



Human Rights Council Side Event at the 34th Session

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON PERSONS WITH ALBINISM

Thursday, 2 March, 2017 - 12:00 to 13:00h
Room XXI, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Concept note

I. Background

Various Treaty Bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee, and the Committee against Torture, have addressed the human rights violations committed against persons with albinism from their specific angles.

Discrimination against persons with albinism has been repeatedly discussed over the last years, including by the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of Human Rights of Persons with Albinism (A/HRC/31/63, A/71/255, A/HRC/34/59), the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (A/HRC/28/75), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2013, A/HRC/24/57). Their findings have demonstrated that persons with albinism are being subjected to and experiencing persisting multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, including ritual attacks, sexual violence, trafficking of body parts, infanticide and abandonment of children, societal prejudices, and lack of access to basic rights such as to health and an adequate standard of living. In addition, too often, States fail to provide legal protection to persons with albinism that were exposed to discrimination.

According to the recent report of the Independent Expert, discrimination affects persons with albinism throughout their lives and in all areas, including in accessing education and others services that would promote their full and effective inclusion in society. This discrimination is widespread, even in its most extreme forms, and seems to be deeply rooted in a prevalent misconceptions on albinism. (See report A/HRC/34/59/Add.2).

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has developed significant jurisprudence to address discrimination against persons with albinism, calling on States Parties to adopt national disability awareness policies or strategies to strengthen efforts to prevent and combat disability stereotypes and discrimination against persons with albinism. The Committee also has stressed the need to increase awareness on the rights and dignity of persons with albinism, in particular in rural and urban areas, through the mass media, workshops and public information campaigns. Efforts must aim at the elimination of stigmatization and to overcome the myths that underpin violence and other forms of discrimination against persons with albinism.

II. International Human Rights Law

The principle of equality and non-discrimination is enshrined at the Charter of the United Nations, and subsequently at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, as well as of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Collectively, these instruments call on States to recognise and ensure that all persons are entitled to all human rights and that discrimination of any kind should not be permitted. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) goes beyond and recognises all people as equal before and under the law and, therefore, to be entitled, without any discrimination, to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law. Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination has been used as a basis to address discrimination and stigmatization faced by persons with albinism on the basis of their colour (see CERD/C/ZAF/CO/4-8, para 20).

The legal frameworks for the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities address issues faced by persons with albinism, such as on the basis of their vision impairment. The CRPD is particularly relevant to persons with albinism as it adopts a broad definition, which considers that the interaction of the person with various barriers, including societal and attitudinal barriers vis-à-vis their personal condition, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Addressing these barriers, including barriers in the social structures, systems and conceptions, requires the transformation of existing structures that perpetuate discrimination against persons with disabilities, including those with albinism.

III. Objective

In March 2017, the Human Rights Council (HRC) will hold its thirty-fourth session, and host the Annual Panel on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this year dedicated to article 5 of the CRPD on Equality and Non-Discrimination. Persons with albinism have historically been underrepresented in society, making it all the more pressing for consideration to be discussed under the HRC agenda. As such, a side event is proposed during this HRC 34th Session, taking advantage of the participation of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of Human Rights of Persons with Albinism. The side event will be held with the aim of:

1. Identifying obligations of States under international human rights law and good practices with regards to ensuring the promotion, protection and enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to life and to not be discriminated, by persons with albinism,

2. Raising awareness, including of the general public, members of the Parliament, the executive and the judiciary, around the dignity and rights of persons with albinism; ensuring, at all times, the involvement of organizations of persons with albinism in any campaigns aimed at eliminating stigmatization and the myths that underpin violence and other forms of discrimination against persons with albinism,

3. Discussing concrete measures that States can take to adopt national disability awareness policies and strategies for the effective prevention and combating of disability-related stereotypes and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities, including persons with albinism, and

4. Highlighting the unique opportunity through the Agenda 2030 to strengthen equality for persons with disabilities, including those with albinism, and to increase their inclusion and participation in society, taking into practice the Agenda's core principle of 'Leaving No One Behind'. This principle asserts that progress of the 2030 Agenda will not be possible unless it reaches the most marginalised people in society.

IV. Panel discussion

Opening remarks

H.E. Ambassador Yvette Stevens, Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone

H.E. Ambassador Sabine Bohlke-Moller, Permanent Mission of Namibia

Moderator

Ms Tchaurea Fleury, Senior Human Rights Adviser, International Disability Alliance

Panellists

1. **Mr Facundo Chavez Penillas**, Human Rights & Disability Advisor, OHCHR
2. **Ms Catalina Devandas**, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
3. **Ms Ikponwosa Ero**, Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of Human Rights of Persons with Albinism
4. **Mr Peter Ogik**, Defender from the Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism

V. Format

Opening statements and initial presentation by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion based on interventions from the floor.

VI. Organizers & Sponsors

This event is organised by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Mandate of the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of Human Rights of Persons with Albinism, and sponsored by the Action on Disability and Development (ADD), the Permanent Missions of Sierra Leone, Portugal, Namibia, Canada and Fiji.

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