



Statement by FDPM/MFA I. DAČIĆ at the event organized on the occasion of marking the 10th anniversary of entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

"Dear guests,
Distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps in Serbia,

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome all participants of the event organized on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to express my appreciation of the initiative to organize our today's gathering, launched by Mr. Damjan Tatić, a distinguished member and Vice Chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I wish to recall that Mr. Tatić has been serving his second consecutive four-year term on the Committee, confirmation of his contribution and expertise within this major international mechanism for the protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities.

I am most grateful for the participation of the following individuals: Mr. Zoran Djordjević, Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Mrs. Suzana Paunović, Acting Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights; Mrs. Karla Hershey, United Nations Resident Coordinator; Mr. Milan Stošić, President of the National Organization of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia.

The 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities is an opportunity to recall some important facts regarding this major international legal instrument, to share and discuss experiences gained in the past ten years of the Convention's implementation, point to most serious challenges faced in a more effective implementation of the established international standards concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, and to reaffirm the commitment of the Republic of Serbia to the efforts to promote the principles and obligations under the Convention and ensure their consistent implementation in practice, in partnership with all relevant state bodies, and particularly organizations and associations of persons with disabilities.

Our panel discussion today is an opportunity for members of the Diplomatic Corps in the Republic of Serbia to acquaint themselves more closely with the role of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in promoting and advocating the universal protection of the rights of this vulnerable segment of the population and the contribution of this international body to cooperation between states in this field. Achieving social cohesion is an aim of any internal policy, and exchanging ideas and good practices is important in formulating and implementing policies catering to the needs and interests of all categories of the population, that is, in the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

I recall that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by unanimity on 13 December 2006, and that it entered into force on 3 May 2008. So far, the Convention has been ratified by 177 UN Member States which is a huge success and a confirmation of the importance that the states around the world attach to this issue. The Republic of Serbia signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto on 17 December 2007 and ratified it on 31 July 2009.

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. The Convention's fundamental principles include: respect for the inherent dignity of persons with disabilities; individual autonomy including freedom to make their own choices and independence of persons; non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality of men and women; respect for the evolving capacity of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identity.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been established to monitor the implementation of the Convention's specific provisions. It is comprised of 18 independent experts in the human rights field, elected by a secret ballot. Committee members serve in their own capacity but are elected at the proposal of the State Parties for a four-year term and a possibility to be re-elected once. The Committee reviews periodic reports submitted by the State Parties and makes suggestions and recommendations on specific reports. Continued dialogue among the State Parties with members of the Committee and their cooperation is an important precondition for a more efficient practical implementation of standards relating to the human rights of persons with disabilities.

The Republic of Serbia is a staunch advocate of the respect for and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. From the point of view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I would like to point out that the Republic of Serbia is a reliable partner of the international community in the process of cooperation, not only in terms of our obligations arising from the Convention but also

in terms of offering support to all harmonized initiatives affirming and developing the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities at the international level. In that respect, the Republic of Serbia traditionally co-sponsors the resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly on the rights of persons with disabilities, on which there is an overwhelming consensus of the international community, as a confirmation of shared responsibility and understanding that the states around the world attach to this issue and as an instance of exemplary cooperation within the United Nations.

Serbia's cooperation with the UN system to protect the rights of persons with disabilities is most comprehensively viewed through our relationship with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Our approach to cooperation and engagement in this context is not limited to submission and consideration of reports, or to recommendations made by the Committee, but is a continuing review process aimed at the implementation of best possible solutions in the interest of persons with disabilities. The institutionalization of this process through the establishment of the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of UN Treaty Bodies is the best concrete illustration of our approach.

Dear friends,

I take this opportunity to thank once again Mr. Damjan Tatić, Member and Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, for his commitment and contribution to the work of the Committee over the past 8 years. The high dedication by Mr. Tatić, his contribution to the work of the Committee, and in particular his efforts in drafting general comments on accessibility, his personal enthusiasm, energy and responsibility, should serve as an inspiration to all candidates for membership of UN Treaty Bodies in the future.

In addition to politically supporting the promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also extended its support to the election of Mr. Tatić as well as to his successful discharge of duties, thus carrying out in the past years yet another notable international activity which contributed to the reputation of the Republic of Serbia in the international community.

Thank you for your attention."