The Sovereign Order of Malta aligns itself with the statement made by Mexico on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). I am also happy to announce that our Permanent Mission has recently joined the Group of Friends of the Human Rights Council’s Task Force on Accessibility.

I wish to thank the distinguished panellists for their very important and valuable contributions to today’s debate. We are particularly grateful to Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar for the work she has done during her tenure as Special Rapporteur and hope to develop our cooperation with her Office and successor.

We strongly believe that awareness-raising is an essential step towards the full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities under the Convention. The Order of Malta is committed, through various projects across the globe, to protect those rights in all circumstances, especially in humanitarian crises when the special needs of persons with disabilities are often not understood or taken into account.

The Chabrouh Centre, near Beirut, established by our Lebanese Association, has been an example for more than 20 years of our efforts to combat exclusion. Its CARAVAN programme enables young volunteers, from several European countries, to spend ten months in Lebanon, assisting and providing companionship to children with disabilities, thus breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions, as they simply see in them the face of a brother or sister. It is a strong experience that they will take back home and share with others.

Madam Vice-President,
Promoting decision-making capabilities of adults with disabilities is another important aspect in respecting their inherent dignity and worth. We encourage States to put in place regulatory frameworks that recognise supported and informed decision-making approaches.

Only by raising awareness at all levels, locally, nationally and internationally, can we achieve inclusion and accessibility for persons with disabilities, ensuring their representation and participation.

Thank you.