

WIN JOINT STATEMENT
June 14, 2021 at COSP 14 Side Event



In conclusion of our first joint side event during the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, the World Independent Living Center Network – WIN calls on Governments, intergovernmental organisations, the civil society and others, around the world, to do as follows:

1. **Adopt a common definition of Independent Living, in line with Article 19 CRPD, the General Comment 5 and the Independent Living philosophy.** According to this, ALL persons with disabilities have the right to choose, to live independently and freely, integrated within the community. Independent living provides persons with disabilities with the right to take control of their lives and to personal autonomy.
2. **Recognise the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of persons with disabilities.** Covid-19 has exacerbated the exclusion of persons with disabilities, deepening existing inequalities. This is especially evident in rural areas of developing countries, where resources are extremely limited. In most countries, due to the lack of support and funding by governments for Personal Assistance services, PAs were not treated as ‘essential workers. This has negatively affected Independent Living organisations, that are losing and no longer have funding, and those that rely on these services on a daily basis. In many countries, we witnessed eugenics practices being put in place, with persons with disabilities considered not worthy of life-saving treatment.
3. **Adopt plans for emergency deinstitutionalization.** The large number of deaths of persons with disabilities inside institutions was due to the very nature of these segregating structures and systems. Still, as Governments are beginning to lift restrictions, solutions they have begun proposing are not acceptable. They suggest that persons with disabilities should move into residential institutions if they cannot survive on their own. Based on the

lessons learned during the pandemic, Governments must urgently invest in efficient deinstitutionalization laws and action plans, with very clear timelines, independent monitoring mechanisms and adequate budgets to realize transition plans. They should ensure that no private or public funding, aimed at Covid-19 recovery, goes into institutions of any kind.

4. **Use the process of recovery to end pre-existing inequalities and put an end to future violations of Independent Living.** Now that everyone around the world has experienced what “being controlled by others” feels like, let us use this to raise our voice for deinstitutionalization and self-determination. We need awareness campaigns to encourage real inclusion and help the paradigm shift at a political and social level in mainstreaming disability inclusion into all aspects of life. In addition, we need all governments to understand that the process of recovery cannot be achieved without meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their organizations from the beginning to end.
5. **Recognise the importance of the global Independent Living Movement at this moment in time.** The Independent Living movement provides practical and inclusive solutions to persons with disabilities, such as peer support and personal assistance, so they can live their lives as they wish and not find themselves institutionalized. Our movement promotes empowerment of all persons with disabilities and the full exercise of all their civil, political, social and economic rights.
6. **We, the World Independent Living Center Network (WIN), must be involved in the Covid-19 recovery.** We, as persons with disabilities, share common values and challenges that go beyond nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, being young or old. We have come together as WIN to advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities from around the world until every person has their freedom. As WIN, we will be a watchdog. We will monitor, report and propose solutions, so that States Parties can comply with their obligations under Article 19 and the Convention as a whole. As WIN, we want to LEAD and SUPPORT the process of deinstitutionalization -- we can do this through expansion of the Independent Living Movement all around the world, to ensure persons with disabilities know their own rights, through peer support and establishment of Independent Living Centers, which can play a major role in supporting the transition of persons with disabilities from institutions into community.

We invite you to join us in this mission. Thank you.