

**Fifty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development**

**High Level Panel discussion on “Towards inclusive, resilient and sustainable development: an evidence-based approach to the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda 2030”**

(United Nations headquarters, New York, 31 January 2018)

**Background**

Over the past decade, while the international community has recognized the need for disability-inclusive development, national policies and strategies have not yet been fully inclusive and responsive to the needs, concerns and perspectives of persons with disabilities. In order to achieve the inclusive, resilient and sustainable development goals for all, especially in areas such as poverty reduction, education, employment and health (access to health care services, rehabilitation and habilitation), resilience-building of communities, and equalization of opportunities for full participation by persons with disabilities in all aspects of life in societies. Meanwhile, evidence based, reliable and high-quality data on persons with disabilities has often been scarce. Although the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in its Article 31, specially calls on States parties to collect information, including statistics and data, and to disaggregate this information to identify barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights, the data gap has been one of the major challenges and obstacles for measuring progress and guiding the efforts towards a disability-inclusive, resilient and sustainable development, especially in the current contexts of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda that promise to leave no one behind.

**Efforts and progress made to narrow the gaps**

The UN and its agencies have been working on disability issues for several decades. The UN General Assembly adopted the World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons in 1982 which institutionally led to the creation of a disability unit in the UN Secretariat.<sup>1</sup> Over the decades, progress has been made in strengthening the international normative frameworks to advance the rights and status of persons with disabilities- one of the major milestones in the recent decade was the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006.

Furthermore, disability is incorporated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a cross-cutting issue and is specifically targeted in goals related to education, economic growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements and in relation to availability

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/42/58

and disaggregation of data for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

While growing attention accorded to disability issues in more and more global normative frameworks, many countries continue to face challenges to reducing poverty and inequality among persons with disabilities. Chronic levels of poverty, limited resource and capacity continue to stymie country efforts. Many developing countries face challenges in creating enabling conditions and equal opportunity for access by persons with disabilities to health care, rehabilitation, education and other public services, as well as to vocational training, employment and decent work.

The extent of poverty and inequality in all development areas experienced by persons with disabilities is often the result of the shortcomings in the structural, social, political and cultural environments in which they reside: lack of accessibility of physical and virtual environments, institutional barriers, discrimination, exclusion and unequal opportunities. Such exclusion has costs for persons with disabilities, their families and communities, and society as a whole. For example, excluding persons with disabilities from employment costs societies not only the value of their lost potential productivity, but also the expense of providing financial support through the social safety net.

The increasing attention to disability issues also prompted a demand for disability data. With decades of collaborative work, internationally comparable measures including relevant methodologies and tools are being developed, gaps still remain in terms of building capacity in many countries. Evidence-based research on disability policies is also scarce, particularly in developing countries.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the SDG target 17.18 calls for enhanced capacity-building support to developing countries to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by disability, by 2020, well ahead of the target-year of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

National efforts to strengthen the evidence base research and to collect data on persons with disabilities in both developed and developing countries have been increasing steadily over time. While in the 1970s, only 19 countries collected disability data in national census, by the 2010s this number increased to 120.<sup>2</sup> Among these 120 countries and areas, 55 used the Washington Group questions; 65 used other methodologies. A number of countries has also included the Washington Group questions in their national surveys.

Relevant initiatives and progress are also being made at the international level. For instance, in response to a request of the General Assembly,<sup>3</sup> a Flagship report on disability and development is currently being produced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in coordination with relevant UN entities. By compiling existing evidence and focusing on the information, it will disseminate experience and good practices for realizing the SDGs for and with persons with disabilities, with a view to making progress towards inclusive, resilient and sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

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<sup>2</sup> J-M. Durr, Use of censuses to collect data on disability, presentation at Expert Group Meeting on the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics, 12-14 July 2017.

<sup>3</sup> A/RES/69/142.

## **The high level panel discussion**

As decided by the Bureau for the Commission on Social Development, a high level panel discussion on “Towards inclusive, resilient and sustainable development: an evidence-based approach to the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda 2030” will be organized at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 31 January 2018, during the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission. The panel will discuss issues related to disability-inclusive development in the context of the efforts to achieve sustainable development and build resilience for all. The thematic focus of the panel will be on strategies and tools that support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development, including in poverty eradication, humanitarian action, and enhancing equal access to rehabilitation and social services. The panel will also discuss how evidence-based research, including the status of disability data and statistics, can be further improved to ensure disability-inclusive implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda.

The panel discussion is expected to make a contribution to the ongoing efforts on improving monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a disability perspective.

The panel will be chaired by the bureau and consist of five panelists and a moderator. Each panelist will be invited to make a 10-minute presentation. Following their presentations, the moderator will open the floor for questions and an interactive discussion. The panel discussion will provide a basis for consideration by the Commission on Social Development to decide on its contribution to the forthcoming 2018 High Level Political Forum and also to the disability-inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The outcome of the panel discussions and proposals will be reflected in the Chairperson’s summary.

Panelists are suggested to consider addressing some of the following questions:

- Using concrete examples, discuss what policies and measures shall be in place in order to effectively promote development and humanitarian actions that are inclusive, resilient and sustainable for all including persons with disabilities?
- What are the existing evidence gaps in assessing the access by persons with disabilities to public services and how to close these gaps?
- What are the steps that can be taken to strengthen an evidence-based approach to guide the inclusion of persons with disabilities in national socio-economic development, in particular in the contexts of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- How can Governments and other actors, including civil society organizations, contribute to the ongoing efforts at the global, regional and national levels to improve monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda 2030 for ensuring that persons with disabilities not be left behind?

## **Tentative program**

Chaired by the Bureau

Moderator: Ms. Venus Illagan, Secretary General, Rehabilitation International

Panelists:

H.E Ms. Zhang Haidi, Chairperson, China Disabled Persons' Federation

Mr. Mesbah Ansari, Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Mrs. Mary Crock, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Sydney

Ms. Margaret Mbogoni, Senior Statistician, Statistics Division, UNDESA

Interactive discussions

Closing