

Kazakhstan statement at the Thematic Session 3

Dear participants!

I am a senator, but I also head the Association of Women with Disabilities 'Shyrak'. And it has never been easy to include gender and disability issues on the agenda. Unfortunately, now, when the world is faced with the pandemic or disasters and conflicts, these issues seem even more secondary and unimportant to many.

However, findings of a number of studies conducted in collaboration with UNFPA in Kazakhstan have showed that:

1. Persons with disabilities often cannot get the vital and reliable information in accessible formats, as it was in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic;
2. They have insufficient access to quality services and information in the field of reproductive health and family planning;
3. They often become the target of violence and abuse because of their low levels of legal literacy, isolation and lack of access to get help.

In Kazakhstan in collaboration with UNFPA we have been adapting knowledge materials on sexual and reproductive health in Braille format, digital audio and video clips with

interpretation in sign language for persons with visual and hearing disabilities. We also adapted them in "Easy-to-read" format for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The needs of persons with disabilities in situations of GBV were assessed and integrated into existing Standard Operating Procedures for the health, police and psychosocial support sectors.

Together with UNFPA, we organized summer schools for youth with disabilities to raise their awareness of reproductive health and rights, GBV and its prevention, as well as to train their leadership and decision-making skills.

In this year's elections in Kazakhstan, a new quota for persons with disabilities was applied, and as a result we have now 7 deputies with disabilities in Parliament, and 71 in municipalities. We have established the Council on Inclusion in the Senate and we expect that this will become an effective mechanism in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities.

In conclusion, let me offer the following recommendations to governments:

1. To keep the rights of people with disabilities a cross-cutting issue on any agenda whatever it may be.
2. To ensure that information, provided to population in emergency situations as well as on reproductive health and gender equality is adapted to formats accessible for persons with different disabilities;
3. To regularly assess the situation of persons with disabilities, and provide them with education on sexual and reproductive health and GBV;
4. To make every effort to realize human rights of women and men with disabilities and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes.