



UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

## **Speaking Notes**

### **Yiping Zhou, Director of United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation Forum for Dialogue on the Post-2015 Development Framework and Disability (2-4 PM, 19 July Conference Room 4 NLB)**

#### **I. Every person will experience a disability in one's life time**

##### **Some facts:**

- Today, more than 1 billion or 15% of the world population are living with some form of disability. They are the world's largest minority.
- Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to UNDP. UNICEF estimates that 30% of street youths are disabled. UNESCO's statistics also show that about 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse.
- According to ILO, about 386 million of the world's working-age people are disabled, about 80% of them are unemployed. In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5 per cent of their lifespan, living with disabilities. When families and households with persons with disabilities are taken into account, a much larger proportion of population is affected by disability.
- In the United States, about one in every 33 babies (about 130,000) is born with a birth defect each year. And about 13 per cent of American children younger than 18 years of age have a developmental disability. About 3 million people are injured every year in car accidents, with about 2 million drivers suffering severe injuries. In 2007, the New York State Workers' Compensation Board reported 139,250 new cases involving workers injured on the job – many ended up with permanent disability. Approximately 1 in 5 people in the United States has some type of disability.

Anyone can have a disability and a disability can occur at any point in a person's lifetime.

- One could be born with a disability.
- One could be disabled due to illness, causing either physical or mental disabilities.
- One could be disabled due to disasters, either natural or man-made.
- Everyone could be disabled as a result of ageing.

Persons with disabilities refer to all humanity, because everyone will experience a disability in one's lifetime.

#### **II. Disability rights are basic human rights**

Persons with a disability are not an interest group, nor do they represent subjects for care and protection. They are human beings! They are us!

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 sets out the following rights of persons with disabilities:

- Equality before the law without discrimination
- Right to life, liberty and security of the person
- Freedom from torture
- Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Right to respect physical and mental integrity
- Freedom from movement and nationality
- Right to live in the community
- Freedom of expression and opinion
- Respect for home and the family
- Right to education
- Right to health
- Right to work
- Right to an adequate standard of living
- Right to participate in political and public life
- Right to participate in cultural life

The vision of a harmonious, inclusive and equitable global society cannot be realized unless every citizen, including every person with a disability, has the rights and access to: legal protection; sustainable energy; affordable housing; nutritious food; clean water; public transport; basic health care; basic social protection; decent work; and democratic processes.

***Therefore, disability rights are basic human rights! Persons with disabilities should enjoy, like everyone else, all fundamental freedoms and the rights to participate, on the basis of equality, in development. This requires: that international normative frameworks are in place; that national policy and legislations are developed, and that the general systems of society (both by public and private sectors) are accessible by all people including persons with disabilities.***

### **III. The need for an evidence-based approach, rather than just text-book scenarios**

With the Convention in place since 2006, there has been enough talking. But talking alone is never enough. We need to act! We need solutions – evidence-based solutions! Solutions in national policy and legislation; institutional establishments; urban planning; public transportation systems; building codes; ICT accessibility schemes and technologies; social inclusion programs; social services programmes; community services centres and systems, etc.

#### **Some examples of good practices in enabling access to public services and facilities:**

- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) launched the Enabling Accessibility Fund; Social Development Partnerships Program; Canada Pension Plan Disability Program; Canada Pension Plan Disability Vocational Rehabilitation Program; Federal Worker’s Compensation Benefits; Merchant Seamen Compensation Act; Registered Disability Savings Plan; Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits; Employment Equity Act; Opportunity Fund; and Labor Market Agreements for Persons with Disability. These legislative and “affirmative action-type” of measures ensure that persons with disabilities in Canada not only have access to public services and facilities, but equal opportunities to participate in development.

- China, a developing country of over 1.4 billion people, with 83 million (2006 figure) persons with disabilities, has promulgated a number of national legislations (i.e. Revised Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities); in national plans (i.e. disability-inclusive agenda was an integral component of the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year National Development Plan); in national programmes (i.e. the Working Programme on Disability in China). In 2010, the State Council approved the Guidelines on Speeding up the Establishment of a Social Security System and Service System for Persons with Disabilities, which requires public and private entities to include ICT accessibility into the development of their information system and services. As a result, both the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Shanghai World Expo in 2010 were made accessible to persons with disabilities – from buildings constructed to transportation infrastructure, and more.
- Republic of Korea made the Education System for Children with Disabilities mandatory. In 2008, Korea revised its Legislative Act on Special Education for Persons with Disability. The new Act established a system to provide educational support for different life stages of disabled people. Under the new Act, disabled infants and toddlers are eligible for free education, and education from kindergarten to high school is compulsory for disabled students. The Act also provides stronger support for higher and lifelong education for disabled people. Since 2010, special education for children with disabilities over five has become mandatory.

There are more such good practices, according to the Secretary-General’s report A/68/95. Italy adopted the first Italian Programme of Action for the promotion of the rights and the integration of persons with disabilities; Chile also recently adopted a national policy and plan of action for the social inclusion of persons with disabilities; United Arab Emirates has adopted a national framework on disability data and statistics by age and gender; Qatar included a project on enabling work environments for persons with disabilities in its Social Protection Strategy; and the African Union established a new disability architecture composed of legal, programmatic and institutional components, to mention just a few.

Solutions are not for display! They should be broadly promoted, shared, transferred and scaled up both in scope and impact!

#### IV. A proposition for DESA and a pledge from UNOSSC

DESA may wish to establish a globally and publically accessible “***Disability-inclusive Development Knowledge and Technologies Exchange Platform/Portal***”, consisting of (i) a ***Disability-inclusive Experts Roster***; (ii) a catalogued ***Disability-inclusive Solutions Databank*** (best national policies; legislative instruments, disability-inclusive employment guarantee systems; social inclusion and protection schemes, regulations or guidelines for infrastructure developers, best urban plans, best transportation systems, best ICT technologies, etc.); (iii) a ***Disability-inclusive Solutions and Technologies Transfer Mechanism***; and (iv) an expanded ***United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability***.

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation pledges to assist DESA, if it chooses to proceed in developing such a “***Disability-inclusive Development Knowledge and Technologies Exchange Platform***”, by offering the services of the following 3-in-1 Multilateral South-South Support Architecture:

- (i) **The Global South-South Development Academy** – a regulated, rules-based, market-oriented, transparent and fair system that enables South-South partners to map, produce and supply South-South cooperation experts and Southern solutions.
- (ii) **The Global South-South Development Expo** – a regulated, rules-based, market-oriented, transparent and fair system that enables South-South partners to showcase, on an annual basis, the most successful and scalable development solutions and help foster broad-based public-private-partnerships around concrete initiatives towards scaling up the impact of the showcased South-South solutions.
- (iii) **The South-South Global Assets and Technology Exchange (SS-GATE)** – a regulated, rules-based, market-oriented, transparent and fair transactional platform through which public and private sectors could list supply or demand for appropriate, affordable and transferable technologies. SS-GATE helps match supply with demand, as well as with potential financiers.

The 3-in-1 Multilateral South-South Support Architecture supports a “*South-South Cooperation Value Chain*” of discovering, marketing, matching and transferring Southern development experts, Southern solutions and Southern technologies on a demand-driven basis. Traditional donor countries and the United Nations system are encouraged to join or support this South-South cooperation Value Chain through Triangular Cooperation and public-private-partnership (PPP) arrangements.

## V. Conclusion

To conclude, persons with disabilities refer to all humanity, because everyone will experience a disability in one’s lifetime. They are not an interest group, nor do they represent subjects for care and protection. They are human beings! They are us!

Disability rights are basic human rights! Persons with disabilities should enjoy, like everyone else, all fundamental freedoms and the rights to participate, on the basis of equality, in development. This requires that international normative frameworks are not only in place, but implemented and progress monitored; that national policy and legislations are developed, and that the general systems of society (both by public and private sectors) are accessible by all people including persons with disabilities.

As such, disability rights must be explicitly integrated into the three key pillars of the evolving post-2015 development agenda, namely the Economic Pillar, the Social Pillar, and the Environmental Pillar.

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