**Opening statements by the Austrian Independent Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Tobias Buchner, Daniela Rammel and Bernadette Feuerstein)**

Dear Chair, distinguished members of the CRPD Committee, distinguished guests. We are honored to deliver this statement as Chairs and members of the Austrian Monitoring Committee.

Firstly, we would like to warmly thank the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Austrian State delegation for their excellent cooperation and support in preparing this meeting.

Over the course of the last 10 years, several efforts have been made by the Austrian State and the Federal States to implement the UN-CRPD. Of Course we acknowledge these efforts. However, many challenges remain. Regarding these challenges, the Austrian Monitoring Committee would like to address three specific topics within this opening statement: education, the situation of women with disabilities and personal assistance and deinstitutionalization.

**Let me start with education:**

Ten years ago, at this very place, Marianne Schulze, at the time chair of the Austrian Monitoring Committee, highlighted the urgent need to transform the Austrian education system into an inclusive one. Thus, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities explicitly recommended Austria to make its education system more inclusive. Now, at the very same place, a decade later, we must acknowledge that the Committee’s call did not result in any substantial progress towards implementing inclusive education in Austria. Overall, there is a persistent violation of the human rights of persons with disabilities in education. This is why we filed a special report on the implementation of Article 24. In sum, the government has shown a strong passivity and indifference towards Austria’s obligations arising from Article 24 in recent years.

**Now I would like to pass over to my colleague Daniela Rammel who will address the situation of women with disabilities:**

Thank you. Due to Article 6, Austria is bound to take measures ensuring equality, full development, advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities. The CRPD Committee’s recommendations have not been adequately implemented as per our assessment. Regrettably, women with disabilities continue to face significant barriers and discrimination within the labour market, health care and other areas of life.

A major factor is the heightened risk of violence by many girls and women. This has been shown in a recent study commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs.
Austria is lacking in safeguarding against violence. Many institutions lack qualified support staff and robust violence protection plans. Women and girls with disabilities receive neither adequate sex education nor sufficient information regarding protection from violence. Now I pass over to my colleague Bernadette Feuerstein.

**Thank You - On personal assistance and deinstitutionalization we have to say that Service offerings of personal assistance and standards of quality vary significantly across the States.**

In some instances, provision of personal assistance is notably lacking, which results, at least in some cases, to life threatening situations.

Thus, we welcome the Ministry of Social Affairs’ pilot project aiming to create ‘nationwide standardised regulations for personal assistance’. However, no concrete steps regarding the implementation are known or published yet. Regrettably, experts with lived experience were not sufficiently included in developing the regulations. Furthermore, we are concerned regarding the successful implementation of the pilot project, as several States have refused to participate in it so far.

Furthermore, we are concerned regarding deinstitutionalization. Since the last State Review in 2013, no visible efforts have been made to develop and implement a comprehensive, unified concept regarding the dismantling of institutions. There are no deinstitutionalization concepts in line with the CRPD at State or federal level. Instead, institutions have continuously been built or renovated.

Thank you.