Women Enabled International Questionnaire for 2018 CEDAW Committee Candidates:
Women and Girls with Disabilities

Name of Candidate: Genoveva Tisheva
State Party Nominating Candidate: Bulgaria

1. Describe any experience you have with integrating women and girls with disabilities into your broader women’s rights work.

Answer: Women and girls with disabilities have been beneficiaries since the beginning of the years 2000 of many of the projects of CSOs I am part and leader of in my country. They have been part also of the decision-making process in initiating, drafting and implementation of such projects. Examples of this work are: projects and programmes for counseling women and girls with disabilities on the issues of domestic violence, other forms of GBV and in cases they are victims of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, in other spheres in education, employment, social assistance, etc. In the last three years in our network of organizations-Alliance for Protection from GBV, I have been coordinating a project for research, ensuring services, appropriate legislation and access to justice for women and girls with disabilities victims of violence. I also contributed to ensuring access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in concrete legal cases, including through complaints before international Treaty bodies. Namely, I assisted a Bulgarian girl with disability and victim of sexual violence with her bringing an individual communication under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. I am also Chair of the Board of Compassion Alzheimer- Bulgaria since many years. We ensure awareness raising and access to services for persons with Dementia and Alzheimer and their families through projects based in the community. As statistics show and also in Bulgaria, women make a good part of the persons with the disease and also the great part of persons and personnel caring for the patients. I am also the Director of the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute- an international programme for training of lawyers from Europe and beyond /conducted since 2004/ and one of the focuses of the programme aimed at protection and access to justice for women is exactly protection of most vulnerable groups of women from multiple discrimination.

2. What human rights abuses do you think most often uniquely or disproportionately affect women and girls with disabilities, as distinct from other women and girls?

Answer: Women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately affected by violence and GBV, including such violence in family, caring and institutional settings. Their rights related to sexual and reproductive health and making free / and supported/decisions about these rights is also more endangered. Also their right to respect for family and private life is violated as they are often not respected as parents and are looked at as non reliable and not suitable mothers putting children at risk. On the other hand, women and girls with disabilities face to a greater extent, compared to men in comparable situations, discrimination in education and also in relation to access to
profession and employment, and decision-making process in the matters they are concerned and in all other spheres.

3. Sexual and reproductive autonomy is a central issue for all women and girls, but particularly for women and girls with disabilities. What obligations do you think States have under CEDAW and other human rights treaties to ensure sexual and reproductive autonomy, including for women and girls with disabilities? Do you think States should be allowed to place any limitations on that autonomy?

Answer: Women and girls with disabilities have the full span of rights and related services in connection with their rights in this sphere, as ensured by the CEDAW, the ICESCR and its General comments, the CRC, and in connection with the ICRPD. They have their women’s rights affirmed, including to dignity and autonomy in maternity health care, access to contraceptives, to safe and legal abortion, access to health services. They have also the right to sexuality education and all related rights. In the CEDAW there is a specific set of rights related to equality in employment, including also reproductive health and rights of women. Women and girls with disabilities deserve specific attention, rights, services and support, as well as special protection of women with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities against discrimination in this sphere of rights. Autonomy for women with disabilities should be fully ensured, with the provision of support for taking decisions, where needed.

4. How do you think the CEDAW Committee should be addressing multiple and intersecting discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities?

Answer: These important issues should be constantly and regularly addressed by the CEDAW Committee through: its consideration of national reports of the states/always putting emphasis on these problems/and in respective concluding observations and recommendations; the elaboration and adoption of General recommendations, also in connection and cooperation with other Treaty bodies, like the Committee under the ICRPD, the CESC, etc.; under the Optional protocol and during the consideration of respective individual complaints under the OP, where specific issues related to women with disabilities are at stake, providing arguments and recommendations for reparation of victims and for legislative and policy changes needed for ensuring freedom from discrimination, including multiple discrimination.

5. Do you think there are any changes (for instance, to procedures, jurisprudence, meeting times and venues, or other practices) the CEDAW Committee needs to make to ensure that it welcomes the participation of women and girls with disabilities?

Answer: In addition to the points made in the answers above, I think that the Committee should hold in its location at least one unofficial meeting per year with representatives of NGOs of women with disabilities in order to listen to them about the current problems and use this information in its work; when gathering information about a given country for its review, the Committee can in all cases ensure that such NGOs and women with disabilities are invited to provide information; inviting and ensuring participation of such women and NGOs at the time of the consideration of the respective reports; make sure that all venues related to that are physically accessible and also through the different languages; make sure that one or more members of the
Committee get specialization on the problems of women with disabilities; enhance further collaboration procedures with the Committee on the RPD, etc.