
COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Inclusive Social Development



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Commission for Social Development Fifty-seventh session

Draft Concept Note

High Level Panel discussion: The empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth

Wednesday, 13 February 2019, 10:00am – 1:00pm
Conference Room 4

1. Background

Pursuant to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decision in 2006, the Commission for Social Development has, since its 2007-2008 review and policy cycle, included an agenda item on ‘Emerging issues’ in its work programme. Under this agenda item, the Commission addresses current issues affecting social development requiring urgent consideration or new cross-cutting issues in the context of evolving global development challenges.

The Bureau of the Commission decided on “The empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth” as the topic of emerging issues of the 57th session of the Commission, which also echoes the theme of the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The selection of this topic acknowledges that the experience and lessons drawn from empowerment of persons with disabilities, older persons and youth could provide concrete examples to illustrate the differential impact of natural and human-made disasters on all socially vulnerable groups, and the need to address their specific needs, with the view to promoting their inclusion, equality and empowerment, and examine the role of social policy to maximize opportunities in the endeavour of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for all people.

2. Context

The increasingly frequent occurrence of natural and human-made disasters and their impact represent a major challenge for the world today. Worldwide, over 350 million people are affected by natural disasters, conflicts and humanitarian crises annually. While all populations face risks of being exposed to certain disasters, the vulnerabilities or resilience of individuals

to these disasters and the severity of disasters' impacts on people often vary depending on their socio-economic conditions, civic and social status, as well as the ability to access mitigation and relief resources. In both developing and developed countries, persons with disabilities, older persons and youth are among those social groups who often disproportionately experience the negative impacts of natural and human-made disasters.

The negative consequences of extensive exposure to disasters are detrimental and their impact hampers ongoing efforts to eradicate poverty and to implement the sustainable development goals (SDGs). This is becoming a matter that deserves more urgent and serious consideration by all concerned with development and humanitarian causes. The achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs depends not only on combating natural and human-made disasters but also on ensuring that all those who are negatively impacted are not left behind.

Against this background, the Bureau of the Commission for Social Development identified "The empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth" as the "Emerging issues" topic, on which a high-level panel will be organized during the fifty-seventh session of the Commission.

3. Objectives

The panel will serve to highlight key issues, identify challenges, opportunities, and good practices in addressing the differential impact of natural and human-made disasters on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth, with a view to reducing inequality and achieving socially inclusive development for all. The outcome of the panel discussion will be a unique contribution to the 2019 High Level Political Forum and the ECOSOC high-level segment. The lessons drawn from it could also provide insights to Member States in their ongoing endeavors to reduce inequality, promote social inclusion and support the empowerment of people, in the implementation of the SDGs.

More specifically, the panel aims to:

- 1) Identify opportunities and key challenges facing Member States in empowering persons with disabilities, older persons and youth, who are too often disproportionately affected and impacted in natural and human-made disasters;
- 2) Exchange information, expertise and good practices at the national, regional and international levels, showcasing successful experience and promising solutions that help support development policy and practices to address the impacts and concerns of affected social groups;
- 3) Explore how the Commission could continue and enhance its important role in empowering people, promoting inclusive disaster and humanitarian actions, and contributing to the building of more resilient societies and sustainable development for all.

4. Structure and format of the panel discussion

The high-level panel discussion will be chaired by the Chair of the Commission for Social Development. The Chair will open the session with brief remarks and introduction of moderator and panellists. The Moderator will then invite the panelists to deliver an address on the topic of the session, with each to speak for 7 to 10 minutes. Following their presentations, the moderator will facilitate an interactive dialogue among panellists, then open the discussion

and invite questions and comments from the floor. Panellists are expected to structure their presentations around concrete strategies that have proven to be successful in addressing disasters and their impacts on the marginalized social groups, promoting inclusion, reducing inequality, and to highlight innovative approaches and lessons learned at the national level.

The expected outcomes of the panel discussion will be reflected in the Chair’s summary, which will be one of the key inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the ECOSOC, in particular the high-level segment of the ECOSOC and the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

The panel will be comprised of the following:

- The Chair of the Commission will chair the panel and open the meeting with brief remarks and introduce the moderator.
- One moderator who will moderate the panel discussion. The moderator will set the stage and after the presentations of the panellists, stimulate an interactive discussion between the panellists and participants of the Commission.
- Five panellists (high-level government official, subject experts from academia/ think tanks/UN system, as well as from the civil society)

5. Guiding questions

Panelists are suggested to consider addressing the following questions:

- What are the major impacts of natural disasters and humanitarian situations that have been challenging persons with disabilities, older persons, youth and the communities that they live in?
- How does the current national or local disaster management systems work for these marginalized social groups in terms of disaster preparedness, response and recovery?
- Sharing of one or two cases as examples to showcase how good practices (policies and measures) have been successful in ensuring that disaster and humanitarian actions are inclusive of and responsive to the needs and aspiration of these marginalized social groups, in particular, persons with disabilities, older persons and youth.
- Recommendations on specific policies and actions that should be in place at local, national and international levels in order to reduce inequality and empower affected people, by addressing not only their immediate protection needs in disasters, but also engaging them and strengthening their capacities to make disaster management more effective and communities and societies more inclusive and resilient.

6. Time allocation

Speaker	Suggested speaking time
Chair: opening remarks	5 minutes
Moderator: introduction/context setting	5 minutes
Panelists (5) presentations	7 - 10 minutes per panelist

Moderated discussion	Lead discussants (3 – 5 minutes per lead discussant)
	Q & A directly related to the presentations (10 minutes) Open dialogue with participants of the Commission (Interventions from the floor, no longer than 3 minutes per speaker.)
Concluding remarks by panellists and moderator	15 minutes in total
Closing by the Chair	5 minutes
	Total duration: 3 hours

