



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Policy and Plan of Action for Disability Inclusion

2020-2021



Table of contents

Foreword by the Under-Secretary-General

Acronyms

Part I. Context

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Overall orientation

1.3 Normative framework for the Policy

 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)

Part II: Policy: commitment to disability inclusion

Part III. Plan of Action for the implementation

3.1. Objective

3.2. Guiding Principles

3.3. Twin-track approach

3.4. Strategy

3.5. Accountability

3.6. UN DESA Plan of Action for disability inclusion (2020-2021)

Foreword by the Under-Secretary-General

Since its establishment, the United Nations has promoted the inclusion and advancement of persons with disabilities around the world. The UN also prioritizes the mainstreaming of disability inclusion across the UN system. To this end, the UN system-wide policy and strategy - the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) was endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), and formally launched by the Secretary-General in June 2019.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) values the endorsement of the UNDIS and recognizes the opportunity it provides to advance critical policies to reduce inequality and ensure that no one is left behind. Over the past decades, UN DESA, through evidence-based research and analysis as well as substantive and technical contributions, has been at the helm in supporting Member States to achieve greater social inclusion and well-being for all. In line with its current mandates and overall objectives to support international cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable development for all, UN DESA emphasizes social inclusion for all, particularly vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities, as an important driver of development progress, reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty.

I am pleased to present UN DESA's first Policy and Action Plan for Disability Inclusion which reflects the Department's strong support for disability inclusion and its commitment to promoting a diverse, inclusive, and accessible workplace for all staff members at the United Nations. This Policy and Action Plan represents a critical step towards further mainstreaming disability-inclusion into the Department's work.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the UN DESA Network on Disability Inclusion and all Divisions for their contributions and expertise in developing this Policy and Action Plan.

LIU Zhenmin

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Acronyms

CDPMO Capacity Development and Programme Management Office

CEB Chief Executives' Board for Coordination

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs

DGC Department of Global Communications

DISD Division for Inclusion Social Development

DMSPC Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance

DOS Department of Operational Support

DPO Organizations of persons with disabilities

DSS Department of Safety and Security

EA Expected Achievement

EO Executive Office

EOSG Executive Office of the Secretary-General

GA General Assembly

IASG Inter-Agency Support Group for the CRPD

JIU Joint Inspection Unit

OHRM Office for Human Resource Management

OICT Office of Information and Communication Technology

OIOS Office for Internal Oversight Services

OUSG Office of the Under-Secretary-General

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

UNDG United Nations Development Group

UNDIS United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

Part I. Context

1.1 Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), hereafter referred to as the Department, has a long history of leadership in the UN system work to advance disability inclusion. For instance, since the early 1980s, UN DESA, through its Division for Inclusive Social Development, has served as the secretariat to support global disability policy development at the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development, among other UN intergovernmental bodies and processes. The Department also supported the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly that negotiated and adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In 2019, following its endorsement by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the Secretary-General launched the UN system-wide policy and strategy - the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). The present document provides guidance to the ongoing work of the Department in implementing the UNDIS and further advancing disability inclusion in its work.

1.2 Overall orientation

The overall objective of this Policy is to promote and support disability inclusion within the activities of UN DESA in alignment with the UNDIS.

With the aim of guiding departmental plans, ensuring that targets are met and consolidating good practices, this Policy and Action Plan will be reviewed and updated in line with ongoing guidance from lessons learned and updates to the UNDIS.

1.3 Normative framework for the Policy

Implementation of the UNDIS is required by all entities within the UN system in line with the policy established by the CEB.

UN DESA's efforts will also be guided by existing agreements of Member States on disability inclusion and the empowerment of persons with disabilities, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other existing intergovernmental frameworks supported by the Department.

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)

In 2019, with the endorsement by the CEB, the Secretary-General formally launched the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, which includes a system-wide policy and accountability framework concerning disability inclusion in the UN.

In his letter of 30 August 2019 to all heads of UN system entities, the Secretary-General underscored that “*achieving disability inclusion is a priority to which we should all commit...*” and called upon entities to develop their own action plans and align their organizational strategic plans with the UNDIS.

The General Assembly, through the adoption of resolution A/RES/74/144¹, invited the Secretary-General “to report on steps taken by the United Nations system towards mainstreaming disability inclusion, including implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy”.

Thus, all entities of the United Nations system are expected to operationalize the UNDIS in the context of their own work and to report annually on progress in the implementation.

Part II. Policy statement: commitment to disability inclusion

UN DESA, with its dedication to the promotion of fundamental human rights, inclusive and sustainable development, and social justice for all, commits itself to advancement of disability inclusion.

More specifically, UN DESA commits to advancing the following key objectives:

- To further mainstream the disability perspective in its substantive work;
- To reduce inequalities in access to resources and the benefits of development for persons with disabilities in areas pertinent to the work of its divisions;
- To promote accessibility, enabling conditions and equal opportunities for the meaningful participation of all persons with disabilities;
- To advance gender equality between men and women with disabilities.

To make sustained progress in delivering on commitments to disability inclusion, a detailed UN DESA Action Plan shall also be developed for the period of 2020-2021, in alignment with the UNDIS.

¹ Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: accessibility (A/RES/74/144)

Part III. UN DESA Action Plan for implementation

3.1 Objective

The objective of the UN DESA Action Plan (2020-2021) is to support the effective delivery of the aforesaid DESA Policy for disability inclusion.

The Action Plan, adhering to UN DESA's mandates and work plan, shall be developed based on inputs from all Divisions and approved by the Under-Secretary-General of UN DESA. It shall serve as a guide to the work of UN DESA in implementing the UNDIS and further promote disability inclusion for the period 2020-2021.

3.2 Guiding principles

Within its mandates, UN DESA works to ensure that commitments to disability inclusion are mainstreamed across its policies, programme of work and activities, strategies, institutions and organizational culture. The implementation of the UN DESA Policy and Action Plan on Disability Inclusion shall be guided by the following general principles:

- * Equality and non-discrimination;
- * Accessibility and usability;
- * Participation and inclusion; and
- * Gender equality and empowerment of women with disabilities.

3.3 Twin-track approach

As envisaged by the UNDIS, a strategic orientation that entails a twin-track approach (namely, a disability mainstreaming effort alongside disability-targeted actions and measures) will inform the development and implementation of the UN DESA Action Plan (2020-2021).

In practice, this entails that two categories of actions be taken, namely (1) cross-cutting actions that mainstream disability inclusion across the whole of UN DESA, and (2) actions that are specific to individual areas of work carried out by the respective Divisions and Offices in UN DESA.

3.4 Strategy for sustained progress

The effective UN DESA-wide implementation of the UNDIS, relevant UN DESA annual plans, policies and procedures, developed in accordance with the Secretariat's established frameworks, will be informed by the following strategy.

Following the twin-track approach, mainstreaming and targeted actions will be pursued to advance disability inclusion, in alignment with the UNDIS.

In line with its assigned portfolio, on mandates related to disability inclusion and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and its overall objective to advance policies for the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequality and the achievement of greater social inclusion and well-being for all, UN DESA's Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) leads coordination of the Department's related work, with support from the Executive Office and the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, and under the overall oversight of the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs.

DISD will continue to be the substantive focal point on disability issues in UN DESA. Institutionally, it shall also continue to represent UN DESA in major disability-specific inter-agency bodies and mechanisms, including in particular the UN Inter-Agency Support Group for the CRPD and the Inter-Departmental Task Force on Accessibility.

UN DESA will establish an UNDIS Network, comprising representatives of each division or office. The UN DESA Focal Point on UNDIS, with DISD, will coordinate DESA's UNDIS implementation in collaboration with all divisions and the UNDIS Network to broadly promote and monitor UN DESA-wide action. Members of the UNDIS Network will be empowered in their roles as their respective divisional focal points to serve as catalysts for change to advance disability inclusion, with the support of their respective divisions and offices.

Persons with disabilities, including staff members with disabilities, and their representative organizations, will be consulted, engaged, and kept informed to enable their meaningful participation while developing and implementing the UN DESA Action Plan.

3.5 Accountability

Responsibility and accountability for the implementation of the UN DESA Action Plan and the UNDIS will rest with UN DESA management and its programme managers.

At the same time, successful implementation of the UN DESA Action Plan requires the unfailing commitment and participation of all UN DESA staff members. Accordingly, there is a need to further raise awareness, change attitudes and enhance the capacities of UN DESA staff in relation to disability inclusion. It is also important to further promote awareness on inclusive environments and conducive conditions for disability-inclusion in organizational culture.

The implementation of the UN DESA Action Plan will be regularly monitored, and adjustments will be made in view of new developments and opportunities for further strengthening disability inclusion in the Department.

3.6 Proposed Action Plan for the implementation (2020-2021)

What	How	Who (leading Division/Office)	When	Remark
Leadership	1. Statements on disability inclusion are delivered by USG or his/her deputy at public meetings	OUSG, DISD	Suggested on Dec 3 or/and other major meetings, each year	
	2: Internal memos / instructions / guidelines are issued to all staff to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to address disability inclusion	OUSG, with support of DESA Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD, DESA UNDIS Network	2020	
	3: At least (1) meeting is held with a representative of an organisation of persons with disabilities, per year	OUSG, with proposals by ASG, and DESA Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD	Once in 2020, once in 2021	
	4: A regular report on the implementation of the UN DESA Action Plan shall be presented to the Under-Secretary-General and reviewed at a Directors' Meeting	OUSG, with substantive inputs from DISD; and proposals and drafts coordinated and drafted by DESA Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD	Once in 2020 and once in 2021	
	5: The Network on Disability Inclusion will serve as an internal mechanism to review progress and performance, and to identify gaps in achieving the Action Plan.	OUSG, Directors of Divisions, DESA Network	Once in 2020 and once in 2021	
	6: A remedial action plan (with a timeline for responsible actors to follow) is developed and implemented to fill gaps wherever identified.	OUSG, Divisions (led by ASG and supported by DISD expertise together with the Focal Point on UNDIS), , and DESA Network	2021	
Strategic Planning	1. 2021 UN DESA budgeting/strategic planning documents are reviewed and updated so as to mainstream disability,	OUSG, EO and CDPMO, with the support of the	2020	

	with explicit references made to disability inclusion and gender equality, in accordance with the Secretariat's established guidelines for the preparation of these documents	Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD		
	2. data on the UNDIS implementation, disaggregated, as appropriate, by disability and sex, is reflected in main strategic planning reports	SD, DISD; and EO and CDPMO (for personnel-related statistics)	End of 2020; 2021	
Disability Strategy/Action Plan	1. An UN DESA Action Plan on Disability Inclusion is put in place	OUSG, EO, CDPMO and Divisions CDPMO – for project offices and because CDPMO is involved in putting AP in place	2020	
	2. The implementation of the UN DESA Plan of Action is assessed and reported on in the format of a programme report, once every two years	OUSG, EO, DESA Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD will lead and coordinate with Divisions	End of 2021	
Institutional Set-up	1. UNDESA DISD maintains a unit with substantive expertise on disability and right-based approach to disability inclusion	DISD	Ongoing	
	2. UN DESA's UNDIS Focal Point and Network are in place for the coordination of UNDIS implementation and reporting	OUSG, DISD	2020	
	3. The UN DESA UNDIS Network holds 2 meetings, per year	DESA UNDIS network, coordinated by ASG and DESA Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD	Ongoing	
	4. The UN DESA UNDIS focal point's and UN DESA UNDIS Network members' work on the UNDIS shall be reflected in their work plans and performance appraisals	Divisions, EO	Once in 2020, 2021	

Consultation with persons with disabilities	1. Guidelines for consultation with persons with disabilities are in place	DESA Focal Point on UNDIS, substantive inputs from DISD, and all Divisions	ongoing	
	2. Include persons with disabilities in the agendas and processes of meetings	All Divisions	Ongoing	
	3. Build and maintain a formal or informal partnership with organizations of person with disabilities in the work of headquarters and at regional /country levels	Divisions	Ongoing	
Accessibility, including in Conferences and events	1. UN DESA, within its mandate and in line with applicable UN guidelines, promotes accessibility for meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the UN	EO, CDPMO (for project offices), Divisions	2020-2021	
	2. The DESA Action Plan which contains accessibility strategy is reviewed, every 5 years	EO, DESA focal point on UNDIS, through DISD, will coordinate the review, in consultation with Divisions and DESA UNDIS Network	2025	

	<p>3. Accessibility and usability in UN DESA meetings and events is progressively improved. Accessibility and usability are considered in particular in the following ways:</p> <p>(1) as a criterion when selecting meeting venues and services;</p> <p>(2) staff proactively solicit information about the accessibility needs of participants of meetings and events;</p> <p>(3) remote participation is enabled for participants and staff in meetings and events, including for persons with disabilities with different needs, where technically and financially feasible.</p> <p>(4) collaborate with Secretariat departments responsible for the provision of accessibility services (such as real-time closed caption, Braille official documentation, sign language interpretation) to ensure that all official meetings that are entitled to these services will receive them; and</p> <p>(5) good practices in making conferences accessible and usable are documented and shared.</p>	EO, Divisions, and CDPMO	Ongoing	
	<p>4. Public information concerning UN meetings, in particular that via websites, are provided in accessible formats that meet applicable international accessibility standards</p>	Divisions, OUSG-SPCS	Ongoing	
Reasonable accommodation	<p>1.A Strategy or procedure is in place for registering requests and the provision of reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities</p>	EO, CDPMO (for projects outside of HQ), DISD	2020	
	<p>2.Staffs with disabilities are consulted on the development or renovation of working stations/offices</p>	Divisions, EO, CDPMO (for projects outside of HQ)	Ongoing	
	<p>3.Good practices for providing reasonable accommodation are recorded</p>	Divisions, OUSG-Strategic Communication	Ongoing	
Procurement	<p>1. Relevant procurement documents have accessibility as a mandatory requirement</p>	EO, CDPMO, Divisions	Ongoing	

Programme and Project	1. DESA provides guidance on disability inclusion in relevant programme and projects	OUSG, EO, CDPMO, Divisions	2020, 2021	
Evaluation	1. Divisions incorporate disability perspectives in self-evaluations that they perform and provide disability inclusion-related inputs/ evidence for evaluations including those external oversight bodies such as OIOS.	OUSG, EO, CDPMO (for capacity development projects), Divisions	2020 2021	
	2. In the course of an evaluation, wherever possible, specific evidence and data disaggregated by disability status is collected and reflected in the conclusion and recommendations.	OUSG, EO, CDPMO, Divisions	Ongoing	
Country programmes	Not applicable, since DESA offices do not programme or operate at country level			
Joint initiatives	UN DESA organizes at least (1) joint programme/initiative per year on disability inclusion in collaboration with other UN entities, on the basis of a partnership, and/or in association with actors from Governments, civil society or the private sector.	DISD and other Divisions	Once in 2020, and 2021	
Employment	1. A self-identification questionnaire is issued to collect data from employees with disabilities	EO, Divisions (with support/guidance from DMSPC/OHR)	2021	
	2. Employees with disabilities report their satisfaction and wellbeing at a level similar to that of staff without disabilities	EO, Divisions (with support/guidance from DMSPC/OHR)	2021	
Capacity development for staff	1. A baseline staff capacity assessment scan is conducted.	EO, CDPMO, DISD	2020	
	2. Disability inclusion tools are made available online to all staff	DESA Focal Point on UNDIS with substantive inputs from DISD, and EO	2020	
	3. Provision of disability awareness-raising and capacity building training for staff, in particular UN DESA Network members	DISD, DESA Network	2021	

Communications	1. For internal and external communications, relevant guidelines are in place and updated to promote disability inclusion	OUSG-SPCS, in collaboration with DISD	2020	
	2. Mainstream communications and knowledge products, especially flagship publications, websites, intranets use rights-based terminology in portraying persons with disabilities, promote disability inclusion, including considering intersectionality, within UN DESA mandates and in line with relevant guidelines/procedures on disability inclusion.	OUSG-SPCS in collaboration with DESA Focal Point on UNDIS through DISD, and all Divisions	Ongoing	
	3. Substantive communication campaigns are organized to promote disability inclusion	OUSG-SPCS, in collaboration with DISD.	ongoing	

Annex. Baseline information (December 2019)

The table below provides a baseline on the current situation in the Department with regard to each of the applicable UNDIS indicator areas and /or performance requirements.

Objective#	Indicators	Status of performance				
		N/A	Missing	Approach	Meet	Exceed
1	Leadership				*	
2	Strategic Planning and Management				*	
3	Disability-Specific Policy/Strategy				*	
4	Institutional setup				*	
5	Consultation with Persons with Disabilities				*	
6	Accessibility			*		
6.1	Accessibility of Conferences and Events			*		
7	Reasonable Accommodation			*		
8	Procurement		*			
9	Programmes and Projects		*			
10	Evaluation			*		
11	Country Programme Documents	*				
12	Joint Initiatives					*
13	Employment			*		
14	Capacity Development			*		
15	Communications				*	



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



www.un.org/disabilities