**Group activity**

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| **Type/title of activity** | Discussing ratification |
| **Total duration** | 50 minutes |
| **Venue(s) requirements** | Main venue and breakout rooms for four working groups |
| **Equipment needed** | Flip charts and markers |

**Activity objective**

The objective of the group activity is to build knowledge and appreciation of different perspectives relating to the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

While many countries have ratified the Convention and about half of those have also ratified its Optional Protocol, there is an ongoing debate about the purpose and effect of ratification. Some encourage rapid ratification to encourage States to get their house in order. Others suggest that ratification should wait until the necessary law reform has occurred and the State can concentrate on preparing its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Other stakeholders are worried less about *when* to ratify but *whether* to ratify, given the perceived costs of implementing the Convention.

This exercise therefore takes the form of a debate around ratification where different stakeholders have to argue the case for and against ratification—ideally from a perspective that is different from their own.

**The roles**

The participants will take part in a debate involving three parties and one adjudicator. The adjudicator is a representative of parliament. The three parties are:

* A representative of the Ministry of Finance
* A representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs
* A representative of an organization of persons with disabilities

Each will have a perspective:

* The representative of parliament is neutral on ratification and is waiting to be convinced by the stakeholders in the Government and civil society. On the basis of the debate, the parliamentarian will report back to the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights on whether parliament should support ratification and, if so, when ratification should take place.
* The representative of the Ministry of Finance is convinced that implementing the Convention will be far too costly.
* The representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs is supportive of ratification in view of recent commitments made in the Human Rights Council’s universal periodic review to ratify the Convention but at the same time is worried about the impact implementation will have on the limited capacities in the Ministry.
* The representative of civil society is very supportive of ratification and sees the Convention as the main means of bringing about sustainable change in favour of persons with disabilities in the country.

The roles in the working groups will be as follows:

* The parliamentary group will have to develop a list of questions for each of the representatives so as to identify the main issues relating to parliament and decide whether to ratify now, later or not at all.
* The representatives of the ministries and civil society will have to prepare their arguments in favour of their position. In doing so, each working group will have to pre-empt the questions that the parliamentarians will put to them.

**Tips for the facilitator**

The facilitator will have to create a country scenario so that the activity has more relevance to the participants. It is suggested that the facilitator should identify a fictitious country which is facing similar challenges in terms of development level (indebtedness, impact of the global financial crisis, income level, etc.), security (conflict, post-conflict, etc.), general level of respect for disability rights, any relevant values that affect respect for persons with disabilities and so on.

Ideally, participants should take roles that are not necessarily their own in real life. Civil society representatives should therefore take a government role, governmental representatives can take a civil society role and so on. This is possible only if the group is mixed. The facilitator will have to adapt the activity to suit the group.

**Dynamic**

1. The facilitator explains the activity to the audience (purpose, dynamics, etc.) in the main venue, divides the audience into *four working groups* and sends them to their respective breakout rooms (5 min)
2. The facilitator meet the working groups in the breakout rooms, ensures that the exercise is understood by all, and invites the groups to nominate a timekeeper and a front person for the tasks (5 min or less)
3. Working groups prepare their question and answer strategies (15 min)
4. Back in plenary. The representative of the parliamentary group will hold a consultation with representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society. The representative will put questions to the representatives of the Ministry, who will then have to respond with their arguments. At the end of the session, the representative of the parliamentary group will have to decide whether to recommend ratification to parliament or not and explain why (15 min)
5. Comments and wrap-up (10 min).