



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia
to the United Nations



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HASHEMITE
KINGDOM OF JORDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

CONCEPT NOTE

Official Side-event at the 18th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (CoSP18)

Recognizing June 27th as the International Day of Deafblindness

Date: Thursday 12 June, 2025

Time: 13:15 – 14:30 Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)

Venue: Conference Room CR4, UN Headquarters, New York.

Organized by: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations, New York with The World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA)

Cosponsors: Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations, Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations

Background

Persons with deafblindness are among the most marginalized and underrepresented groups globally. Representing between 0.2% and 2% of the population, this diverse yet often overlooked community faces significant socio-economic disadvantages. According to the World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB), individuals with deafblindness are more likely to live in poverty, experience unemployment, and attain lower levels of education compared to other persons with disabilities.

Despite the commitments made under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the 2030 Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), persons with deafblindness continue to face systemic exclusion. The WFDB 2018 Global Report revealed that many countries do not legally recognize deafblindness as a distinct disability. As a result, persons with deafblindness remain statistically invisible, and critical data gaps and services necessary for their inclusion and support are lacking.

While deafblindness is explicitly referenced in the 2004 Declaration of the European Parliament on the Rights of Deafblind People and in Article 24 (Education) of the CRPD, broader recognition remains limited. General Comments and Concluding Observations from the CRPD Committee have acknowledged the unique challenges faced by this group, yet implementation of relevant measures remains insufficient.



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Due to the specific and unique nature of their disability, persons with deafblindness often require specialized support services—such as Deafblind interpreters and personalized rehabilitation. Their communication methods may include tactile communication, braille, sign languages, and other non-verbal approaches. However, these services are rarely available, resulting in minimal benefit from development and inclusion efforts, including those aimed at implementing the CRPD.

At the 17th Conference of States Parties (CoSP17), the WFDB launched an initiative urging the United Nations General Assembly to **proclaim June 27th as the International Day of Deafblindness**. This date honours the birth of Helen Keller (1880), a globally recognised figure in the deafblind community. The last week of June is also observed as Deafblind International Awareness Week, celebrated worldwide through events and exhibitions aimed at promoting visibility and awareness.

Objective of the session

This side-event will spotlight the initiative led by the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the UN, in collaboration with WFDB and a cross-regional group of countries in the UNGA to proclaim June 27th as the **International Day of Deafblindness**. The session will:

- Bring together key stakeholders from across the UN system;
- Raise awareness of the importance of recognizing deafblindness as a distinct disability;
- Highlight the intended impact of establishing the International Day of Deafblindness;
- Promote the empowerment, visibility, and full inclusion of persons with deafblindness in all aspects of society.

For more information, please contact the WFDB Team at communication@wfdb.eu and Katarina Andrić, Permanent Mission of Croatia at Katarina.andric@mvep.hr

