Simone Aspis’s Speech to the Civil Society Forum event part of the Government’s Disabled Peoples Summit held on Monday 23rd July 2018.

Hello my name is Simone Aspis – I am Policy and Campaigns Coordinator for the Alliance for Inclusive Education, a member of Reclaiming our Futures Alliance, an umbrella organisation consisting of disabled peoples lead organisations.

Today, the UK government is asking other countries to sign up to a charter which talks about the importance of holding governments to account under the CRPD and yet our Government stand in breach of it – hypocrisy!

In 2016, Inclusion London and DPAC submitted a complaint to the UN Monitoring Committee on how Government’s austerity plans were fundamentally breaching disabled peoples human rights to independent living, and a decent standard of living and work. The closure of the Independent Living Fund, a fund that allowed disabled people to live independently in their own homes was going to be withdrawn. This meant for many disabled people, they would be forced into being prisoners in their own homes or forced into institutionalised care, a campaign we thought against over 30 years ago. This was the first time that the CRPD monitoring committee have been asked to investigate complaints under the optional protocol against a state. Disabled peoples complaint was upheld. The UN disability committee published findings of an extensive investigation which found the threshold for evidence of grave and systematic violations of disabled people’s rights due to welfare reforms. As we expected our arrogant government dismissed these findings.

In 2017 the routine examination of the UK government’s implementation of the CRPD took place. The UN disability committee made over 80 recommendations and commented that in the history of the committee, members have never been as concerned about a country as they are about the UK today. The Chair described “human catastrophe” caused by the government’s “social cuts” as there is continued evidence of deliberate, systematic and dramatic retrogression of disabled people’s human rights.

UK Government has said for the second time that they do not agree with the findings. The UK Government attempted to defend their record, by saying that the state of disabled people’s human rights is worse in other countries. This is Government’s failure in understanding that the CRPD is about the progressive realisation of disabled people’s human rights.

UK DPOs absolutely welcome the giving of support and aid to our disabled brothers and sisters in other countries but we must also not let the UK government get away with its deliberate dismissal of its obligations under the CRPD because if one government can get away with it then others will follow.

We must all make sure that the charter being introduced at the summit does not become a substitute for proper implementation of the CRPD and a way to water down our rights and our ability to hold our government’s to account.

In the UK, DPOs are campaigning for the enshrinement of the CRPD in domestic legislation.

We call on our government to implement the inquiry recommendations from the UN disability committee, all of which they have dismissed, including carrying out a full cumulative impact assessment of welfare and tax reforms.

We are also calling upon our Government to reverse welfare reforms measures that are seriously adversely impacting on disabled people’s standard of living since 2010.

We are also calling for a national independent living support service independent of local authorities and funded via general taxation to halt and reverse the re-institutionalisation of disabled people that is happening here and to meet our rights to Article 19.

We are also calling for the removal of the reservation on Article 24 and full implementation of disabled people’s human right to inclusive education.

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