

**INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE
ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

(Adopted at Guatemala City, Guatemala at the twenty-ninth regular session
of the General Assembly of the OAS, held on June 7, 1999)

THE STATES PARTIES TO THIS CONVENTION,

REAFFIRMING that persons with disabilities have the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as other persons; and that these rights, which include freedom from discrimination based on disability, flow from the inherent dignity and equality of each person;

CONSIDERING that the Charter of the Organization of American States, in Article 3.j, establishes the principle that "social justice and social security are bases of lasting peace";

CONCERNED by the discrimination to which people are subject based on their disability;

BEARING IN MIND the agreement of the International Labour Organisation on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons (Convention 159); the Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (UN General Assembly resolution 2856 (XXVI) of December 20, 1971); the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UN General Assembly resolution 3447 (XXX) of December 9, 1975); the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (UN General Assembly resolution 37/52 of December 3, 1982); the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador" (1988); the Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and for the Improvement of Mental Health Care (UN General Assembly resolution 46/119 of December 17, 1991); the Declaration of Caracas of the Pan American Health Organization; resolution AG/RES. 1249 (XXIII-O/93), "Situation of Persons with Disabilities in the American Hemisphere"; the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN General Assembly resolution 48/96 of December 20, 1993); the Declaration of Managua (December 1993); the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the UN World Conference on Human Rights (157/93); resolution AG/RES. 1356 (XXV-O/95), "Situation of Persons with Disabilities in the American Hemisphere"; and AG/RES. 1369 (XXVI-O/96), "Panama Commitment to Persons with Disabilities in the American Hemisphere"; and

COMMITTED to eliminating discrimination, in all its forms and manifestations, against persons with disabilities,

HAVE AGREED as follows:

Article I

For the purposes of this Convention, the following terms are defined:

1. Disability

The term "disability" means a physical, mental, or sensory impairment, whether permanent or temporary, that limits the capacity to perform one or more

essential activities of daily life, and which can be caused or aggravated by the economic and social environment.

2. Discrimination against persons with disabilities

a. The term "discrimination against persons with disabilities" means any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on a disability, record of disability, condition resulting from a previous disability, or perception of disability, whether present or past, which has the effect or objective of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by a person with a disability of his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms.

b. A distinction or preference adopted by a state party to promote the social integration or personal development of persons with disabilities does not constitute discrimination provided that the distinction or preference does not in itself limit the right of persons with disabilities to equality and that individuals with disabilities are not forced to accept such distinction or preference. If, under a state's internal law, a person can be declared legally incompetent, when necessary and appropriate for his or her well-being, such declaration does not constitute discrimination.

Article II

The objectives of this Convention are to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and to promote their full integration into society.

Article III

To achieve the objectives of this Convention, the states parties undertake:

1. To adopt the legislative, social, educational, labor-related, or any other measures needed to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities and to promote their full integration into society, including, but not limited to:

a. Measures to eliminate discrimination gradually and to promote integration by government authorities and/or private entities in providing or making available goods, services, facilities, programs, and activities such as employment, transportation, communications, housing, recreation, education, sports, law enforcement and administration of justice, and political and administrative activities;

b. Measures to ensure that new buildings, vehicles, and facilities constructed or manufactured within their respective territories facilitate transportation, communications, and access by persons with disabilities;

c. Measures to eliminate, to the extent possible, architectural, transportation, and communication obstacles to facilitate access and use by persons with disabilities; and

d. Measures to ensure that persons responsible for applying this Convention and domestic law in this area are trained to do so.

2. To work on a priority basis in the following areas:

a. Prevention of all forms of preventable disabilities;

b. Early detection and intervention, treatment, rehabilitation, education, job training, and the provision of comprehensive services to ensure the optimal level of independence and quality of life for persons with disabilities; and

c. Increasing of public awareness through educational campaigns aimed at eliminating prejudices, stereotypes, and other attitudes that jeopardize the right of persons to live as equals, thus promoting respect for and coexistence with persons with disabilities;

Article IV

To achieve the objectives of this Convention, the states parties undertake to:

1. Cooperate with one another in helping to prevent and eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities;

2. Collaborate effectively in:

a. Scientific and technological research related to the prevention of disabilities and to the treatment, rehabilitation, and integration into society of persons with disabilities; and

b. The development of means and resources designed to facilitate or promote the independence, self-sufficiency, and total integration into society of persons with disabilities, under conditions of equality.

Article V

1. To the extent that it is consistent with their respective internal laws, the states parties shall promote participation by representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, nongovernmental organizations working in this area, or, if such organizations do not exist, persons with disabilities, in the development, execution, and evaluation of measures and policies to implement this Convention.

2. The states parties shall create effective communication channels to disseminate among the public and private organizations working with persons with disabilities the normative and juridical advances that may be achieved in order to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Article VI

1. To follow up on the commitments undertaken in this Convention, a Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, composed of one representative appointed by each state party, shall be established.

2. The committee shall hold its first meeting within the 90 days following the deposit of the 11th instrument of ratification. Said meeting shall be convened by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States and shall be held at the Organization's headquarters, unless a state party offers to host it.

3. At the first meeting, the states parties undertake to submit a report to the Secretary General of the Organization for transmission to the Committee so that it may be examined and reviewed. Thereafter, reports shall be submitted every four years.

4. The reports prepared under the previous paragraph shall include information on measures adopted by the member states pursuant to this Convention and on any progress made by the states parties in eliminating all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities. The reports shall indicate any circumstances or difficulties affecting the degree of fulfillment of the obligations arising from this Convention.

5. The Committee shall be the forum for assessment of progress made in the application of the Convention and for the exchange of experience among the states parties. The reports prepared by the committee shall reflect the deliberations; shall include information on any measures adopted by the states parties pursuant to this Convention, on any progress they have made in eliminating all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities, and on any circumstances or difficulties they have encountered in the implementation of the Convention; and shall include the committee's conclusions, its observations, and its general suggestions for the gradual fulfillment of the Convention.

6. The committee shall draft its rules of procedure and adopt them by a simple majority.

7. The Secretary General shall provide the Committee with the support it requires in order to perform its functions.

Article VII

No provision of this Convention shall be interpreted as restricting, or permitting the restriction by states parties of the enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities recognized by customary international law or the international instruments by which a particular state party is bound.

Article VIII

1. This Convention shall be open for signature by all member states in Guatemala City, Guatemala, on June 8, 1999, and, thereafter, shall remain open for signature by all states at the headquarters of the Organization of American States, until its entry into force.

2. This Convention is subject to ratification.

3. This Convention shall enter into force for the ratifying states on the 30th day following the date of deposit of the sixth instrument of ratification by a member state of the Organization of American States.

Article IX

After its entry into force, this Convention shall be open for accession by all states that have not signed it.

Article X

1. The instruments of ratification and accession shall be deposited with the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States.

2. For each state that ratifies or accedes to the Convention after the sixth instrument of ratification has been deposited, the Convention shall enter into force on the 30th day following deposit by that state of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article XI

1. Any state party may make proposals for amendment of this Convention. Said proposals shall be submitted to the General Secretariat of the OAS for dissemination to the states parties.

2. Amendments shall enter into force for the states ratifying them on the date of deposit of the respective instruments of ratification by two thirds of the member states. For the remaining states parties, they shall enter into force on the date of deposit of their respective instruments of ratification.

Article XII

The states may enter reservations to this Convention when ratifying or acceding to it, provided that such reservations are not incompatible with the aim and purpose of the Convention and relate to one or more specific provisions thereof.

Article XIII

This Convention shall remain in force indefinitely, but any state party may denounce it. The instrument of denunciation shall be deposited with the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States. The Convention shall cease to have force and effect for the denouncing state one year after the date of deposit of the instrument of denunciation, and shall remain in force for the other states parties. Such denunciation shall not exempt the state party from the obligations imposed upon it under this Convention in respect of any action or omission prior to the date on which the denunciation takes effect.

Article XIV

1. The original instrument of this Convention, the English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, which shall send a certified copy thereof to the United Nations Secretariat for registration and publication pursuant to Article 102 of the United Nations Charter.

2. The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States shall notify the member states of that Organization and the states that have acceded to the Convention of the signatures, deposits of instruments of ratification, accession, and denunciation, and any reservations entered.