



The Right of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Political and Public Life

**Contribution on the Draft General Comment on Article 29 of the Convention on the
Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Executive Summary

This contribution is submitted in response to the call issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for comments and recommendations on the draft General Comment on Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities concerning the right to participation in political and public life. QADER for Community Development welcomes the issues addressed in the draft and considers it an important foundation for strengthening the normative understanding of this right, advancing mechanisms for its implementation at the national and international levels, and promoting the effective participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life.

This contribution is based on the understanding that participation in political and public life is not limited to the right to vote, stand for election, or participate in electoral processes. Rather, it encompasses all forms of engagement in public affairs, policy and decision-making processes, the monitoring of their implementation, and accountability for their outcomes. The contribution emphasizes the close interrelationship between Article 29 and other provisions of the Convention, particularly those relating to legal capacity, accessibility, equality and non-discrimination, effective participation, and partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities.

The contribution further underscores the importance of recognizing legal capacity as a foundational prerequisite for participation in political and public life, and of promoting participation that is meaningful and influential rather than merely formal or symbolic. It also highlights the need to ensure the inclusive representation of persons with disabilities in positions of influence and decision-making. Furthermore, it stresses that reasonable accommodation and accessibility are integral components of the right itself and calls for a shift from sectoral approaches toward adopting disability inclusion as a governing framework for participation in political and public life.

This contribution is also grounded in the belief that rapidly evolving normative and practical developments require an expanded understanding of the right to participation in political and public life beyond its traditional dimensions. This highlights the need to address a range of emerging issues related to armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, the broader context of unlawful (colonial) occupation, recovery and reconstruction processes, the digital environment, accountability and remedy mechanisms, and disability inclusion as an overarching framework for political and public participation.

The contribution also addresses several issues that, in our view, warrant further consideration in the final version of the General Comment. These include participation in situations of armed conflict, emergencies, and

unlawful occupation; participation in recovery and reconstruction processes; strengthening the role of data and accountability and remedy mechanisms; ensuring the equal participation of women and girls with disabilities; and addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation and artificial intelligence. In this context, the contribution emphasizes the importance of the involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in monitoring, documentation, accountability, and remedy processes as a natural extension of the right to participation in political and public life.

The contribution concludes that the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life should not be understood as an isolated right or a technical procedure. Rather, it should be viewed as a fundamental pathway to realizing equal citizenship, promoting inclusion and justice, and ensuring that persons with disabilities are present as active partners in shaping the present, building the future, and contributing to decisions that affect their lives and communities.

1. Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

This contribution has been prepared in response to the call issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for comments and recommendations on the draft General Comment on Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), concerning the right to participation in political and public life. This article is of particular importance as one of the fundamental pillars of equal citizenship, empowerment, and democratic participation. It not only guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to vote and stand for election but also extends to their right to full and effective participation in political and public life, decision-making processes, and engagement through their representative organizations. This reflects the recognition of persons with disabilities as rights holders and equal partners in public affairs, as well as in the development of policies and decisions that affect their lives.

This contribution is based on the recognition that Article 29 cannot be interpreted in isolation from the other provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly the general principles set out in Article 3, the general obligations contained in Article 4, the recognition of legal capacity under Article 12, accessibility under Article 9, and the provisions relating to equality and non-discrimination, access to justice, freedom of expression, and freedom of association. It is further grounded in the understanding that participation in political and public life is the direct result of the realization of an interconnected set of rights and guarantees, rather than an isolated right that can be achieved independently of the removal of legal,

institutional, and societal barriers that hinder equal participation. From this perspective, the contribution seeks to support the development of a General Comment that strengthens a comprehensive understanding of Article 29, keeps pace with relevant normative and practical developments, and contributes to consolidating the political and public participation of persons with disabilities as an inherent human right and a fundamental pillar of equal citizenship and inclusive democratic societies.

Methodology

This contribution is based on a review and analysis of the draft General Comment under consultation in light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Committee's General Comments, particularly General Comment No. 1 (2014) on equal recognition before the law, General Comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, General Comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination, General Comment No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities, and General Comment No. 2 (2014) on accessibility. It also draws upon the lists of issues and concluding observations issued by the Committee, as well as relevant international normative documents concerning participation in political and public life, human rights, and non-discrimination.

The contribution further draws on the accumulated research and practical experience of QADER for Community Development in the field of the rights of persons with disabilities and the disability inclusion approach, including specialized studies, analytical papers, and rights-based and policy initiatives developed by QADER in recent years¹. The observations and recommendations have been organized around thematic areas reflecting the key issues addressed in the draft General Comment, with references to the relevant paragraphs of the draft. The contribution also includes several additional recommendations and issues that merit further consideration to strengthen the coherence, comprehensiveness, and practical impact of the General Comment, thereby supporting the transition from the formal recognition of the right to participation toward ensuring its effective, meaningful, and equal exercise in practice.

2. Legal Capacity and Participation in Political and Public Life

Legal capacity constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of the right to participate in political and public life. Genuine and effective participation of persons with disabilities in public affairs cannot be realized without full

¹ See the relevant publications available on the website of QADER at: [Resources Page](#)

recognition of their right to make decisions, express their will, and exercise their political and civil rights on an equal basis with others. From this perspective, the relationship between Article 12 and Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is not merely substantive or procedural; rather, it is foundational, making the recognition of legal capacity a necessary and governing condition for the effective, meaningful, and independent exercise and enjoyment of political and public rights².

QADER for Community Development welcomes the repeated emphasis in the draft General Comment on the interrelationship between legal capacity and participation in political and public life, particularly regarding rejecting any restrictions or exclusions based on disability or assumptions concerning decision-making ability. However, QADER believes that the General Comment could more explicitly affirm that the exclusion of persons with disabilities from political and public participation does not occur only through the direct denial of voting or candidacy rights, but may also result from legal, administrative, or institutional systems that deny recognition of their capacity to make decisions or place their will and preferences under the control of others. Accordingly, any restrictions based on disability or on substitute decision-making regimes are inconsistent with the Convention and with the human rights-based approach adopted by the Committee in its General Comment No. 1, which is grounded in the full recognition of the legal capacity of persons with disabilities and respect for their will and preferences.

QADER further emphasizes that participation in political and public life neither begins nor ends at the ballot box. Rather, it extends to all forms of engagement in public life, including participation in public consultations, policy-making and legislative processes, involvement in political parties, trade unions, and civil society organizations, holding public and leadership positions, and engaging in organizations of persons with disabilities and other representative structures. Participation is, at its core, an expression of an individual's will, choices, and preferences, making the full recognition of legal capacity indispensable for ensuring participation at all levels and in all its forms.

In this context, QADER considers it useful for the General Comment to clarify in greater detail that supported decision-making should not be viewed as a substitute for, or a restriction upon, the exercise of political rights. Rather, it constitutes one of the essential safeguards that enable persons with disabilities to exercise those rights on an equal basis with others. The General Comment should also reaffirm that protection against undue influence, exploitation, or coercion must not be used as a justification for imposing guardianship or restricting

² **Relevant paragraphs of the Committee's draft General Comment: paras. 3, 6, 10–11, 15–17, 24–31, 41–43, 44–54, and 61–70.**

political and public rights. Instead, such concerns should be addressed through safeguards and procedures that respect the person's will, preferences, dignity, and autonomy while simultaneously ensuring the integrity and freedom of political participation.

3. Inclusion and Non-Discrimination in Political and Public Participation

Effective participation in political and public life by persons with disabilities requires moving beyond formal approaches that merely recognize rights in theory and toward the removal of legal, institutional, physical, communication, and digital barriers that prevent the enjoyment of those rights on an equal basis with others. The equality envisioned under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is not merely formal equality limited to granting the right to participate; rather, it is substantive equality that ensures the genuine, safe, and meaningful exercise of that right, enabling persons with disabilities to influence public affairs and contribute to decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.

QADER welcomes the emphasis placed in the draft General Comment on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation. However, it considers it important to strengthen the connection between these principles and the actual outcomes of political and public participation. The mere existence of a legal right to vote, stand for election, or participate in public affairs is not sufficient if barriers continue to limit access to information, consultation processes, decision-making spaces, or mechanisms for influencing public policy. The removal of such barriers is therefore not merely a supportive measure for participation; it is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving the substantive equality envisioned by the Convention.

QADER also emphasizes the importance of giving greater attention to the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that may affect different groups of persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities, young persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities living in rural or marginalized areas, and others who may experience compounded forms of deprivation, exclusion, and marginalization. Inclusive participation cannot be achieved merely through the removal of general barriers; it also requires addressing inequalities that disproportionately affect certain groups within the disability community itself, ensuring that no individual or group is left behind.

In this context, QADER considers it useful for the General Comment to state more explicitly that disability inclusion should be treated as a guiding principle in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programmes, electoral processes, and public participation mechanisms, rather than as an additional

component or a subcategory to be considered at a later stage. The earlier a disability inclusion perspective is integrated into planning and decision-making processes, the greater the opportunities for equal and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities across all levels of political and public life³.

4. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and Partnership in Decision-Making

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) constitute one of the fundamental pillars of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as they embody the rights to participation, self-representation, and decision-making. In this regard, QADER for Community Development welcomes the significant attention given in the draft General Comment to the role of these organizations, as well as its reliance on Article 4(3) of the Convention and General Comment No. 7 of the Committee concerning the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. Together, these instruments have established the principle of the effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all matters affecting them and have affirmed that the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us” constitutes a fundamental cornerstone of the Convention and its human rights-based approach.

However, QADER believes that the General Comment should more clearly emphasize that meaningful participation cannot be achieved through formal or occasional consultations, nor merely by providing opportunities to comment on decisions, legislation, policies, or plans that have already been drafted. Rather, it requires the early, sustained, and meaningful involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities throughout all stages of developing legislation, policies, plans, programmes, and public decisions. The participation envisaged by the Convention is not a subsequent consultative exercise; it is a continuous process that begins with identifying problems and priorities, shaping policy options, and continues through decision-making, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability.

QADER also considers it useful for the General Comment to clarify more explicitly that the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us” is not limited to ensuring the presence of organizations of persons with disabilities in consultation processes. Rather, it aims to secure their genuine and effective influence over decisions and outcomes that affect the rights and lives of persons with disabilities. The essence of the participation required

³ Relevant paragraphs of the Committee’s draft General Comment: paras. 7–14, 18–23, 32–40, and 55–60.

by the Convention lies not in merely having a seat at the table but in having the real capacity to shape policies and decisions, monitor their implementation, and influence their outcomes.

The General Comment should also emphasize the importance of respecting the diversity of organizations of persons with disabilities and their representation of different groups of persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities, children and young persons with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, and others who may face additional marginalization even within participation spaces themselves. Genuine partnership requires ensuring that patterns of exclusion are not reproduced within representative structures and that participation mechanisms reflect the diversity within the disability community, thereby ensuring that different voices, experiences, and perspectives are heard on an equal basis.

QADER further emphasizes the importance of clarifying the obligations of States, international actors, and United Nations agencies to ensure the effective participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in the design of programmes and policies that target persons with disabilities or affect them directly or indirectly. The principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us” is not confined to national public authorities; it extends to all actors involved in shaping, implementing, or financing public policies. Such an approach ensures a transition from formal consultation to genuine partnership in decision-making and strengthens the ownership of persons with disabilities over the processes and outcomes that affect their rights and lives⁴.

5. Inclusive Representation and Meaningful Participation in Decision-Making Positions

The right to participate in political and public life is not limited to removing barriers to voting, standing for election, joining political parties, or engaging with other political actors. It also extends to ensuring genuine and equal opportunities to access positions of influence and decision-making at both national and local levels. The participation envisaged under Article 29 is meaningful participation that contributes to shaping public policies and decisions, rather than symbolic or formal participation limited to mere presence or nominal representation within public institutions and bodies.

⁴ **Relevant paragraphs of the Committee’s draft General Comment:** paras. 32–40, 55–60, and 71–78.

Regarding the institutionalization of partnership with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations within the United Nations system, and the transition from consultation to meaningful participation in decision-making, see: [QADER for Community Development – Rebuilding the United Nations Disability Inclusion Approach in Palestine](#)

In this regard, QADER for Community Development believes that the General Comment should place greater emphasis on the issue of inclusive representation of persons with disabilities within institutions, public bodies, national committees, and various decision-making mechanisms. The continued limited or absent representation of persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities and young persons with disabilities, constrains the ability of these institutions to reflect societal diversity and respond effectively to its different needs and priorities. Moreover, the absence of persons with disabilities from positions of influence and decision-making often results in policies and programmes being developed about them without their meaningful participation.

The General Comment would benefit from more clearly affirming that achieving substantive equality requires the adoption of measures and policies aimed at addressing the historical and structural inequalities that have hindered the participation of persons with disabilities in public life. Such measures should be regarded as tools for promoting equal opportunities and ensuring equitable participation, rather than as exceptions to or departures from the principle of equality.

QADER further considers that inclusive representation should be understood through a perspective that recognizes diversity and intersectionality within the community of persons with disabilities. Attention should not be limited to increasing the number of participants or office holders, but should also ensure the presence of diverse groups, experiences, expertise, and viewpoints within decision-making processes. Inclusive participation is not only about who occupies a seat, but also about the extent to which the participation system itself can accommodate, respect, and transform human diversity into a source of strength and enrichment for public life⁵.

In this context, QADER considers it beneficial to encourage States to develop more comprehensive approaches for measuring the participation and representation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity. Such approaches should consider the quality of participation and its actual impact on public decisions and policies, rather than relying solely on quantitative indicators related to voting, candidacy, or holding public office. The true measure of participation lies not merely in being present within decision-making institutions, but in the ability to influence their outcomes, directions, and resulting policies, as well as in ensuring equal opportunities to access leadership positions and areas of political, economic, and social influence. This reflects recognition of

⁵ **Relevant paragraphs of the Committee's draft General Comment:** paras. 18–23, 41–54, 61–70, and 79–86.

persons with disabilities as leaders, influencers, decision-makers, and full partners in public governance and sustainable development.

6. Reasonable Accommodation and Accessibility

Reasonable accommodation and accessibility are essential prerequisites for the effective enjoyment of the right to participate in political and public life. The recognition of political rights for persons with disabilities is not sufficient in itself if electoral processes, public institutions, information, services, and physical and digital environments remain inaccessible for the exercise of those rights on an equal basis with others. From this perspective, reasonable accommodation and accessibility should be viewed as interconnected obligations aimed at removing barriers that hinder effective participation and ensuring that persons with disabilities can exercise their political and public rights independently, safely, and with dignity. Accessibility is not merely a precondition for participation; it is an integral component of the right itself and of the conditions necessary for its effective exercise⁶.

QADER for Community Development welcomes the references in the draft General Comment to the importance of removing barriers and providing reasonable accommodation and accessibility. However, it considers it useful to strengthen this aspect by explicitly affirming that the denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes a form of discrimination based on disability. Ensuring participation in political and public life therefore requires the adoption of positive measures that enable persons with disabilities to access information, communications, services, electoral processes, and public institutions on an equal basis with others, while eliminating practical and procedural barriers that perpetuate exclusion.

QADER also emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between reasonable accommodation and accessibility as two complementary obligations with different functions and characteristics. Reasonable accommodation responds to the specific needs of an individual in a particular context, whereas accessibility aims to proactively remove general barriers and enable equal participation for all. Compliance with one obligation does not substitute for compliance with the other. Effective implementation of Article 29 therefore requires a combination of broad accessibility measures and individualized accommodations tailored to the diverse needs and requirements of persons with disabilities.

⁶ **Relevant paragraphs of the Committee's draft General Comment:** the provisions relating to accessibility, reasonable accommodation, participation in electoral processes, and access to information and communications.

It would also be useful for the General Comment to state more clearly that accessibility is not limited to the physical environment or polling stations. It extends to information, communication, technology, digital platforms, media, electoral campaigns, public meetings, consultation mechanisms, and decision-making processes. Participation in political and public life in the digital age is no longer solely linked to access to information and public spaces; it also depends on the ability to engage, influence, and contribute to public discussions and decisions through diverse digital environments on an equal basis with others. This requires ensuring that information, documents, programmes, and online platforms are available in accessible and multiple formats, including sign language, augmentative and alternative communication, and other appropriate forms of support.

QADER further considers that reasonable accommodation and accessibility should be understood within a broader framework of disability inclusion as a guiding approach to political and public participation. Disability inclusion is not limited to removing barriers or providing accommodations upon request; it requires integrating the rights, needs, and diversity of persons with disabilities into all stages of designing legislation, policies, programmes, institutions, and decision-making mechanisms. From this perspective, inclusive political and public participation is not achieved by incorporating persons with disabilities into existing systems that were designed without them in mind, but rather by designing those systems and policies from the outset in a manner that prevents exclusion and reflects their diversity, dignity, and right to participate on an equal basis with others.

7. Political and Public Participation in Situations of Conflict, Emergencies, and Occupation

QADER for Community Development welcomes the inclusion in the draft General Comment of situations in which persons with disabilities face heightened risks in the context of armed conflicts, emergencies, and humanitarian crises. However, QADER believes that this aspect should be further developed, given the disproportionate impact that such contexts have on the ability of persons with disabilities to exercise their political and public rights. During armed conflicts, situations of unlawful occupation, and humanitarian emergencies, the risks of exclusion and discrimination increase, while the gap between persons with disabilities and decision-making processes that directly affect their lives, rights, and future widens. This makes effective participation an even greater necessity, one that is no less important than protection and humanitarian assistance measures.

In situations of conflict and emergency, the impact extends beyond restricting access to electoral processes or public consultations. It also affects access to information, disrupts support services, undermines the work of organizations of persons with disabilities, and reduces opportunities to participate in planning, humanitarian

response, recovery, and reconstruction processes. Women and girls with disabilities, as well as persons with disabilities who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion, are often among the groups most affected by these circumstances. This requires approaches that integrate both disability inclusion and gender responsiveness throughout all stages of the response.

QADER believes that the General Comment should more clearly affirm that States' obligations concerning political and public participation do not cease during emergencies and conflicts. Rather, they continue and require additional measures to ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from planning, response, and recovery processes. It should also emphasize that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be active partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of crisis- and emergency-related interventions, including humanitarian plans and recovery and reconstruction programmes, in line with Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which establishes obligations relating to the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, humanitarian emergencies, and armed conflicts.

QADER also believes that the General Comment should give greater attention to the role of international organizations, United Nations agencies, and humanitarian actors in respecting and promoting the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life, consistent with the Convention and other relevant international obligations. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) emphasized the importance of involving persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of conflict prevention, humanitarian response, recovery, and reconstruction, and stressed the need to ensure their equal access to protection, assistance, services, and information. Effective participation should therefore not be understood solely as a right applicable in ordinary circumstances, but also as an integral component of protection systems during crises and conflicts⁷.

QADER further believes that the General Comment should take into account recent normative developments in international law related to armed conflict and unlawful occupation. The International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 concerning the legal consequences arising from Israel's policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the United Nations General Assembly, in Resolution A/RES/ES-10/24, affirmed that all States, the United Nations, its organs and specialized agencies, and international organizations bear legal and institutional responsibilities in addressing situations arising from

⁷ **Relevant paragraphs of the draft General Comment:** paras. 87–94, as well as related provisions addressing participation in situations of emergency, armed conflict, and humanitarian crises.

the unlawful presence of the Israeli occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Accordingly, ensuring the political and public participation of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict and occupation is not solely a State responsibility, but also an obligation that should be reflected in the policies, programmes, and interventions of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, international and humanitarian organizations, and donors⁸.

QADER also believes that the General Comment could more clearly emphasize the importance of activating monitoring, accountability, and remedy mechanisms established under the Convention and its Optional Protocol in cases of serious violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring that the international response is not limited to humanitarian protection alone. Political and public participation in such contexts is also linked to the ability of persons with disabilities and their organizations to access and contribute to international accountability mechanisms, and to ensure that their experiences, needs, and priorities are reflected in international investigations, monitoring and documentation efforts, as well as in remedy, recovery, and reconstruction processes.

The General Comment could also highlight the importance of activating the cooperative and institutional mechanisms provided by the Convention in situations where persons with disabilities face widespread risks in the context of armed conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, and protracted crises.

The challenges faced by persons with disabilities in these contexts often exceed the capacities of individual States, making enhanced international cooperation and coordination among States Parties, the United Nations, its agencies, international organizations, and humanitarian actors essential. In this regard, the Conference of States Parties and other relevant international mechanisms serve not only as platforms for sharing experiences and good practices, but also as mechanisms for mobilizing international responses, strengthening cooperation, and developing collective measures aimed at protecting persons with disabilities and ensuring their effective participation, assistance, and access to justice in large-scale exceptional situations.

In this context, QADER believes that contemporary experiences of conflict and humanitarian crises demonstrate the need to treat disability inclusion as a guiding principle throughout all stages of humanitarian response, recovery, and reconstruction, rather than as a secondary or subsequent consideration. Excluding persons with disabilities from data collection, planning, and decision-making during crises deepens

⁸ **Relevant paragraphs of the draft General Comment:** the provisions relating to participation in situations of armed conflict, emergencies, and humanitarian crises. See also the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice dated 19 July 2024, and United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/24 dated 18 September 2024.

marginalization and inequality, reduces the effectiveness of the response itself, and contributes to concealing violations against them while weakening opportunities for accountability and remedy. Accordingly, the General Comment should affirm that the effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations is not only a means of improving protection and humanitarian response, but also a fundamental safeguard for realizing rights, strengthening accountability, and guiding recovery and reconstruction efforts on the basis of human rights and non-discrimination. Persons with disabilities are not merely recipients of protection or assistance; they are rights holders and partners in setting priorities, making decisions, and shaping pathways toward recovery and justice.

8. Data, Accountability, and Effective Participation

Effective policies, programmes, and measures to promote the political and public participation of persons with disabilities cannot be developed without reliable and comparable data and information that provide a clear understanding of participation patterns and the barriers that hinder them. From this perspective, QADER considers disaggregated data to be an essential tool for advancing the implementation of Article 29 and monitoring progress in its realization. Such data also provide a necessary foundation for evidence-based public policies and for strengthening accountability regarding the implementation of the rights and obligations set forth in the Convention.

QADER for Community Development welcomes the references in the draft General Comment to the importance of data collection and monitoring. However, QADER believes that this aspect should be strengthened through a clearer emphasis on the need to develop integrated national systems for collecting, analyzing, and using data related to the political and public participation of persons with disabilities. This should include data disaggregated by gender, age, type of disability, geographic location, and other relevant indicators. The objective is not merely to produce data for its own sake, but to transform it into an effective tool for setting priorities, informing policy development, assessing impact on persons with disabilities, and continuously improving policies and practices.

QADER also emphasizes the importance of involving persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design of data collection tools, the development of indicators, the interpretation of findings, and the use of resulting data, in line with the partnership principles underpinning the Convention. Participation should not be limited to benefiting from data; it should also encompass participation in generating data, setting priorities, and guiding its use. Persons with disabilities should be recognized as partners in

producing knowledge about their rights and lived realities, rather than being treated merely as subjects of measurement or monitoring.

It would also be useful for the General Comment to establish a clearer link between data, accountability, and access to remedies. The absence of data, or deficiencies in its quality, not only limits the ability to develop appropriate policies but also weakens monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms related to the implementation of Article 29. Data gaps may obscure patterns of exclusion and disability-based discrimination or underestimate their impact, thereby limiting the ability of national and international institutions to assess compliance with rights obligations and adopt appropriate corrective measures⁹.

QADER believes that the importance of data extends beyond supporting planning and policymaking to include strengthening monitoring, documentation, evidence-gathering, accountability, and effective remedies, particularly in contexts where persons with disabilities face serious violations or systematic forms of exclusion and disability-based discrimination. Reliable and verifiable data not only contribute to understanding realities on the ground, but also help identify gaps and violations, assess their impact, and guide responses aimed at addressing them and preventing their recurrence. Accordingly, promoting transparency, ensuring access to information, and developing clear and measurable indicators constitute an integral part of guaranteeing effective political and public participation.

9. Issues Requiring Further Consideration

QADER welcomes the important issues addressed in the draft General Comment on Article 29 and considers them a solid foundation for strengthening the understanding of the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life. At the same time, QADER highlights several issues that warrant further consideration or development in the final version of the General Comment, given their growing importance considering contemporary normative and practical developments.

⁹ **Relevant paragraphs of the Committee's draft General Comment:** the provisions addressing data collection, monitoring, follow-up, evaluation, and the measurement of the political and public participation of persons with disabilities. Regarding the importance of developing a disability data system and linking it to processes of monitoring, documentation, evidence-gathering, accountability, and effective remedies, see: [QADER for Community Development – Article/Blog](#).

9.1 Participation in Recovery and Reconstruction Processes Following Conflict

While the draft General Comment addresses participation in situations of conflict, emergencies, and humanitarian crises, it would be beneficial to expand this perspective to include participation in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction processes. These phases extend beyond rebuilding infrastructure and restoring services; they involve strategic decisions regarding public policies, resource allocation, and the establishment of institutional, social, and economic priorities. The General Comment should affirm the right of persons with disabilities and their organizations to participate effectively in the design, implementation, and monitoring of recovery and reconstruction plans, ensuring that pre-existing barriers and patterns of exclusion are not reproduced.

QADER also emphasizes the importance of clearly affirming that responsibility for ensuring such participation does not rest solely with States. It also extends to the United Nations system, its organs and specialized agencies, international and humanitarian organizations, and donor entities. This approach is consistent with recent developments in international law, including the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued on 19 July 2024 and United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/24 adopted on 18 September 2024, both of which affirmed the responsibilities of States, the United Nations, and international organizations in addressing situations arising from serious violations of international law.

9.2 Disability Inclusion as a Governing Framework for Political and Public Participation

The draft General Comment focuses primarily on removing barriers and promoting participation. However, it would be beneficial to further develop the concept of disability inclusion as a governing framework for the right to political and public participation. Persons with disabilities are not a separate group from society nor a sector in their own right; rather, they are part of all social, political, economic, and cultural groups and constituencies. Accordingly, achieving full and equal participation does not depend solely on creating specific measures or programmes for persons with disabilities. It requires the systematic integration of a disability inclusion perspective across all policies, legislation, programmes, institutions, and decision-making mechanisms.

QADER believes that highlighting this dimension would strengthen coherence between Article 29 and other provisions of the CRPD and support a shift from sector-specific or fragmented approaches toward a comprehensive framework that ensures the inclusion of persons with disabilities across all aspects of public and political life on an equal basis with others. A disability inclusion approach is not about incorporating persons with disabilities into systems and policies that were designed without them in mind. Rather, it requires

designing those systems and policies from the outset in a manner that reflects societal diversity and guarantees equal participation for all. From this perspective, disability inclusion is not merely a tool for promoting political and public participation; it constitutes a governing framework for reimagining, organizing, and evaluating participation based on human rights, equality, and non-discrimination.

9.3 Women and Girls with Disabilities and Equal Participation

While the draft General Comment contains important references to women and girls with disabilities, it would be beneficial to strengthen this aspect further considering the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion they face. Women and girls with disabilities frequently encounter additional barriers that limit their opportunities for political and public participation, including stereotypes, compounded discrimination based on both gender and disability, and significant barriers to accessing resources, opportunities, and positions of influence and decision-making.

From this perspective, the General Comment should more explicitly emphasize the need to adopt effective measures to ensure the equal participation of women and girls with disabilities in elected institutions, public bodies, political parties, civil society organizations, and various decision-making mechanisms. It should also strengthen the links between Article 29 and Article 6 of the CRPD to ensure that the specific challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in public and political life, as well as in decision-making positions, are adequately addressed.

QADER also considers it useful for the General Comment to give attention to the concept of “multidimensional inclusive representation” or “multidimensional inclusive quotas” as a conceptual framework that can help understand and address intersecting forms of marginalization and exclusion within spaces of political and public participation. The challenge is not limited to ensuring the presence of persons with disabilities in general; it also extends to ensuring the representation of women and girls with disabilities, young persons with disabilities, and other groups that face additional layers of marginalization and exclusion within systems of representation and decision-making. Promoting equal participation therefore requires the development of approaches that recognize diversity and intersectionality within the disability community and that ensure participation that is more inclusive, influential, and equitable.

9.4 Political and Public Participation in the Digital Environment and Artificial Intelligence

Political and public participation is undergoing rapid transformation as a result of digital developments and the increasing use of artificial intelligence technologies and digital platforms in political communication, policymaking, public service delivery, and the administration of electoral processes. While these developments create significant opportunities to enhance participation in political and public life, improve access to information, and increase influence over public discourse, they may also generate new forms of exclusion and discrimination if they are not designed in accordance with accessibility principles and a disability inclusion approach.

Accordingly, it would be beneficial for the General Comment to address more explicitly the challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation and artificial intelligence from the perspective of the political and public participation of persons with disabilities. This should include accessibility of digital platforms, algorithmic transparency, measures to prevent and mitigate digital bias, and safeguards to ensure that emerging technologies do not become additional barriers to equal participation.

9.5 Participation in Monitoring, Accountability, and Remedies

While the General Comment focuses primarily on participation in political and public processes, it would be beneficial to highlight the importance of the participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in monitoring, documentation, accountability, and remedy processes, particularly in contexts involving serious violations or large-scale crises. Participation is not limited to influencing policymaking and public decision-making; it also extends to assessing their impacts, monitoring their implementation, identifying related violations, and contributing to efforts aimed at addressing them and preventing their recurrence.

QADER believes that involving persons with disabilities in data generation, documentation of violations, and the development of monitoring and accountability indicators enhances the quality and reliability of evidence and contributes to more effective and equitable policies and responses. From this perspective, participation in monitoring, documentation, accountability, and remedies represents a natural extension of the right to political and public participation and reflects a shift from the role of recipient or beneficiary to that of an active partner in protecting rights, promoting justice, and combating impunity.

The General Comment should also affirm that involving persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in monitoring, documentation, and accountability processes strengthens the effectiveness of protection and remedy systems and helps identify patterns of exclusion and disability-based discrimination that may not be visible through traditional mechanisms alone. Participation in these processes is not an additional procedural element; it is an expression of active citizenship and genuine partnership in the protection of rights and the advancement of justice. The impact of monitoring, documentation, and accountability efforts cannot be fully realized unless persons with disabilities are visible in the data, evidence, and processes upon which decisions, policies, and remedy pathways are built. Fair documentation begins when all victims are visible and when their voices, experiences, and rights are heard and considered on an equal basis with others.

10. Key Messages

The observations and recommendations presented in this contribution highlight several key issues that can strengthen the coherence, comprehensiveness, and practical impact of the General Comment. In this regard, QADER wishes to emphasize the following key messages:

1. Legal capacity is a foundational prerequisite for the exercise of the right to political and public participation. Disability, substitute decision-making regimes, or assumptions regarding decision-making ability must never serve as grounds for restricting or limiting this right.
2. Political and public participation neither begins nor ends at the ballot box. It extends to policymaking, public decision-making, participation in public affairs, monitoring implementation, and holding decision-makers accountable for outcomes.
3. Effective participation requires a shift from formal equality to substantive equality through the removal of legal, institutional, physical, communication, and digital barriers that hinder full and meaningful participation.
4. Organizations of persons with disabilities are essential partners in decision-making. Their participation should begin with setting priorities and shaping policies and legislation, rather than being limited to commenting on pre-prepared decisions or draft documents.
5. The presence of persons with disabilities in institutions, bodies, and decision-making mechanisms is not sufficient; their ability to meaningfully influence policies, outcomes, and public decisions must also be ensured.

6. Disability inclusion should be understood as a governing framework for political and public participation, rather than as an additional measure or secondary issue addressed after policies, institutions, and programmes have already been designed.
7. Equal participation requires addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, particularly those faced by women and girls with disabilities, young persons with disabilities, and the most marginalized groups within the disability community.
8. Reasonable accommodation and accessibility are integral components of the right to political and public participation, and their denial results in effective exclusion and discrimination based on disability.
9. Obligations relating to political and public participation continue in situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and occupation, and must extend to response, recovery, reconstruction, monitoring, accountability, and remedies.
10. Disaggregated data, monitoring, and documentation are essential tools for understanding participation, assessing policy impacts, and identifying exclusion and violations, and should not be developed without the involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
11. Political and public participation must extend to the digital environment and artificial intelligence, ensuring that digital platforms, algorithms, and emerging technologies do not become new spaces of exclusion and inequality.

11. Concluding Remarks

QADER welcomes the efforts of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in developing the General Comment on Article 29 and considers the draft to be an important foundation for strengthening a human rights-based understanding of the political and public participation of persons with disabilities. However, the effectiveness of the General Comment will depend largely on its ability to move beyond narrow procedural approaches to participation toward a deeper understanding that links participation to legal capacity, substantive equality, disability inclusion, genuine partnership, meaningful representation, and accountability.

QADER emphasizes that political and public participation should not be reduced to voting, standing for election, or formal presence in consultation mechanisms. Rather, it should be understood as a continuous right to influence public affairs, shape policies and decisions, monitor their implementation, and ensure accountability. From this perspective, disability inclusion is not a technical addition to existing systems; it is a

governing framework for redesigning those systems, public policies, and institutions from the outset based on equality, non-discrimination, and human dignity.

QADER hopes that this contribution will help strengthen the final version of the General Comment by promoting a clearer and more comprehensive treatment of legal capacity, genuine partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities, inclusive representation, accessibility, armed conflict, emergencies, colonial occupation, data and accountability, and the digital environment. Political and public participation for persons with disabilities is not merely a standalone right; it is a fundamental pathway to realizing full and equal citizenship and building more inclusive and just societies.