# CONCEPT NOTE

### 2015 UNDESA/DSPD Forum on disability and development[[1]](#footnote-1)

Theme: Disability Inclusion and Accessible Urban Development

Co-organized by DESA and UN-Habitat, on the occasion of the 2015 World Cities Day: “Designed to Live Together”

UN Convention Center Nairobi, 28-30 Oct 2015

### Background

Urbanization is a growing global phenomenon in countries all over the world. The proportion of the world’s urban population is expected to increase to approximately 57 per cent of the world’s population by 2050.[[2]](#footnote-2) Of the projected increase, 90% is predicted to be in Africa and Asia.[[3]](#footnote-3)

For the world’s more than one billion persons with disabilities, urban areas, if ill-planed and built, often present significant challenges, including a lack of accessible infrastructures, spaces, facilities and basic public services. Ill-planned urbanisation, as seen in most developing countries, produced many urban areas with insufficient and inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate design of housing and public buildings, and limited access to accessible transport. These barriers have contributed to growing inequalities and exclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups.[[4]](#footnote-4)Making cities and towns accessible to and inclusive of all people, including persons with disabilities, is essential for sustainable urban development.

#### Advancing accessible and disability inclusive urban development

The international community, in the Outcome Document of the UN High Level Meeting on Disability and Development, reaffirmed its commitment to advancing a disability-inclusive development agenda, emphasising among other issues, the importance of accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities in urban development contexts.[[5]](#footnote-5) As the UN is now set to adopt a post-2015 sustainable development agenda in September 2015, it is important to look toward strategies to implement this agenda, including by making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable. This means actions and measures to be enhanced to ensure universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces; to adequate and affordable housing, urban and peri-urban transport and basic services for all urban dwellers.[[6]](#footnote-6)

All regions in the world are making headways in advancing the rights and wellbeing of persons with disabilities. In Africa, many countries have ratified the UNCRPD and efforts are being made to put in place legislation and policies to protect the rights and promote inclusion of people with disabilities. Further, the Common African Position on the post 2015 Development Agenda aims for inclusive and sustainable growth that leads to the uplifting of each and every single African. It recognizes the critical need to focus on empowering people living in vulnerable situations, including people with disabilities.

The 3rdUN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III) and its preparation will provide an important opportunity for urban policy makers and practitioners, as well as the disability sector, to review current progress and promote changes in urban policy and practices to ensure that the “New Urban Agenda” and future cities will be more environmentally accessible, user-friendly and inclusive of all people’s needs, including persons with disabilities, and furthermore facilitating and enabling their participation in urban planning, development and management.

### Forum on Disability Inclusion and Accessible Urban Development

On the occasion of the 2015 World Cities Day (Designed to Live Together), the UN Division for Social Policy and Development of Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), will organize a 3 day DESA Forum on Disability and Development with a focus on disability inclusion and accessible urban development in Nairobi from 28-30 October 2015 in close collaboration with UN-Habitat, ECA, the African Union Commission and civil society partners including the African Disability Forum.

#### Participation

Governmental focal points on disability and urban planning issues and Disabled PersonsOrganizations in selected countries , along with overseas resource persons, as well as representatives from UN, ECA, AUC, academic institutions, development partners and private sectors, will be also invited in their individual capacities as experts to the Forum.

#### Objectives

To promote the world’s urban development to be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities and contribute to the preparatory processes leading to the Habitat III and its emerging “ New Urban Agenda” .

More specifically, the Forum is expected to:

(1) provide a forum for exchanging experiences and practical expertise for strengthening policy and improving practices in promoting disability inclusive urban development;

(2) support the efforts of participating Governments and civil society partners in building their capacity to promote accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in urban development;

(3) contribute to policy discourses on sustainable and equitable urbanization and efforts to promoting disability inclusive development; and

(4) develop a set of recommendations on advancing sustainable and equitable urban development from the disability perspective

#### Organization of work:

The tentative programme of work will be organized as follows:

-**Opening segment to** review current urban development policy and practices from a disability perspective at global, regional and national levels, with the focus on the city and national lessons and experience learnt in promoting accessibility and disability inclusion in urban development.

-**Round-table discussions** to focus on reviewing policy framework, issues and trends in planning and constructing accessible and inclusive cities; exchanging national and local experiences and lessons learnt on planning and developing accessible, inclusive, and sustainable cities and communities for all, in key areas such as infrastructure, housing, transportation, information and communications, and public services. Issues concerning accessibility in urban planning, roles of accessibility standards and national legislations and ways forward to further promoting accessible and inclusive development for all especially from a disability perspective will be also discussed.

- **Closing segment to** present findings and recommendations on promoting accessibility and disability inclusion in urban development based on the reviewing of lessons learnt, and linking with the sustainable development goals concerning sustainable urbanization.

The Forum in all its segments will also discuss on the role of civil society in particular Disable People Organizations (DPOs) working in partnership with Governments and other development partners to advance a disability-inclusive urban development agenda.

1. The Forum on Disability and Development, officially launched in 2013, is an initiative of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). It aims to contribute to the on-going global efforts towards an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-2015 development framework and agenda, through exchange of experiences, expertise and innovative ideas to develop practical solutions for pressing issues with regard to disability-inclusion in development. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. African Development Bank, <http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/urbanization-in-africa-10143/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UN Habitat, State of the African Cities Report ([2014](http://mirror.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3528)) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ibid., African Development Bank, [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. General Assembly resolution 68/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals , see http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E [↑](#footnote-ref-6)