



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK



AUTISM RESEARCH INSTITUTE



## **Concept Note**

### **Health, Rights, and Inclusion: Addressing the Needs of Aging Autistic Individuals**

**Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026 – 11.30am-12.45pm**  
**Conference Room 12, UN HQ New York**

Side-Event at the 19th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

International Sign interpretation and Closed Captioning will be provided

#### Sponsor:

- Permanent Mission of the Bahamas to the United Nations in New York

#### Co-sponsors:

- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations in New York
- Autism Research Institute, United States
- Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability – Malta

#### Background

As life expectancy increases worldwide, there is growing recognition that aging is not a uniform experience. For Autistic individuals, aging presents distinct challenges that remain largely unaddressed within health and social care systems. While significant progress has been made in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, Autistic adults in mid and later life continue to face barriers to equitable healthcare, mental health support, and community inclusion.

Autistic individuals are more likely to experience co-occurring medical and mental health conditions, along with differences in communication and sensory processing that can complicate care and support. Many face difficulty navigating complex systems that are not designed to be neuro-affirming. These challenges are compounded by limited provider training, fragmented services, and environments that do not accommodate diverse needs. As a result, Autistic adults often experience delays in diagnosis, unmet health needs, and reduced quality of life over time.

This side event will draw on insights from a recent think tank held at the United Nations, to highlight key challenges related to healthcare access, social inclusion, and decision making, and to explore how more inclusive policies and systems can support Autistic individuals across the lifespan.



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### Key matters explored will include:

- Barriers to equitable and accessible healthcare for aging Autistic individuals
- The impact of co-occurring physical and mental health conditions in later life
- Social isolation, reduced community participation, and the need for inclusive environments
- Challenges related to legal autonomy and decision making, including supported decision-making models
- Gaps in provider training, care and support coordination, and service delivery
- The importance of incorporating lived experience into research, policy, and service design

These issues highlight significant gaps in healthcare access, service delivery, and social inclusion for aging Autistic individuals, with important implications for health outcomes, autonomy, and quality of life. Addressing them will require more inclusive systems, better trained providers, and policies that incorporate lived experience to support full participation in society.

### Core Objectives for the Side Event:

- Highlight the growing but under explored intersection between autism and aging within global policy and research frameworks.
- Share insights from clinical research, policy development, and lived experience to better understand the needs of aging autistic individuals.
- Promote inclusive healthcare systems and community-based supports aligned with Articles 25 and 19 of the CRPD.
- Encourage the adoption of supported decision-making approaches in line with Article 12 of the CRPD.
- Foster international collaboration among governments, researchers, and organizations of persons with disabilities.
- Ensure meaningful participation of autistic individuals in shaping policy and practice, consistent with the principle of inclusion and participation.

Addressing the intersection of autism and aging has important implications for strengthening global policy and research by integrating clinical evidence, lived experience, and cross sector collaboration. Advancing inclusive healthcare, supported decision making, and meaningful participation can improve quality of life for aging autistic individuals while better aligning systems with the principles of the CRPD.