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**11 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028, Tel: (212) 737 4790, Fax: (212) 472 9865, e-mail: bulgaria@un.int**

**Civil Society CRPD Forum**

**Day of General Discussions on Articles 4.3 and 33.3**

[**Article 4.3 of the CRPD** states that “In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.”

**Article 33.3 of the CRPD** states that “Civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, shall be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process.”]

**New York, 11 June 2018, CR 4, UNHQ**

**Opening Session, 10.00 am**

**H.E. Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the UN and President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to address you today first on behalf of the Government of Bulgaria and also in my capacity as President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Bulgaria strongly supports the Civil Society CRPD Forum as an integral part of the Conferences of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and actively promotes the full participation and involvement of civil society and particularly persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all processes related to the implementation of the Convention.

I would like to highlight the important role of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the discussions, planning, implementation and monitoring of decision-making processes that impact their lives. The CRPD is well-known as a unique treaty that recognizes the role of the people whom it is trying to impact as stipulated in Articles 4.3 and 33.3. It brings together Member States, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, donors, Non-governmental Organizations, National Human Rights Institutions and UN Agencies to discuss ways of strengthening the implementation of the Convention and ensuring the realization of all human rights for persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society on an equal basis with others. In this regard I welcome the decision to dedicate this year’s Civil Society CRPD Forum to a Day of General Discussion of the CRPD Committee on Articles 4.3 and 33.3 which provide for the active involvement of persons with disabilities in all decision-making processes concerning the implementation of the Convention and its monitoring.

The 11th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD which opens tomorrow is of great significance as it marks the 10th anniversary since the entry into force of the Convention in the year when the international community celebrates also the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights thus renewing the commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities marked a major paradigm shift to a human rights model of disability, codifying the principles of equality, non-discrimination and respect for human dignity and diversity, and the empowerment and full participation of persons with disabilities. Following the bold ambition of the Convention to involve persons with disabilities in all processes related to its implementation, the Conference will have a strengthened focus on the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all of its proceedings.

As President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD in the current 2-year period Bulgaria has worked actively to ensure that the Conference serves as a useful platform where the fruitful partnership with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations can be realized in line with Articles 4.3 and 33.3 of the CRPD. I believe that the Conference of States Parties should set the example of how the UN, Member States and persons with disabilities implement the core principles of the CRPD. It is a space to set a high standard and to illustrate just how much more we can achieve when we work together.

It was in this spirit that from the outset the Bureau of the Conference under the leadership of Bulgaria engaged actively with Civil Society and other stakeholders, particularly with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, whose valuable expertise and contribution was taken into account in all deliberations related to the preparation of the Conference. We are confident that only when we join efforts with persons with disabilities themselves and their representative organizations and make space for their voices and opinions to be heard and considered, can we really achieve better results in our common goal to promote the full implementation of the Convention and the realization of all human rights for persons with disabilities.

CSOs and DPOs have been invited to share their views with regard to all aspects of the Conference, including themes, panelists, format of participation, speakers and co-chairs. And I am pleased that this close cooperation has brought very good results this year again. To name just a few: the Bureau took into consideration the rich input of civil society received with regard to the themes of the Conference and we believe the Conference will address some of the most pressing issues for persons with disabilities and will try to find solutions for those again together with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, which as we are all very well aware is deeply grounded in the Convention itself, namely Articles 4.3 and 33.3 which are in the focus of attention of today’s meeting as well. Another example is the enhanced participation of CSOs representatives and their more prominent role in all segments of the Conference in the last 2 years - from the opening, through co-chairing round table discussions to the closing segment. The informal briefing organized for the second time this year for DPOs, CSOs and other stakeholders in the run-up to the Conference is another good example of the commitment of the Bureau to deliver on its mandate to engage all stakeholders and ensure that their contribution makes an integral part of the Conference.

Let me conclude by reiterating that the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD should be viewed as the Conference of persons with disabilities and we hope we will make this year’s Conference another success - together with all of you!

**Thank you!**