

GENERAL COLIN L. POWELL, USA (RET)

October 16, 2013

Dear Chairman Menendez and Ranking Member Corker:

I am writing to urge you and your fellow members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to report favorably and promptly to the Senate a resolution supporting U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.


The disabilities treaty is a crucial tool for recognizing and upholding the rights of one billion people – including our own disabled veterans -- with disabilities around the world. This is why the American Legion, VFW, and many other prominent veteran's organizations have called upon your committee to support the treaty. Seven hundred disability, faith, and business organizations across the United States support it, as well as veterans on your committee.. I join them in endorsing the treaty – and, in so doing, rejecting claims that U.S. ratification will somehow compromise our nation's sovereignty.

The treaty promotes fairness and equality in education, work, and recreation. It calls for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream of society. It also recognizes the importance of keeping families, including family members with disabilities, together at home in their own communities. Many of these concepts were enshrined in U.S. law through passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. The United States has always been at the forefront of the global movement for disability rights. Disability organizations and governments abroad look to our disability rights legislation as a model for their countries' nascent laws. If the Senate does not approve this treaty, the United States will continue to be excluded from the most important global platform for the implementation of best practices in disability rights abroad.

To date, 137 countries have ratified the disabilities treaty. In New York each September, delegates from these nations participate in the annual Conference of States Parties and share new ideas for strengthening the rights of people with disabilities around the world. The United States should not be missing this vital opportunity to sit and play a leadership role at the world's largest table for countries trying to improve the lives of their citizens with disabilities.

I therefore urge the Senate to provide its advice and consent for the United States to ratify the disabilities treaty at the earliest possible date. Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Bob Corker
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510