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| **Keywords:** | Autism; Self-advocacy; COVID-19; Face Masks; Virtual Events; Accessibility; Participation; Leadership; United Nations; Civil Society Space |
| **Abstract:** | The wearing of face masks is mandatory at the United Nations, seemingly even for persons with disabilities in possession of a medical or psychiatric dispensation. As UNOG writes: "Masks are required in all indoor common areas on the premises, including conference rooms". The UN does not communicate any exemptions from the mask mandate. As masks are unlikely to be abolished fully for a long time, regardless of whether someone is vaccinated, this will prevent the return of numerous persons with disabilities unable to wear them, including many autistic self-advocates, to the UN for in-person or hybrid meetings and conferences, such as sessions of human rights treaty bodies resuming in Geneva from September. Being excluded from participating in physical UN events for the foreseeable future means that we remain relegated to remote participation, if available, and in particular virtual UN and civil society events, which have proven one-directional, non-participatory, and inaccessible to many of us over the past 18 months. Both these ill-conceived developments are interlinked and conspire to keep the voices of autistic persons (and others with disabilities) muzzled at the UN and beyond, whilst the COVID-19 pandemic is still raging on and many of us were and are suffering in silence and isolation. |

Excerpt of relevant sections of an invited analytical paper, "Autistic Voices Muzzled: Diversity or Uniformity after COVID-19?"[[1]](#footnote-1), written by Erich Kofmel, President, Autistic Minority International (www.autisticminority.org/about-us), for the UN Expert Group Meeting on the participation and leadership of persons with disabilities in building a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world, organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)/Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD)/Programme on Disability and UN Women/Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality Global Portfolio (DIIP), in collaboration with the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (IASG-CRPD), held 3-6 August 2021 as a virtual meeting[[2]](#footnote-2):

"Autistic persons' participation and leadership in public affairs are held back by persistent systemic barriers, stemming from the pre-COVID-19 period, but massively reinforced and exacerbated during the pandemic. Governments the world over have imposed protective measures on their populations without giving due consideration to how these will affect autistic people and others with disabilities. Some of these measures have resulted in new and additional barriers for us and silenced autistic self-advocates in public. The autistic community is one of the most marginalized among disability constituencies, and it has been left further behind because of this crisis, which is far from over. It should not be expected that autistic leaders will suddenly emerge and participate in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts when diverse answers and perspectives have been rejected in favour of uniformity throughout this period, and even before, and intellectual openness has given way to moralistic rigour and a dearth of public discourse in most countries and globally. Despite the promises of UN jargon and buzzwords, we are not 'building back better'. We are not even 'building forward better', as has been proposed alternatively by civil society. The post-COVID-19 world is shaping up to be less inclusive and less accessible to most of us. Autistic people's full and equal participation in public affairs seems very far off. [...]

In 2020 and 2021, the UN has been carrying on as if the world can't stop. But the world has stopped for many of us. Autistic Minority International has reduced its participation in UN activities greatly over the past year as many of the short-form virtual events now put on seem further and further detached from autistic persons' life realities and far removed from the urgency of our daily struggles. The pandemic isn't over just because the UN has been talking about post-COVID-19 recovery almost since it started. Speculations about a post-COVID-19 world seem wishful thinking at best and premature, still. What we have learned quickly, however, are some valuable lessons about the inaccessibility and non-inclusivity of virtual UN conferences, in particular during the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). For example, 11,000 people from around the world apparently registered to participate in [UN Volunteers] UNV's follow-up global technical meeting on reimagining volunteering for the 2030 Agenda, held over four days during the HLPF. But this is not meaningful participation. Like in so many other virtual events now, no one got to speak who was not a carefully selected invited speaker. The UN organizers set the agenda, and agreed on the outcomes, and there was no way any attendee could raise objections or highlight overlooked issues by making an oral statement from the floor, as had been possible before in actual conference rooms, with actual participants, participating actively rather than passively. There, you never knew what the next person was going to say. Now, it's all bland uniformity and suppression of dissent. The UN has become an echo chamber, having further shrunk civil society space and eliminated any challenging public discourse. Speaking up may not have made a difference then either, but at least we had a chance to be heard by someone [...]. That chance has disappeared for the foreseeable future, maybe forever. Participants now are just an audience, and treated as such, and UN staff mostly seem to approach virtual events, such as the ubiquitous webinars (often posing as side events to conferences), as if they were producing TV programming, or infomercials, for UN Web TV or YouTube. A staff member of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, whose office organized a 2-hour virtual consultation with youth with disabilities in November 2020, made this inadvertently quite clear when writing in an e-mail: 'I will share the run of show shortly'. These time constraints and mindset come at the expense of accessibility even in disability-related events and meetings and when one of the themes purportedly is inclusion and the right to participate. We pointed out to them that potential autistic participants may not be able to speak at command, when prompted to do so, and many of us experience selective mutism, or they might require other accommodations, after learning that young persons with disabilities on the planning committee felt that the UN had been dismissive of their requests, including for scheduled breaks during the meeting. We welcome the opportunity to participate in this UN Expert Group Meeting precisely because it doesn't appear to follow the current trend at the UN, provides sufficient time for discussions and interactivity, and allows us to voice these concerns and misgivings freely. This in marked difference even to many virtual civil society events that have become equally one-directional, with way too many invited speakers to allow for any meaningful interaction with other attendees. As a member of the Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors (JCA-AHF) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN specialized agency for information and communication technologies, we were particularly discouraged by how disempowering and inaccessible the HLPF felt because of new technological barriers to the full and equal participation of autistic persons. This was extraordinarily noticeable thanks to the sheer mass of events happening in parallel over ten days. There were multiple video conferencing platforms employed across the conference, and each event and session organizer configured the platform they were utilizing differently, enabling and disabling technological features in a stunningly random fashion, so that it was never possible to get used to anything. Autistic people tend to like routine and dislike change, and this was constant change. We continue to advocate for interactive remote participation in physical conferences and meetings to make the UN more accessible to autistic persons, but the total lack of predictability makes fully virtual events, especially at the scale of [the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD] COSP or the HLPF, a cognitive nightmare. Even during an HLPF side event of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities the text chat, essential for the participation of autistic people who do not speak, was turned off, and then they ran out of time to answer at least one or two questions from the Q&A box. Other organizers, both UN and civil society, found a myriad of ways to set up and handle Q&A boxes, almost all confounding and cognitively inaccessible – forcing people to discuss technical problems and exchange links and e-mail addresses in Q&A instead of chat, new questions appearing in no logical order, or 250 questions clogging the box –, some had text chat enabled, but completely disregarded what was happening there, elsewhere the chat was in English only even though the meeting had interpretation in all official UN languages. Moderators kept instructing attendees to use functions that weren't there for non-speakers – like renaming themselves, when attendees couldn't even see a list of participants and therefore couldn't click on themselves, or changing views, e.g., from sign language to gallery view, when this wasn't enabled for those who weren't invited speakers. Some organizers and moderators clearly didn't know what video conferencing platforms look like on the side of attendees because they only ever participate as speakers, with full functionality. Instead of organizers being able to switch off features that would make virtual events more accessible to particular disability constituencies, participants should be put in control and have the power to personalize what the meeting looks like and how it functions for them. Ultimately, through ten days of the HLPF we did not get to ask a single question on the record, as part of the proceedings at least of some side event, VNR Lab, or SDG learning, training, and practice capacity-building workshop, never mind making a statement, anywhere. Interactivity was largely limited to polls. 'Participation' like that seems futile and a misnomer. These technological liberties and constant unexpected changes have made autistic persons' lives miserable when trying to participate earnestly in virtual UN system and related events and meetings now. None of this bodes well for the future.

We do not know what will come after the pandemic, but more pressingly, we don't know what will come tomorrow, next week, or the following month. Constantly changing protective measures imposed by governments on their enfeebled populations, bypassing any public debate or accountability, have ruptured our lives as much as COVID-19 and caused many autistic self-advocates to cease public activities, sometimes even silencing them altogether, out of frustration, out of anger, out of feeling left behind. For some of us, including myself, this feeling hinges on the issue of face masks. The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health recognizes that '[t]here are many circumstances in which certain people cannot wear a face mask for health or disability reasons [...]. Here are some of the principle exceptions: [...] people with autism who, for example, cannot wear a mask because they panic [...]. A medical certificate issued by a doctor or psychotherapist is required as proof of dispensation on medical grounds [...]. The certificate must be shown to transport or sales staff on request. [...] The purpose of this exception is to prevent people who are exempt from wearing a face mask for health or disability reasons from being denied access to publicly accessible establishments or services, and to prevent them from being unduly discriminated against. [...] For some people with disabilities wearing a mask is a severe hindrance to their daily life. [...] We ask everyone to show solidarity and understanding'[[3]](#footnote-3). This leaflet would have been a lot more helpful had it not been published only half a year after masks became mandatory in Switzerland and if it had been accompanied by any kind of public awareness campaign. The government and public transport operators never communicated these exemptions, and the media never reported on them, except to insinuate that some people had obtained a dispensation fraudulently. Organizations of parents of autistic children and umbrella bodies of disabled persons' organizations proved too dependent on state funding to fight for us, their tame media releases being easily ignored. Public protesters were (and still are) discredited as 'covidiots', any and all, indiscriminately. My own dispensation was issued by a psychiatrist, but many persons with disabilities, including autistic people, were not able to find anyone willing to issue a dispensation due to severe and incessant public pressure and long waiting lists. Autistic persons thus have been prevented from going to a store to buy groceries, being told to have them delivered instead, which many of us can't afford. Masking policies may also restrict autistic people from getting vaccinated. Even with the dispensation, I did not leave my room for eight months, except in the middle of the night, once or twice a month. The first time I went outside again during the day was to get vaccinated at a doctor's office. Then again a month later for the second shot, and two weeks after that, once I was fully immunized. By then it was mid-July. Only that last time, after the requirement to wear masks even in the open air and other measures had been lifted, did I not have to constantly defend myself to total strangers who felt entitled to stare at me and interrogate and admonish me for not wearing a mask. What autistic person would want to endure this? Who of us has the strength to handle it, withstand the anxiety, and the fortitude to go outside anyway? What gives these people the right to judge us? Literally, the government. The alarmist propaganda unleashed by the media. The muzzle put on anyone daring to ask questions. The suppression of public discourse in the interest of fearmongering. Not just in Switzerland, but everywhere. This post-COVID-19 world is a scary place for autistic people. It is shaping up to be less inclusive and less accessible to most of us. A young autistic man was arrested by police in Switzerland and subjected to involuntary psychiatric evaluation, simply for being caught without a mask on public transport and not able to verbally explain himself. A visually impaired female Swiss politician with other hidden disabilities was physically assaulted by train crew and forced to disembark. Autistic children are denied an education because schools refuse to recognize their dispensations. Hospitals have become effectively inaccessible. These are not isolated incidents, but new forms of systemic discrimination and intimidation. Face masks will prevent my return to the UN for in-person or hybrid meetings and conferences any time soon. As the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) writes: 'Masks are required in all indoor common areas on the premises, including conference rooms'[[4]](#footnote-4). Similar rules apply in New York. The UN does not communicate any exemptions from the mask mandate, and even if it did, my dispensation is not in English and might not be recognized by UN security. As masks are unlikely to be abolished fully for a long time, regardless of whether someone is vaccinated, persons with disabilities unable to wear them, including many autistic self-advocates, will most likely be excluded from participating in physical UN events during a possible post-COVID-19 recovery phase and our voices remain silenced. That is a choice the UN has to make. It is a highly political choice. It is creating new barriers to the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities. The same is true at the local and national levels. As autistic self-advocates, our leadership at this moment demands that we raise the issue, however unpopular it may turn out to be. The UN must act on masks – and mask-related human rights violations against persons with disabilities. I am using this platform and my status as an expert invited by the United Nations to break the silence and testify. That is true participation.

The COVID-19 response at national and global levels highlighted and hid simultaneously the many ways in which autistic persons are still left behind and excluded, it exacerbated pre-existing systemic barriers to our participation and leadership in public affairs and created new and additional ones on top of it. Some autistic children and adults were quite literally left behind in institutions. Personal assistants that allowed a few of us to live independently and hold a job stopped showing up. For others again, isolation and loneliness were nothing new, but now they stayed inside alone for months. The stresses of dealing with ever-changing protective measures in addition to those of daily life exhausted many, including autistic women taking care of their families, and left them with no energy to engage in self-advocacy in the public realm. Others tried to be heard publicly, but their voices were silenced or ignored because what they said or wrote was controversial. UN jargon and buzzwords, such as 'building back better', or 'building forward better', and 'leaving no one behind' were exposed by the pandemic as the empty promises they have always been. They fall short of the revolution we so desperately need to level pervasive inequalities. After COVID-19, will autistic voices continue to be muzzled, by face masks, stigma and prejudice, pathologization, destitution, uniformity of thinking, persistent barriers, the agenda of parents' organizations, exclusion from cross-disability bodies, barring from COSP, marginalization on WAAD [World Autism Awareness Day]? Or will diversity set us free? Are the UN and governments finally ready to accept, respect, value, and empower autistic persons on our own terms? If so, we are ready to lead."

On the last day of the UN Expert Group Meeting, Autistic Minority International followed this up with a set of twelve practical recommendations, namely:

"United Nations: [...]

5) Institute and communicate an exemption from wearing a face mask on UN premises, including in indoor common areas and conference rooms, for persons with disabilities holding a medical or psychiatric dispensation, even if the document is not in English

United Nations and civil society:

6) Refrain from holding one-directional virtual events and change the format to allow for full interactivity and meaningful participation of attendees who are not invited speakers, avoid turning off features of video conferencing platforms that enable the full and equal participation of particular constituencies of persons with disabilities, namely text chat, and ensure that a remote moderator reads out written chat contributions aloud and verbatim during virtual events and hybrid events with remote participants [...]

National and local governments: [...]

12) Guarantee that all areas of political, social, cultural, and economic life, including but not limited to public transport, grocery stores, vaccination sites, workplaces, and in-person public consultations, remain fully accessible, without discrimination or intimidation, to persons with disabilities who cannot wear a face mask, if mandated, by instituting and widely communicating an exemption from wearing a mask for persons with disabilities holding a medical or psychiatric dispensation, and ensure that persons entitled to such a dispensation are in fact able to obtain it and won't be harassed for using it"[[5]](#footnote-5)

In the meantime, Autistic Minority International has also submitted these recommendations in writing to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for oral presentation during the public opening meeting of its 25th session (due to time constraints to be continued on 14 September 2021), in response to their invitation to UN agencies and mandate holders and disabled persons' organizations "to brief the Committee on the 'building back better' inclusive response and recovery in the covid-19 and post covid-19 pandemic" from a human rights perspective.

In September 2020 and March 2021, Autistic Minority International contributed materially to two joint statements by diverse coalitions of civil society organizations (CSOs), submitted in writing and presented orally during the UN Human Rights Council's 45th and 46th sessions, respectively, regarding insufficient provisions for remote participation, the inaccessibility of virtual events, and shrinking civil society space at the UN. The first statement, on behalf of fifteen organizations, among them Rutgers University, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, noted:

"Civil society participation is one of the cornerstones of human rights and a human rights-based approach. Transparency and accountability are fundamental to good governance at all times and at all levels, including at the HRC and in the context of COVID-19 and the UN budget crisis. It is particularly critical at a time when borders are shut, racism and xenophobia are rampant and gender-based violence and social exclusion have drastically increased. Accountability begins at home, it does not end there.   
  
We demand greater transparency and accountability from the Human Rights Council. Visa conditions, the high cost of getting to and staying in Geneva, travel bans and restrictions and reprisals are just a few of the long-standing obstacles exacerbated by the current context for human rights defenders participating in person, particularly those coming from the Global South or belonging to marginalized groups. For those who cannot come to Geneva, remote participation remains a challenge due to internet access and time zones issues (particularly for activists from Asia Pacific and the Americas) and preventable participation barriers including unavailability of webcasts for non-English speakers, lack of system-wide accessibility measures for the diversity of persons with disabilities, an approach mired in bureaucracy, and delays in the programme of work. The HRC and the UN human rights system have missed a great opportunity to make virtual and hybrid meetings an improvement in real access and participation. Modalities this year have tended to exacerbate the flaws of in-person meetings, making virtual meetings less accessible than before, including by transferring responsibilities to participants, for example to provide captioning.

Implementation of recommendations made to increase participation are welcome. Yet, these cannot be an afterthought. The lack of direct communication channels and consultation of civil society regarding the UN budget crisis and its consequences is indicative of the low priority afforded to civil society participation in that context.

We call on States to:   
- Ensure [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights] OHCHR has the resources required to fulfill its mandate, including ensuring robust civil society participation and providing closed-captioning, sign language interpretation, the possibility for written input during virtual and hybrid meetings via text chat and other system-wide accessibility measures.   
  
We call on the Secretariat to:   
- Regularly update civil society on the UN budget crisis and consult us to mitigate its impact on participation.   
- Webcast plenary meetings in all UN languages, live-stream informal negotiations and make recordings available after informals for those in different time zones.   
  
The Human Rights Council can be most effective only with meaningful civil society participation and only if our concerns are addressed transparently. Nothing about us without us!"[[6]](#footnote-6)

The second statement, half a year later, endorsed by twelve organizations, including CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, ISHR, Child Rights Connect, and International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, the latter two working in regular strategic partnership with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), supporting the work of these treaty bodies and their secretariats (similar to the International Disability Alliance for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), reaffirmed:

"In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, States committed to 'the real and effective participation of the people in decision-making processes'[[7]](#footnote-7) and reaffirmed the interdependence of human rights, development and democracy, 'based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.'[[8]](#footnote-8) They also called for 'the elimination of all socially determined barriers, be they physical, financial, social or psychological, which exclude or restrict full participation' of persons with disabilities.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Today we ask the Human Rights Council: are you really ensuring people's full and inclusive participation in your decision-making processes, including during this COVID-19 crisis? How can States be accountable to the people for their commitments, statements, positions and votes, if they restrict civil society scrutiny over negotiations of resolutions, if webcast archives are only understandable to English speakers, and if the vast majority of HRC discussions take place without accessibility measures such as closed captions and sign language interpretation? 'Efficiency,' 'rationalization' and resource constraints arising from the systematic underfunding of OHCHR are not acceptable justifications for these barriers which call into question States' commitment to human rights. In addition, these measures seem to be pretexts for further restricting civil society space rather than effective tools for streamlining the work of the Council.

Where is the accountability for the repeated erosions of civil society space, which disproportionately impact defenders from the Global South and persons with disabilities? Difficult access to negotiations of resolutions; the renewal of 'efficiency' measures for another year and removal of general debates in June despite their impact on civil society participation; and the capping of general debate statements this session, all add to pre-existing barriers such as ECOSOC status requirements, reprisals, the high costs of getting to Geneva, travel restrictions, and discriminatory visa regulations.

While we welcome some important advances such as the possibility for NGOs to make video statements, we see that civil society continues to be disproportionately affected by the move of proceedings online. We object to the removal of access details for online informal negotiations from Sched without explanation or justification, effectively restricting CSO access to negotiations by leaving that decision to individual core groups, and favoring CSOs based in Geneva or with existing contacts with diplomats.

Civil society participation is core to the Council's mandate[[10]](#footnote-10) and an essential principle of any human rights-based approach. It cannot continue to be treated as an afterthought in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the HRC efficiency process, and the UN budget crisis.

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!"[[11]](#footnote-11)

Civil society space, at the Human Rights Council and throughout the UN system, at the global as well as national and local levels, has shrunk and will shrink further because of the endless prolongation of protective measures enforced by governments and embraced by the UN without due consideration as to the consequences for persons with disabilities in real life and online. The mandatory wearing of face masks, even for the fully vaccinated, without exemptions, and the inaccessibility of virtual events, and their mostly one-directional and non-participatory nature, are interlinked developments that are equally ill-conceived and discriminatory and conspire to stifle the participation and leadership of autistic persons (and others with disabilities) in public affairs, including at the UN, keep us isolated, and our voices silenced. When the UN resumes in-person and hybrid meetings on a larger scale, such as sessions of human rights treaty bodies in Geneva from September, and for the foreseeable future, many autistic self-advocates will be excluded and relegated to remote participation, if available. Mask mandates force persons with disabilities to use technology more frequently, but passive attendance at virtual events can never be an acceptable substitute for full and equal participation, and their inaccessibility prevents even that, for as long as the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, for as long as our unmasked rage remains raw.

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1. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/08/KOFMEL\_PAPER\_revised.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/egm-disability-inclusive-postcovid19.html [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.bag.admin.ch/dam/bag/en/dokumente/mt/k-und-i/aktuelle-ausbrueche-pandemien/2019-nCoV/merkblatt-maskendispens.pdf.download.pdf/Factsheet\_dispensation\_for\_wearing\_a\_mask\_for\_certain\_people\_with\_disabilities.pdf

   The leaflet also names the following examples: "- people who cannot put the mask on and take it off by themselves for physical reasons (e.g. people with paralysis, cerebral palsy or missing limbs); [...] - people with a mental or psychological disability or people with dementia who are unable to understand that they need to wear a mask; - people with diseases involving a risk of suffocation; - people with a hearing impairment who depend on lip-reading, for whom masks are a communication barrier that can lead to misunderstandings. In this case, staff or accompanying persons may remove their mask while communicating. If available, a mask with a transparent window may be used in these situations." [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.ungeneva.org/en/covid-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Additional recommendations: United Nations:1) Change the name of World Autism Awareness Day to World Autism Acceptance Day (WAAD) through a General Assembly resolution

   2) Empower autistic persons to lead on WAAD, and form a committee of autistic adults, including autistic parents of autistic children, from all around the world to set the annual theme and priorities of WAAD and suggest potential speakers to be invited to the official observance at UN headquarters, with a focus on inviting emerging autistic self-advocacy leaders from all regions of the world to speak, representing the diversity of autistic experiences

   3) Cooperate with States Parties to change COSP accreditation requirements so that self-funded volunteer organizations of autistic self-advocates and other informal grassroots groups of persons with disabilities can get accredited and participate in their own name, in particular if they have contributed to the work of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (for example, by making written submissions for country reviews or thematic consultations, speaking at civil society briefings or Days of General Discussion, and/or organizing side events, etc.)

   4) Instead of referring to "persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities" in UN documents and on websites, recognize autistic persons as a separate constituency, i.e. "persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities and autistic persons" [...]

   United Nations and national and local governments: 7) Simplify the language used in consultations and documents aimed at persons with disabilities by avoiding or explaining jargon, buzzwords, acronyms, and insider references, and formulate requests for input as openly and accessible to the diversity of persons with disabilities, including self-advocates with low levels of education, intellectual disabilities, or cognitive impairment, and children with disabilities, as possible

   National and local governments: 8) Repeal or amend discriminatory mental health and guardianship laws, as well as specific autism laws, that are based in a medicalized view of autism, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and deprive autistic persons of legal capacity and thus exclude them not only from public decision-making, but even from decisions about their own lives, and provide any supports autistic persons and other persons with disabilities may require in exercising their legal capacity

   9) Consult and include autistic adults, and not just non-autistic parents of autistic children, in all matters relating to autism and disability policy at all levels of government, and appoint actually autistic persons to any and all public bodies concerned with the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of mental health and autism policy

   10) Engage and consult with autism self-advocacy organizations, run by and for autistic persons themselves, or alternatively informal groups and networks of individual autistic self-advocates, and provide funding and technical support to such organizations and groups, so as to enable them to represent the interests of autistic children and adults

   11) Make all public sector jobs, up to the most senior ranks of management and leadership, available to autistic candidates with the requisite qualifications and skills on an equal basis with others, regardless of their autism [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Video of the shortened oral presentation (starts 1:15:53): http://webtv.un.org/search/item3-general-debate-contd-18th-meeting-45th-regular-session-human-rights-council-/6194143535001/?#player [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, operative paragraph 67: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/vienna.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, operative paragraph 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, operative paragraph 64 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251: Human Rights Council, operative paragraph 5(h): https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/251 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Video of the shortened oral presentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDh7G\_um1Aw [↑](#footnote-ref-11)