

Quality support key for people with disabilities to fully participate in their communities – UN rights expert

3 March 2017 – Access to good and safe support is of great importance for people with disabilities, as it helps them become independent and gain human rights, a United Nations independent expert said today, urging Member States to take legal, policy and financial actions to ensure their adequate support.

“Guaranteeing their access to support is not only a human rights obligation, but also a prerequisite to ensure that no one is left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,” Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said today while presenting her report to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council.

However, she stressed, in practice, people with disabilities have limited or no access to the support they need.

“Many have been segregated and disempowered in traditional care services, explained Ms. Devandas, adding that “for them, the very notion of ‘care’ bears a heavy historical connotation associated with oppression and invalidation.”

Today, people with disabilities still risk having their decisions overridden by the “caregivers,” the human rights expert underscored.

“This must stop,” said Ms. Devandas, while emphasizing that “States must promote support services that allow for the independence, autonomy and direct participation of all and invest resources in this.”

Voicing concern that not enough is being done to make sure persons with disabilities are getting support, as well as the fact that the demand for support is rising, her report offers guidance to Member States on how to best provide human rights-based support services.

She urged government authorities to develop legislation, implement policies and allocate funds to make support services available, accessible, adequate and affordable.

“States should guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities in the provision of support,” Ms. Devandas concluded.