the duty to provide accessibility before receiving an individual request to enter or use a place or service. States parties need to set accessibility standards, which must be negotiated with organizations of persons with disabilities, and they need to be specified for service-providers, builders and other relevant stakeholders. Accessibility standards must be broad and standardized. In the case of individuals who have rare impairments that were not taken into account when the accessibility standards were developed or do not use the modes, methods or means offered to achieve accessibility (not reading Braille print, for example), even the application of disability standards may not be sufficient to ensure them access. In such cases, reasonable accommodation may apply.

23. The duty to provide reasonable accommodation is an *ex nunc* duty, which means that it is enforceable from the moment an individual with an impairment needs it in a given situation (workplace, school, etc.) in order to enjoy her or his rights on an equal basis in a particular context. Here, accessibility standards can be an indicator, but may not be taken as prescriptive. Reasonable accommodation can be used as a means of ensuring accessibility for an individual with a disability in a particular situation. Reasonable accommodation seeks to achieve individual justice in the sense that non-discrimination or equality is assured, taking the dignity, autonomy and choices of the individual into account. Thus, a person with a rare impairment might ask for accommodation that falls outside the scope of any accessibility standard. The decision to provide it or not depends on whether it is reasonable and whether it imposes a disproportionate or undue burden.

24. The inherent dignity of persons with disabilities is a crucial element to be considered, including in the context of reasonable accommodation. In adapting existing buildings, reasonableness of costs must be balanced against respect for the inherent dignity of persons with disabilities. For example, a private entrepreneur who owns a restaurant in an old building should make every effort to make the main entrance accessible to customers with disabilities, even if it is more costly and technically challenging than adapting the back door to the restaurant.

III. States parties' obligations

25. Even though ensuring access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services open to the public is often a precondition for the effective enjoyment of different civil and political rights by persons with disabilities, States parties can ensure that access is achieved through gradual implementation when necessary as well as through the use of international cooperation. An analysis of the situation to identify the obstacles and barriers that need to be removed can be carried out in an efficient manner and within a short- to mid-term framework. Barriers should be removed in a continuous and systematic way, gradually yet steadily.

26. States parties are obliged to adopt, promulgate and monitor national accessibility standards. If no relevant legislation is in place, adopting a suitable legal framework is the first step. States parties should undertake a comprehensive review of the laws on accessibility in order to identify, monitor and address gaps in legislation and implementation. It is important that the review and adoption of these laws and regulations are carried out in close consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative

organizations (art. 4, para. 3), as well as all other relevant stakeholders, including members of the academic community, expert associations of architects, urban planners, engineers and designers. Legislation should incorporate and be based on the principle of universal design, as required by the Convention (art. 4, para. 1 (f)). It should provide for the mandatory application of accessibility standards and for sanctions, including fines, for those who fail to apply them. Efforts should also be made to achieve the interoperability of goods and services, especially in the field of transport, information and communication, including the Internet and other ICT, through the promotion of internationally recognized accessibility standards.

27. It is helpful to mainstream accessibility standards that prescribe various areas that have to be accessible — the physical environment in laws on construction and planning, transportation in laws on public aerial, railway, road and water transport, information and communication, and services open to the public. However, accessibility should be encompassed in general and specific laws on equal opportunities, equality and participation in the context of the prohibition of disability-based discrimination. Denial of access should be clearly defined as a prohibited act of discrimination. Persons with disabilities who have been denied access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, or services open to the public should have effective legal remedies at their disposal. When defining accessibility standards, States parties have to take into account the diversity of persons with disabilities and ensure that accessibility is provided to persons of both genders and of all ages and types of disability. Part of the task of encompassing the diversity of persons with disabilities in the provision of accessibility is recognizing that some persons with disabilities need human or animal assistance in order to enjoy full accessibility (such as personal assistance, sign language interpretation, tactile sign language interpretation or guide dogs). It must be stipulated, for example, that banning guide dogs from entering a particular building or open space would constitute a prohibited act of disability-based discrimination.

28. It is necessary to establish minimum standards for the accessibility of different services provided by public and private entities for persons with different types of impairments. States parties should establish a legislative framework with specific, enforceable, time-bound benchmarks for monitoring and assessing the gradual modification and adjustment by private entities of their previously inaccessible services into accessible ones. States parties should also ensure that all newly procured goods and services are fully accessible for persons with disabilities. Minimum standards must be developed in close consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 3, of the Convention. The standards can also be developed in collaboration with other States parties and international organizations and agencies through international cooperation, in accordance with article 32 of the Convention. Such cooperation can be useful in developing and promoting international standards that contribute to the interoperability of goods and services. In the field of communication-related services, States parties must ensure at least a minimum quality of services, especially for the relatively new types of services such as personal assistance and sign language interpretation, aiming at their standardization.

29. Public procurement procedures should be used in a way that encourages the removal of existing barriers and prevents the creation of new barriers. It is unacceptable to use public funds to perpetuate new inequalities. All new objects, infrastructure, facilities, goods, products and services must be fully accessible for all persons with disabilities. Public procurements should be used to implement affirmative action in line with the provisions of article 5, paragraph 4, of the Convention in order to ensure accessibility and de facto equality for persons with disabilities.

30. States parties should adopt action plans and strategies to identify existing barriers to accessibility, set time frames with specific deadlines and provide both the human and material resources necessary to remove the barriers. Once adopted, such action plans and strategies should be strictly implemented. States parties should also strengthen their monitoring mechanisms in order to ensure accessibility and they should continue providing sufficient funds to remove barriers to accessibility and train monitoring staff. As accessibility standards are often implemented locally, continuous capacity-building of the local authorities responsible for monitoring implementation of the standards is of paramount importance. States parties are under an obligation to develop an effective monitoring framework and set up efficient monitoring bodies with adequate capacity and appropriate mandates to make sure that plans, strategies and standardization are implemented and enforced.

IV. Intersectional issues

31. The duty of States parties to ensure access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services open to the public for persons with disabilities should be seen from the perspective of equality and non-discrimination. Denial of access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services open to the public constitutes an act of disability-based discrimination that is prohibited by article 5 of the Convention. Ensuring accessibility *pro futuro* should be viewed in the context of implementing the general obligation to develop universally designed goods, services, equipment and facilities (art. 4, para. 1 (f)).

32. Awareness-raising is one of the preconditions for the effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Since accessibility is often viewed narrowly, as accessibility to the built environment (which is significant, but only one aspect of access for persons with disabilities), States parties should strive systematically and continuously to raise awareness about accessibility among all relevant stakeholders. The all-encompassing nature of accessibility should be addressed, providing for access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services. Awareness-raising should also stress the fact that the duty to observe accessibility standards applies equally to the public and to the private sector. It should promote the application of universal design and the idea that designing and building in an accessible way from the earliest stages is cost-effective and economical. Awareness-raising should be carried out in cooperation with persons with disabilities, their representative organizations and technical experts. Special attention should be paid to capacity-building for the application and monitoring of the implementation of accessibility standards. The media should not only take into account the accessibility of their own programmes and services for persons with disabilities, but should also take an active role in promoting accessibility and contributing to awareness-raising.

33. Ensuring full access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and services open to the public is indeed a vital precondition for the effective enjoyment of many rights covered by the Convention. In situations of risk, natural disasters and armed conflict, the emergency services must be accessible to persons with disabilities, or their lives cannot be saved or their well-being protected (art. 11). There can be no effective access to justice if the buildings in which law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary are located are not physically accessible, or if the services, information and communication they provide are not accessible to persons with disabilities (art. 13). Safe houses, support services and procedures must all be accessible in order to provide effective and meaningful protection from violence, abuse and exploitation to persons with disabilities, especially women and children (art. 16). Accessible environment,

transportation, information and communication, and services are a precondition for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their respective local communities and for them to have an independent life (art. 19).

34. Articles 9 and 21 intersect on the issue of information and communication. Article 21 provides that States parties “shall take all appropriate measures to 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 and through all forms of communication of their choice”. It goes on to describe in detail how the accessibility of information and communication can be ensured in practice. It requires that States parties “provide information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities” (art. 21 (a)). Furthermore, it provides for “facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions” (art. 21 (b)). Private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, are urged to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities (art. 21 (c)), and the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, are encouraged to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities (art. 21 (d)). Article 21 also requires States parties to recognize and promote the use of sign languages, in accordance with articles 24, 27, 29 and 30 of the Convention.

35. Without accessible transport to schools, accessible school buildings, and accessible information and communication, persons with disabilities would not have the opportunity to exercise their right to education (art. 24 of the Convention). Thus schools have to be accessible, as is explicitly indicated in article 9, paragraph 1 (a), of the Convention. However, it is the entire process of inclusive education that must be accessible, not just buildings, but all information and communication, support services and reasonable accommodations in schools. In order to foster accessibility, education should promote and be conducted in sign language, Braille, alternative script, and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation (art. 24, para. 3 (a)). Modes and means of teaching should be accessible and should be conducted in accessible environments. The whole environment of students with disabilities must be designed in a way that fosters inclusion and guarantees their equality in the entire process of their education. Full implementation of article 24 of the Convention should be considered in conjunction with the other core human rights instruments as well as the provisions of the Convention against Discrimination in Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

36. Health care and social protection would remain unattainable for persons with disabilities without access to the premises where those services are provided. Even if the buildings where the health-care and social protection services are provided are themselves accessible, without accessible transportation, persons with disabilities are unable to travel to the places where the services are being provided. It is especially important to take into account the gender dimension of accessibility when providing health care, particularly reproductive health care for women and girls with disabilities.

37. Persons with disabilities cannot effectively enjoy their work and employment rights, as described in article 27 of the Convention, if the workplace itself is not accessible. Workplaces therefore have to be accessible, as is explicitly indicated in article 9, paragraph 1 (a). A refusal to adapt the workplace constitutes a prohibited act of disability-based discrimination. Besides the physical accessibility of the workplace, persons with disabilities need accessible transport and support services to get to their workplaces. All information pertaining to work, advertisements of job offers, selection processes and communication at

the workplace that is part of the work process must be accessible through sign language, Braille, accessible electronic formats, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication. All trade union and labour rights must also be accessible, as must training opportunities and job qualifications. For example, foreign language or computer courses for employees and trainees must be conducted in an accessible environment in accessible forms, modes, means and formats.

38. Article 29 of the Convention guarantees persons with disabilities the right to participate in political and public life, and to take part in running public affairs. Persons with disabilities would be unable to exercise these rights equally and effectively if States parties failed to ensure that voting procedures, facilities and materials were appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use. It is also important that political meetings and materials used and produced by political parties or individual candidates participating in public elections are accessible. If not, persons with disabilities are deprived of their right to participate in the political process in an equal manner. Persons with disabilities who are elected to public office must have equal opportunities to carry out their mandate in a fully accessible environment.

39. Everyone has the right to enjoy the arts, take part in sports, and go to hotels, restaurants and bars. However, wheelchair users cannot go to a concert if there are only stairs in the concert hall. Blind persons cannot enjoy a painting if there is no description of it they can hear in the gallery. Deaf persons cannot enjoy a film if there are no subtitles. Persons with intellectual disabilities cannot enjoy a book if there is no easy-to-read version of it. Article 30 of the Convention requires that States parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part in cultural life on an equal basis with others. They are required to take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- (a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
- (b) Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats; and
- (c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.

The provision of access to cultural and historical monuments that are part of national heritage may indeed be a challenge in some circumstances. However, States parties are obliged to strive to provide access to these sites as far as possible. Many monuments and sites of national cultural importance have been made accessible in a way that preserves their cultural and historical identity and uniqueness.

40. “States parties shall take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential” (art. 30, para. 2). “States parties shall take all appropriate steps, in accordance with international law, to ensure that laws protecting intellectual property rights do not constitute an unreasonable or discriminatory barrier to access by persons with disabilities to cultural materials” (art. 30, para. 3). The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled of the World Intellectual Property Organization, adopted in June 2013, should ensure access to cultural material without unreasonable or discriminatory barriers for persons with disabilities, especially those facing challenges accessing classic print materials. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides that persons with disabilities are entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity. Article 30, paragraph 4, stresses the recognition of and support for sign languages and deaf culture.

41. Article 30, paragraph 5, of the Convention provides that, in order to enable persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;

(b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;

(c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;

(d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system; and

(e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

42. International cooperation, as described in article 32 of the Convention, should be a significant tool in the promotion of accessibility and universal design. All new investments made within the framework of international cooperation should be used to encourage the removal of existing barriers and prevent the creation of new barriers. It is unacceptable to use public funds to perpetuate new inequalities. All new objects, infrastructure, facilities, goods, products and services must be fully accessible for all persons with disabilities. International cooperation should be used not merely to invest in accessible goods, products and services, but also to foster the exchange of know-how and information on good practice in achieving accessibility in ways that will make tangible changes that can improve the lives of millions of persons with disabilities worldwide. International cooperation on standardization is also important, as is the fact that organizations of persons with disabilities must be supported so that they can participate in national and international processes to develop, implement and monitor accessibility standards.

43. Monitoring of accessibility is a crucial aspect of the national and international monitoring of the Convention. The processes of national and international monitoring of the implementation of the Convention should be performed in an accessible manner that promotes and ensures the effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Article 49 of the Convention requires that the text of the Convention be made available in accessible formats. This is an innovation in an international human rights treaty and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be seen as setting a precedent in that respect for all future treaties.
