

Qatar launches a global declaration to promote the rights of more than 1.5 billion people with disabilities worldwide

- The Doha Declaration serves as a reference point for world governments and a catalyst for positive global change
- The Doha Declaration underscores Qatar's commitment to inclusive policies that provide greater opportunities for people with disabilities

December 8, 2019- Doha, Qatar:

Qatar Foundation for Social Work (QFSW) launched the "Doha Declaration" at the closing ceremony of the Doha International Conference on Disability and Development (DICDD) yesterday. The two-day conference, which has attracted more than 1,500 policymakers and practitioners, took place at the Qatar National Convention Center under the theme: "Leaving No One Behind".

The Doha Declaration on disability and development sets out an action-oriented approach that Qatar hopes will be an international reference point for world governments to integrate the rights of persons with disabilities into their national development plans. The aim is to ensure the needs of persons with disabilities are included in policies related to education, health, employment, and other relevant areas.

The Doha Declaration states the following:

We, the conferees of the Doha International Conference on Disability and Development 7-8 December 2019 held under the patronage of Her Highness Shaikha Moza bint Nasser, came together in the spirit of the UN Charter to advance peace, justice and human rights for all and especially for the 1.5 billion persons with disabilities in the world.

Whereas, we are painfully aware that the legacy of the past has left many persons with disabilities behind. That legacy of invisibility, exclusion, segregation, discriminatory policies and law is an affront to the human conscience.

Whereas, we call for a rethinking the disability concepts at all levels, stepping out from the cultural barriers, stigmas and medical approaches towards CRDP definitions ensuring empowerment, comprehensive social wellbeing, belonging, inclusiveness, equality and dignity for all;

Whereas, we acknowledge that humanity now has at its disposal two powerful instruments reflecting the values of change and each, in their own way, driving that process of change. Whereas, we acknowledge legal obligations arising from the UN CRPD and view the UN SDGs as key guiding principles in development, complementary action as between the two can help create a more inclusive future for all persons with disabilities. Whereas, we stress on the interoperability and interdependence of the two global instruments; SDGs and UNCRPD, where leaving no one behind cannot be achieved without mainstreaming the rights-based approach embedded in the UNCRPD as human rights and development cannot be divided.

The participants concluded in the following recommendations:

- 1- Combat structural barriers causing the exclusion of persons with disabilities, with a noteworthy emphasis on discriminatory laws and policies, fragmentation of services, lack of accessibility to physical and visual environments, lack of access to assistive technology and to rehabilitation and lack of measures to promote independent living of persons with disabilities.
- 2- Establish large scale awareness raising campaigns promoting disability rights, using the voice of persons with disabilities as a key driver to nudge the community, reducing discrimination, negative attitudes and stigma which hinders the social participation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that SDGs strategies at the national levels consciously take into account the need for cultural transformation.
- 3- Mainstream disability in the implementation of all SDGs, including the development of national strategies, policies and action plans are nationally addressed and aligned with the UNCRPD commitments.
- 4- Promote full and active participation and representation of all persons with disabilities in societies and in all policies and programs. All duty-bearers must prioritize the representation of all persons with disabilities as leaders, active citizens and active agents of change in the community, country, and international level, thus reaffirming the principle of 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. Encourage governments, civil society and others to innovate with new methods of co-production of policies.

- 5- Ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the education system by promoting an inclusive education system, including disability-friendly environment and facilities as well as assistive technologies.
- 6- Emphasize a comprehensive approach to disability in health policymaking, going beyond the medical approach and narrative to the overall wellbeing of persons with disabilities. Promote reproductive rights and accessibility to reproductive health services to persons with disabilities ensuring that they have the same needs, securing their full potential and recognizing their rights.
- 7- Acknowledge the role of families in the wellbeing of persons with disabilities and empower family members, emphasizing UNCRPD commitment on providing persons with disabilities and their family members the necessary protection and support to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities.
- 8- Invest in monitoring and evaluation of progress towards SDGs for persons with disabilities. Reliable and comparable and high-quality research is needed to better understand the lived experience of persons with disabilities and the nature of the challenges they face.
- 9- Strengthen the means of implementation and monitoring of the SDGs for persons with disabilities.
- 10- Welcome and encourage the active participation of the private sector as a key partner in realizing the UNCRPD and SDGs.
- 11- Prioritize accessibility to address and eliminate barriers in the physical, digital and social environment of the cities, to match the requirements of persons with disabilities.

Ms. Amal Abdullatif Al-Mannai, CEO of QFSW, commented on the conference and the Doha Declaration, saying:

“The aim of the conference and the Doha Declaration is to leave a long-lasting imprint on international efforts to improve the rights of persons with disabilities. The launch of the Doha Declaration underscores Qatar’s commitment to promoting policies that will ensure persons with disabilities are provided with opportunities for involvement, engagement and contribution in their communities.”

She also expressed hope that the outcomes of the conference will support the efforts of the United Nations and be a catalyst for change towards the adoption of policies that promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

"We hope the Doha Declaration will serve as a roadmap for governments, showing that change through a combination of human rights and sustainable development goals is both desirable and achievable," she added.

The conference highlighted the main issues and challenges facing persons with disabilities. The Doha Declaration was the culmination of two days of discussions on how the UN Sustainable Development Agenda can be fully integrated with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Qatar has a long-standing commitment towards protecting the rights of people with disabilities. In 2006, Qatar supported the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, before signing it in 2008. Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the Founder of QFSW, also initiated Al Noor Center in 1998 and the Shafallah Center in 1999, establishing the Qatar Social Work Foundation as a civil society organization under which Al Noor and the Shafallah operate.

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About DICDD

The Doha International Conference on Disability and Development will be held on 7–8 of December 2019, under the guidance and patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, a global advocate for the SDGs, and Founder of Qatar Foundation for Social Work and its affiliated civil society centers.

The key visionary item on the agenda of the conference is about how to rationalize, consolidate, contextualize, and streamline the nexus between the UN SDGs and the UN CRPDs based on the co-production of social policy between civil society and governments to achieve meaningful structural change to achieve inclusive equality. As a key outcome, the conference aims to deliver a visionary 21st century approach that will positively impact 1.5 billion people with disabilities worldwide.

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