

## **Commission on the Status of Women**

### **Side Event**

#### **Operationalising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Women and Girls with Disabilities**

18 March 2016, 11.30 – 12.45

United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room B

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework to guide development efforts for the next 15 years. The SDGs seek to address key challenges such as poverty, inequality and social exclusion and, specifically address the empowerment of women and persons with disabilities as agents and beneficiaries of development. This framework is indicative of global progress in advancing the rights and interests of women and persons with disabilities over the decades. The 2030 Agenda promises to close the gender gap, strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and recognise that the empowerment of all women and girls is crucial for the achievement of all Goals and Targets in the new global development framework.

Women and girls with disabilities would also have a critical role to play in all of the SDGs in order to effectively leave no one behind. Many targets specifically recognise the equality and empowerment of women and persons with disabilities. Goal 5 on gender equality and empower all women and girls and six related targets, as well as the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective, provides the opportunity to address the needs and priorities of women and girls with disabilities. Further, most of the targets with specific reference to disability or persons with disabilities also include reference to gender or women.

#### *Building on existing normative frameworks*

The 2030 Agenda builds on existing international normative frameworks for promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls with disabilities on an equal basis with others. Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, last year during the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, these were reaffirmed, and States committed to accelerate and achieve their full and effective implementation, to engaging all stakeholders for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and called upon them to intensify their efforts in this regard. During this session, Member States emphasised that the realisation of gender equality and empowerment of *all* women and girls, including particularly marginalised groups, is not only a goal but an essential element for sustainable development.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities further provides a human rights and development framework for the empowerment and realisation of the rights of women and girls with disabilities as both agents and beneficiaries of development. This year will mark 25 years of the adoption of CEDAW General Recommendation 18, on disabled women, 10 years of the adoption of the Convention, as well as the adoption of a general comment by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on women with disabilities.

### *Challenges*

The challenge faced by the international community at this historical juncture is to translate these commitments into practical action on the ground. While there has been progress made in advancing gender equality for women and girls in some areas,<sup>1</sup> there has been less progress made with regards to women and girls with disabilities, including in responding to the specific challenges they face, particularly in terms of discrimination and stigma, higher levels of risk of violence and abuse, achieving economic empowerment, and civic and political participation.<sup>2</sup> Existing evidence indicates that disability is experienced differently by women and men, and that this difference is largely shaped and determined by gender.<sup>3</sup>

Women with disabilities are often subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, for being women, for having a disability and for other characteristics that disadvantage or marginalise them in society. Women and girls with disabilities also continue to suffer from discrimination and therefore unequal opportunities in terms of accessing mainstream education, employment and participation in social activities and society, when compared to their male and non-disabled peers. At the same time, women and girls with disabilities largely remain in the margins of the global/national efforts on gender equality and disability rights.

### *Way forward*

Building on gains from the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs continue to place the eradication of poverty at the centre of global development, while giving greater emphasis on an integrated approach to sustainable development and pledging to “leave no one behind” in pursuit of equality. In this regard, addressing multiple barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities is key to achieving the SDGs. Not only is it important to mainstream disability into programmes and policies related to gender but also to ensure that the gender perspectives are mainstreamed in disability policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In order to effectively address the goal of “leaving no one behind”, women and girls with disabilities need to be actively involved in the operationalisation of the SDGs as both change agents and beneficiaries of development.

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixtieth session, has a historic opportunity to identify the urgent actions and key enabling conditions needed for gender-responsive

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<sup>1</sup> Draft General Comment on Article 6: Women with disabilities, prepared by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (CRPD/C/14/R.1), 22 May 2015, paragraph 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, paragraph 3.

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/20/5

implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as how to translate the commitments and gains into concrete steps and measures towards realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women for and with women and girls with disabilities.

In the context of the Commission's thematic focus on women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development, and the first year of implementation of the SDGs, UN DESA, with co-sponsorship of UN Women and the UK Department for International Development, is organising a side event to explore and identify: (a) gaps and barriers, (b) priorities and goals, (c) effective strategies, and (c) opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships for the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities and their inclusion and full participation.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

The side event will provide an opportunity for Member States and other key stakeholders, including civil society organisations of persons with disabilities and women to engage in substantive dialogue around priorities, policy and programme strategies, and concrete steps and measures to ensure the inclusion and full participation of women and girls with disabilities in the implementation of the SDGs.

With the overall goal of empowerment, inclusion and full participation of women and girls with disabilities at the global, regional and national levels, including in the context of the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and aware of the importance of the following five elements to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- (1) Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks
- (2) Enhancing national institutional arrangements
- (3) Enabling environments for financing gender equality and women's empowerment
- (4) Strengthening women's leadership and supporting women's civil society organizations
- (5) Fostering gender-responsive data collection, follow-up and review, and accountability processes

The main objectives of the side event are to:

- (1) Identify gaps and barriers;
- (2) Discuss concrete priorities and goals;
- (3) Share information on effective strategies;
- (4) Identify opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships.

## **III. STRUCTURE**

The event will consist of a key note address from Minister Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the UK Department for International Development, followed by a multi-stakeholder dialogue.

For the area in which they are invited to speak, speakers are expected to structure their interventions around one or more of the four objectives, and to address, to the extent possible the five elements identified above.

#### **IV. PROGRAMME**

##### **Welcoming remarks**

UN DESA Representative

##### **Opening statement**

Minister Baroness Verma, DFID

##### **Speakers**

Mrs. Esther Lungu	First Lady of the Republic of Zambia
Ms. Alexia Manombe-Ncube	Deputy Minister for Disability, Namibia
Ms. Veronica Magar	Director of the Gender, Equity, and Human Rights Unit, World Health Organisation
Ms. Gillian Bird	Ambassador of the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Ms. Kathy Greenlee	Assistant Secretary for Ageing and Administrator for Community Living, United States
Ms. Stephanie Ortoleva	President, Women Enabled International
Ms. Vanessa dos Santos	International Disability Alliance
Ms. Rangita de Silva de Alwis	Associate Dean of International Affairs University of Pennsylvania Law School
Ms. Nancy Khweiss	Fund for Gender Equality, UN Women
Ms. Dena Gassner	Board member of Arc, United States
Ms. Ernestine Ngo Melha	Chair & Founder, Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH)
Ms. Boram Lee	Women's Refugee Commission
Mr. Takashi Tokushige	Berkley University