##

Human Rights Council

**Social Forum**

**3 – 5 October 2016**

**Room XX, *Palais des Nations*, Geneva**

Panellist Biographies

**Ms. Abia Akram, Chief Executive Officer, National Forum of Women with Disabilities of Pakistan**

Ms. Abia Akram is CEO of the National Forum of Women with Disabilities of Pakistan. She has lobbied with parliamentarians and UN High Level Representatives from IDA, conducted leadership trainings and established the National Forum of Women with Disabilities, Independent living Centre with Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP), Ageing and Disability Task Force and the Commonwealth Young Disabled People’s Forum. She was recently assigned as Global Chair of the Global Youth Council for UNICEF-NY. Ms. Akram is also Co-Coordinator of Asia Pacific Women with Disabilities United and Coordinator of South Asia Disability and Development Initiative Project. Ms. Akram is a member of Beijing +20 Review Committee member with focus on rights of women with disabilities. She participated in the UN COP, High-Level Stakeholders Conference on Disability and UNICEF Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities held in UN New York, 2012-2014.

**Mr. Khalid Al Nuaimi, President of the Arab Union for the Blind**

Mr. Khalid Al Nuaimi is President of the Arab Federation for the Blind and President of the Arab Association for Human Rights. He serves with the Minister of Social Affairs as Advisor to the State of Qatar on the family policies. Previously, he was Minister Plenipotentiary of the Secretariat of the Arab League. Mr. Al Nuaimi also served as Vice Chairman of the Social Cultural Center for the Blind with Qatar Management, Vice President Gulf Association of Blind, Chairman of the Follow-up Committee for the Blind for the Middle East's recommendations, and Member of the Board of Commissioners for the Arab Organization for People with Disabilities.

**Mr. Colin Allen, Chairperson of the International Disability Alliance (IDA)**

Mr. Colin Allen has worked extensively in Australia and internationally on projects in capacity building and human rights for deaf people. Mr. Allen worked as Director of Services and Community Engagement with the Deaf Society and as Access and Community Engagement Consultant with the Deaf Society. He served as a board member of IDA as well as World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), of which he is now President. He has represented IDA and WFD at various UN meetings, including the CRPD Committee session meetings in Geneva, at Annual State Parties' Conferences of CRPD, UN High Level Meeting on Disability and Development in New York, and 22nd APEC High Level Forum on Disability in Beijing, China. He is closely engaged with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities worldwide. Under his leadership, IDA's mission is to ensure that the UN upholds the essential, unifying principle of the disability movement: 'nothing about us without us'.

**Ms. Patricia Almeida, Founder of the Global Alliance for Disability in Media and Entertainment**

Patricia Almeida is a journalist, member of the Brazilian Foreign Service and founder of Global Alliance for Disability in Media and Entertainment (GADIM). She worked for 10 years as a television editor in Brazil and at the Brazilian section of the BBC World Service, in London. Ms. Almeida coordinated the efforts of civil society for the establishment of World Down Syndrome Day at the UN. She is on the Board of Down Syndrome International, co-founder of Movimento Down, Strategic Coordinator of MetaSocial Institute and founder of the Brazilian news agency on disability issues, Inclusive – Inclusion and Citizenship. Ms. Almeida worked at the Disability Secretariat of the Brazilian Ministry of Human Rights, where she was involved in the translation of the CRPD into Brazilian Portuguese and its ratification at the Brazilian Congress. She is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Disability Studies at the City University of New York.

**Ms. Dena Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Assistant Professor, Hamad Bin Khalifa University**

Dr. Dena Ahmed Saif Al-Thani is an assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalif University, Qatar. Dr. Al Thani was awarded her PhD in Computer Science from Queen Mary University of London. Her thesis, titled “Understanding and Supporting Cross-modal Collaborative Information Seeking”, explored the under-investigated area of cross-modal interaction between visually impaired and sighted web users. Her research interest includes human computer interaction (HCI), cross-modal interaction, inclusive design, usability evaluation and web accessibility and assistive technology for the visually impaired. In addition, Dr. Al Thani has worked as a teaching assistant in three computer science modules. She has obtained a postgraduate certificate of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and is an associate member of the Higher Education Academy in the UK.

**Ms. Ana Lucía Arellano, Chair, Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families**

Ms. Ana Lucía Arellano is an Ecuadorian marketing and social projects consultant. In 1996, Ms. Lucía began her training and participation representing civil society organizations of persons with disabilities and their families, with special emphasis advocating for people with intellectual disabilities. As a rights activist, Ms. Lucía is President of the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS), an organization that represents 49 national organizations of persons with disabilities and their families in 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region. She also chairs the Board and the Latin American Conference and represents the network at the regional and global levels.

**Mr. Pascal Benga Tonangoye, Magistrate at the Court of Auditors of Gabon**

Mr. Pascal Benga Tonangoye is a judge at the Court of Auditors in Gabon. He holds a number of degrees and certificates, including a master’s degree in economics, legal diploma auditing public option, and a certificate from the Japan International Cooperation Agency. He is a former US International Visitor and an active member of the Handi-Va Association. He is the former president of the National Federation of Associations of Disabled Persons of Gabon. Mr. Benga participated in the last evaluation of Gabon to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a representative of Gabonese civil society.

**Ms. Rosangela Berman-Bieler, Senior Advisor on Children with Disability of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)**

Ms. Rosangela Berman-Bieler, originally from Brazil**,** is Senior Advisor on Children with Disabilities at UNICEF and head of the organization's Disability Section. Ms. Bieler previously worked as a consultant for the World Bank, IADB and other international organizations. Among other associations, Ms. Bieler founded the Inter-American Institute on Disability and Inclusive Development (IIDI), created in the late 1990s to promote social-economic and political inclusion in Latin American and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Asia. IIDI played a key role on the development of the CRPD.

**Ms. Roseane Cavalcante de Freitas Estrela, Special Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Ministry of Justice and Citizenship of Brazil**

Ms. Roseane Cavalcante de Freitas Estrela (also known as “Rosinha de Adefal”) is an active advocate in the movement of people with disabilities, a politician and currently Special Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Ministry of Justice and Citizenship of Brazil. Graduated in Law, her political career began in Adefal, a civil society organization based in Maceió. Rosinha of Adefal is a career servant at the Regional Labor Court of Alagoas and served as Secretary of Women and Human Rights of the Alagoas State. She was a member of parliament as ombudsman, working proactively on issues of persons with disabilities, combating violence against women, investigating allegations of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, promoting human rights, social security and family. She assumed various roles in non-governmental organizations and joined several boards and commissions related to human rights and persons with disabilities at the municipal, state and federal levels.

**Mr. Vladimir Cuk, Executive Director, IDA**

Mr. Vladimir Cuk has spent the past 15 years working to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, most recently in his roles as acting Executive Director and head of the New York Office of IDA. He previously worked to promote the rights of young persons with disabilities in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the United States. Mr. Cuk has a master’s degree in Disability and Development from the University of Illinois Chicago. He has published a book, several articles and encyclopaedia entries, and has delivered over 100 presentations and workshops on the rights of persons with disabilities across the globe. Since becoming Executive Director of IDA in New York in July 2014, Mr. Cuk has coordinated the Alliance Secretariat in New York and Geneva, and the Secretariat’s advocacy within the framework of the UN system and relationships with UN agencies, the World Bank and other international human rights organizations.

**Ms. Yeni Rosa Damayanti, Chairperson, Indonesia Mental Health Association**

Ms. Yeni Rosa Damayanti is Chair of Indonesian Mental Health Association. She advocates for the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities and to bring psychosocial disability issues into the main agenda of the disability and human rights movements in Indonesia. She started the first organization for persons with psychosocial disability in Indonesia in 2010, before which she was active in human rights and women rights for more than 20 years.

**Ms. Bhargavi Davar, Transforming communities for Inclusion, Asia**

Ms. Bhargavi Davar is an activist on the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities in India. She received her PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, in 1993, with a thesis on the Epistemological Foundations of Psychoanalytic Theory. She is active in the women’s movement and has published several books, research projects and papers linked to gender, culture, human rights, development and mental health. Currently, she leads the project Transforming Communities for Inclusion - Asia, working for the inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities in 15 countries of the ASEAN region, human rights, and legal advocacy for enabling social and legal policies.

**Ms. Theresia Degener, Member of the CRPD Committee**

Ms. Theresia Degener is a professor of law and disability studies at Evangelische Hochschule RWL - University of Applied Sciences, Bochum, Germany and Director of the Bochum Center for Disability Studies. She is Vice-Chair of the CRPD. She studied law in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and Berkeley, California, USA. She has been teaching law in Germany, Finland, Ireland, South Africa and USA. Her research fields include international human rights, anti-discrimination law and gender and disability studies.

**Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**

Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar is a lawyer and human rights advocate. She is the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. Previously, she worked as Program Officer for Strategic Partnerships with the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund, and was formerly with the UN Secretariat unit responsible for the CRPD and the World Bank as a consultant for the Disability and Inclusive Development team for Latin America and the Caribbean region. She previously served as a board member of the Latin American Network of Persons with Disabilities, representing the region before the IDA. Her work has focused on the rights of women with disabilities and the rights of indigenous peoples with disabilities, and she has experience supporting capacity building and technical assistance projects with governments, UN system actors, national human rights institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities.

**Mr. Jose María Díaz Batanero, Strategy and Policy Coordinator, International Telecommunications Union**

José María Díaz Batanero is Strategy and Policy Coordinator at the International Telecommunication Union, the UN specialized agency for telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Since 2010, Mr. Díaz Batanero has been ITU’s focal point in the areas of sustainable development and digital inclusion, which includes promoting ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities. As part of this work, Mr. Díaz Batanero coordinated the elaboration of the first ITU-wide Accessibility Policy, the publication of the report “The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework” and has coordinated ITU´s participation in bodies established by the CRPD. Prior to joining ITU, Mr Díaz Batanero worked as ICT specialist in the Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP, and in the private sector at Vodafone Spain. He is an electronic engineer and has a master’s degree in Strategic Planning and ICTs applied to business.

**Ms. Gerel Dondovdorj, CEO of the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind**

Ms. Gerel Dondovdorj is President of the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind. She is a member of the executive committee of the World Blind Union and a board member of the World Blind Union -Asia Pacific. In addition, she has been involved in drafting the law on the rights of persons with disabilities in the Mongolian Parliament, as well as drafting the National Disability Program. Ms. Dondovdorj led the reporting work of organizations of persons with disabilities before the CRPD, CEDAW and ICESCR Committees on the review of her country and attended the interactive dialogue of the CRPD and CEDAW Committees in April 2015 and February 2016, respectively. Ms. Dondovdorj is a member of Disability Policy Counsel in the Ministry of Population Development and Social Welfare. She serves as a member of the Disability Policy Counsel at the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour, as well as at the Ulaanbaatar city government, and is an honorary disability policy counsellor of the Mongolian President.

**Ms. Priscile Geiser, Chair of the International Disability and Development Consortium**

Ms. Priscille Geiser is Chair of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), a global consortium of NGOs and organizations for persons with disabilities. IDDC promotes inclusive development in more than 120 countries with a special focus on promoting the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by all persons with disabilities living in lower and middle-income countries. IDDC works very closely with the IDA to promote and enforce inclusive SDGs in compliance with the CRPD. Ms. Geiser is also head of Handicap International’s Support to Civil Society Technical Unit that provides technical guidance on disability rights and policies towards the effective enforcement of the CRPD in countries of intervention and at the global level.

**Ms. Verónica Carolina González, Journalist specialized in gender and disability, Public Television of Argentina**

Ms. Verónica González is a journalist specialized in gender journalism. She is head of the award-winning segment on Disability and Human Rights at the State Television of Argentina. The segment has been distinguished by the Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism for their approach to disability-related issues. Ms. González is a member of the Association of Journalists with Gender Perspective and the Association for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She gives lectures on issues such as disability and media, gender violence against women and girls with disabilities, social model of disability, employment and disability. In 2015, the Association for Civil Rights selected her to author an information manual, called “Good Practices in Communication and Disability: Inform with responsibility and respect for diversity”.

**Ms. Pratima Gurung, Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network, Asia Chapter**

Ms. Pratima Gurung is a member of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network, General Secretary of Nepal Indigenous Disabled Association and President of the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal. She serves as an advisory member of Disability Advocacy Rights Fund and is a past fellow of IDA. Ms. Gurung works in research and documentation to highlight gender, ethnicity, disability and marginalized groups and to mainstream these concerns in national and international discourse.

**Ms. Zhang Haidi, Chairperson of China Disabled Persons' Federation**

Ms. Zhang Haidi is Chairperson of the China Disabled Persons’ Federation. She has a master’s degree in philosophy from Jilin University and honorary doctorates from the University of York and University of Massachusetts Boston. As a young person, she taught and provided medical treatment to thousands of villagers in rural China. She went on to publish extensively, detailing her experiences and successes as a person with disability. As a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC ), Ms. Haidi called for improving the livelihood of persons with disabilities and protecting their human rights. She was elected in 2008 and again in 2013 as Chairperson of China Disabled Persons’ Federation. In 2014, Ms. Haidi was elected President-Elect of Rehabilitation International. Much of her work is dedicated to supporting rehabilitation, education, employment and poverty alleviation for persons with disabilities and to the implementation of CRPD and other UN instruments on disability in China and beyond.

**Mr. Geir Jensen, President of the World Federation of the DeafBlind**

Mr. Geir Jensen is President of the Norwegian Association of the Deafblind and the World Federation of the Deafblind. He has also served as Treasurer of the European Deafblind Union and a member of the Board at IDA. Mr. Jensen has been an active participant in organizations for persons with disabilities representing deaf, hard of hearing and persons with deafblindness since his youth. He is currently working as an advocate for the rights of persons with deafblindness and their inclusion in society on an equal basis, according to the CRPD both nationally and internationally.

**Ms. Esther Kyozira, National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda**

Ms. Esther Kyozira is Programme Manager for disability and human rights at the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU). She has done programme work with NGOs and acquired a certificate in Project Planning and Management from Uganda Management Institute. She has led the development of the Alternative Report by Disabled Persons Organization in Uganda on the implementation of the CRPD, and has also worked in capacity building with individuals with disabilities and related organizations at national and local levels with respect to CRPD and human rights. Ms. Kyozira currently leads monitoring on the implementation of the concluding observations of the CRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals in Uganda in partnership with other civil society organizations.

**Ms. Kirstin Lange, Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Ms. Kirstin Lange is Senior Disability Advisor at the UNHCR Division of International Protection as Senior Disability Advisor. Prior to this role, she worked with UNRWA in Gaza, and had a particular interest in inclusion of persons with disabilities in UNRWA’s response to the 2014 conflict. From 2011-12, Ms. Lange worked as Inclusion Technical Advisor with Handicap International in Afghanistan, a role which included working on a regional project to strengthen inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management. During 2010- 11, she worked as Disability Policy Advisor at UNRWA headquarters in Amman, Jordan, developing a policy framework for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Agency’s work with Palestine refugees. Ms. Lange also worked with displaced communities in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea and with refugee communities in Australia.

**Ms. Anna Lawson, Director of the Centre for Disability Studies, University of Leeds**

Ms. Anna Lawson is a professor of law at the University of Leeds. She is Director of the University-wide multi-disciplinary Centre for Disability Studies and Co-Coordinator of the Disability Law Hub. In recognition of her work on disability equality, she was awarded the Bob Hepple Equality Award by the Equal Rights Trust in 2016. Ms. Lawson has served on a range of interdisciplinary national and multinational projects focusing on disability equality and accessibility in employment, housing, healthcare, political participation, independent living and access to justice. She has been a member of the coordinating research board of the EU’s Academic Network of Experts on Disability (ANED) since its inception, leading work on accessibility. Ms. Lawson is also a member of the Disability Committee of the British Equality and Human Rights Commission.

**Mr. Alzouma Maiga Idriss, President of the West African Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities**

Mr. Idriss Maiga, from Niger, graduated from the National School of Administration and Magistracy (Principal Inspector of Taxes to the Directorate General of Taxes). He worked with the Associations of the Disabled Persons Organisation for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. Mr. Maiga is Vice-Chair of the African Disability Forum [ADF] which held its first General Assembly in 2015. He is also President of the West African Federation of Persons with Disabilities and head of the Niger Federation of Persons with Disabilities.

**Ms. Yvette Maker, Disability Research Initiative, Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne**

Ms. Yvette Maker is Academic Convenor of the Disability Research Initiative at the University of Melbourne. Her areas of work are social protection, assistance and care policy, with particular focus on the intersection of disability rights and feminist perspectives. She was the recipient of a Strategic Australian Postgraduate Award for her PhD studies in 2012. Ms. Maker teaches in Melbourne Law School’s Disability Human Rights Clinic, where she lectures on disability studies and human rights law. She supervises students to identify, analyse and report on rights violations experienced by persons with disabilities and to advocate for solutions in collaboration with external stakeholders. She has also recently provided research to the Vice-Chair of the CRPD Committee.

**Mr. Robert Martin, People First New Zealand – Nga Tangata Tuatahi (TBC)**

Mr. Robert Martin is an advocate for the rights of all people with a learning disability and has travelled the world speaking on many topics including the right to live in the community, deinstitutionalisation and the right to work and making your own decisions. Mr. Martin was involved in the development of the CPRD and has been elected as New Zealand’s representative for the CRPD Committee, to start in 2017.

**Mr. Alejandro Marzo Pena, Director of the Cuban Association of the Deaf**

Mr. Alejandro Marzo Peña graduated from Superior Health Polytecnic High School in 1982 and started his career as a specialist in the Provincial Hospital of Cuba. He holds a degree in education from the University of Jose Enrique Varona Pedagogical Sciences. From 1991 to 1993 Mr. Marzo taught various specialty courses. In 1993, he was elected as the provincial President of ANSOC and currently 2003 serves as national President of the organization.

**Mr. Alastair McEwin, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission**

Mr. Alastair McEwin has been Australia’s Disability Discrimination Commissioner since August 2016. He worked as an associate to the Hon. Justice John von Doussa at the Federal Court in Vancouver, after which he worked in Sydney as a consultant with Accenture, a global management and IT consulting company. Mr. McEwin was Executive Director of Community Legal Centres in New South Wales (NSW), the peak body for Community Legal Centres in NSW. He also served as CEO of People with Disability Australia and Manager of the Australian Centre for Disability Law. He was Chairperson of the NSW Disability Council, the official advisory board to the NSW Government on disability issues. He was also President of the Deaf Society of NSW, Chairperson of the Australian Theatre of the Deaf, and Coordinator of the World Federation of the Deaf Expert Group on Human Rights.

**Mr. Michael Njenga, Board Member, Pan African Network of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities**

Mr. Michael Njenga is Executive Director of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry in Kenya, Executive Council member of the African Disability Forum and board member at the National Council for Persons with Disabilities in Kenya. He is currently a fellow with the International Disability Alliance. He has been involved in the drafting of legislation and policies relating to the implementation of the CRPD in Kenya. Mr. Njenga has contributed to initiatives on monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities with the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and was part of a technical team that developed a briefing paper on Article 12 of the CRPD regarding the right to decision making for persons with disabilities in Kenya. Mr. Njenga is part of a technical committee implementing the concluding observations on Kenya by the CRPD Committee.

**Mr. Peter Ochieng, Chair of Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities Youth Council**

Mr. Ochieng Peter studies development leadership at Coady International Institute of St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada. Since 2011, he has been a youth with disabilities rights advocate in Uganda through NUDIPU-Youth. He was an organizing committee member and participant at the 2013 Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development Open Meeting hosted by UNFPA New York and facilitator at the second Global Partnership for Children with Disabilities forum at UNICEF New York. In 2015, Mr. Ochieng joined Uganda National Association of cerebral palsy as Assistant Project Coordinator. He is the chair of Global Partnership on Children with Disability Youth Council. He was a panellist at the 2016 online Global Education Monitoring Report Digital Youth Launch.

**Ms. Godliver Omondi, Senator of the State of Kenya**

Senator Godliver Nanjira Omondi represents people with disabilities in the Kenya. She serves on the Delegated Legislation Committee, Health Committee, Library and Broadcasting Services Committee and Equal Opportunities & National Cohesion Committee. Senator Omondi is a founding member of the Kenya Disabled Parliamentarians, a caucus bringing together elected and nominated political leaders from the Parliament and county assemblies and also a founder member of Kenya Women Parliamentarians. She is the former Chairperson and current patron for the United Disabled Persons of Kenya, an umbrella organization for all organizations of persons with disabilities in the country.

**Mr. Georgi Panayotov, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations in New York, President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD**

Ambassador Georgi Panayotov represents Bulgaria, which is the current president of the Conference of States Parties of the CRPD Committee. He is a career member of the Diplomatic Service for Bulgaria. Since joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1995, Mr. Panayotov has held various positions in Sofia and abroad, including head of the NATO Department; Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Bulgaria in Washington, D.C.; Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Bulgaria in Kabul, Afghanistan; Deputy Head of the “Multilateral Co-operation in South-Eastern Europe” Department; and Political Officer at the Embassy of Bulgaria in Tirana, Albania. Mr. Panayotov has a master’s degree in politics from the Moscow State Institute for International Relations.

**Ms. Silvia Perel-Levin, International Longevity Centre Global Alliance**

Ms. Silvia Perel-Levin is the Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing at the United Nations in Geneva, representing the International Longevity Centre - Global Alliance and is an independent consultant on ageing, health and communication. Her advocacy work on human rights of older persons focuses on violence, elder abuse and the intersection of gender, disability and ageing. Ms. Perel-Levin organizes events at the UN and with the HRC in Geneva and participates in numerous panels and conferences. At the WHO, she designed and coordinated the first multi-country study on elder abuse and co-wrote the resulting publication “Missing Voices, views of older persons on elder abuse”. Ms. Perel-Levin also launched the “Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse,” led a study on the organizational capacity of patient groups at the Union for International Cancer Control and produced the first international film festival on cancer.

**Ms. Malena Pineda Ángeles, Chief of program persons with disabilities, National Human Rights Institution of Peru**

Ms. Patricia Malena Pineda Angeles is a lawyer with a specialization in Public Policy and Management. She has been a public official in the Office of the Ombudsman in Peru since 1996. She is head of the Advocacy Program on the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the agency specializing in disability to coordinate care, protection and supervision of the 38 Ombudsman offices at the national level. Ms. Pineda is a coordinator and professor of the Graduate Management Program in Inclusive Public Services for Persons with Disabilities at the La Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. She is a human rights specialist in charge of overseeing public policies with a rights-based approach for the inclusion of people with disabilities with emphasis on the areas of mental health, education, accessibility, employment and access to justice. Her reports have enabled advances on regulations and set important legal precedents.

**Ms. Lidia Pretorious, Chief Director, Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Department of Social Development of South Africa**

Ms. Lidia Pretorius has worked extensively as an occupational therapist, disability rights policy and development consultant and human and disability rights activist. She has contributed to the drafting processes of key policies and instruments, including the Disability Rights Charter of South Africa (1992) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act as a member of the South African Human Rights Commission’s Disability Committee (1999). Ms. Pretorious laid the foundation for her current responsibilities as Chief Director in the National Disability Rights Coordinating Mechanism of the South African government (Article 33 of the UNCRPD). She also helped establish the Disability Programme in the Presidency, served as Commissioner on the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and was recently Project Manager for the South African UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Ms. Heisoo Shin, Member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

Dr. Heisoo Shin is a sociologist from the Republic of Korea. Dr. Shin led legislation on sexual and domestic violence, on which she worked with the disability community to incorporate rights of women and girls with disabilities. She served as a member of the CEDAW Committee and contributed to the negotiations of CRPD together with the Korean organizations for persons with disabilities. As a commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission in Korea, she also dealt with the rights of persons with disabilities. Currently, Dr. Shin is a visiting professor at the Graduate School of International Studies at Ewha Womans University, Seoul, and is a representative of KOCUN, a national human rights organization that worked with 28 organizations for persons with disabilities to participate in CRPD in 2014. She has been a member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights since 2011.

**Ms. María Soledad Cisternas, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Ms. María Soledad Cisternas Reyes is the Chairperson of the CRPD Committee. She is a law professor, researcher and director of various legal and interdisciplinary projects such as training programs for judges, government officials and civil society members including indigenous groups. She has authored several publications, conducted various conferences at national and international levels, and has been recognized by many awards, including Star of the Latin American Esperanza, Colombia (1999); Award for Equality and Non-discrimination, Mexico (2008); Award "100 Women Leaders 2012-2014;" and National Human Rights Award from 2014 to 2015, Chile.

**Ms. Saowalak Thongkuay, Member of the Steering Committee of ASEAN Disability Forum**

Ms.Saowalak Thongkuay is an educator on disability and is Regional Development Officer at DPI/AP. Her responsibilities include acting as the regional focal point of DPI national assemblies and the disability movement in the region; promoting and protecting human rights and disabilities and creating a regional program to mobilize the disability movement in the ASEAN region and sub-region.

**Mr. Stefan Trömel, Senior Disability Specialist, International Labour Organization**

Mr. Stefan Trömel is Senior Disability Specialist at the ILO. He coordinates the ILO Global Business and Disability Network. Previously, he was Executive Director of IDA, the global umbrella organization of organizations of persons with disabilities. He is the former Director of the European Disability Forum, the most representative disability organization at the EU level. He was actively involved in the negotiation process of the CRPD.

**Mr. Alberto Vázquez Encalada, Research coordinator, Office of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**

Mr. Alberto Vázquez is Research Coordinator at the Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. He is a Peruvian lawyer and holds a LLM in Disability Law and Policy from the National University of Ireland Galway. He has worked at the Peruvian Ombudsman Office and at the Peruvian Congress on disability-related issues and as a consultant to a number of UN agencies. He is President of the Peruvian NGO Society & Disability and a member of the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.