

UNITED NATIONS



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**Opening Remarks  
Interactive Dialogue with the United Nations system  
on the implementation of the Convention (Agenda Item 5 C)  
Twelfth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention  
on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**13 June 2019, 3:00-6:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 4**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Esteemed Participants**

**On behalf of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs – UN DESA, I am honoured to join this interactive dialogue among States Parties, members of the UN system, and representatives of civil society. I will present the main activities of the Department in reference to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.**

**DESA’s mandate is centered on the realisation of the development pillar of the UN. We work together towards a common goal, to promote and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for all, and this includes persons with disabilities.**

**Since the inception of the United Nations, DESA has been the focal point on disability within the Organization, working closely with Member States, other UN entities, academic institutions, expert communities, as well as with civil society, in particular with organizations of persons with disabilities, in order to build an inclusive, accessible, and sustainable world by, for, and with persons with disabilities.**

**As you know, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, or UNDIS was just adopted. The Strategy provides normative, operational, and accountability frameworks for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 development agenda at the global, regional, and country level both internally within the UN system, and externally, through the Organization's programme and cooperation with Member States.**

**The UNDIS was elaborated thanks to a UN Inter-Agency effort, engaging and cooperating with more than 300 individuals from approximately 60 UN entities, staff unions, networks and civil society organizations. DESA played an active role in the drafting process for the UNDIS, providing technical guidance and facilitating inter-agency cooperation. We have now, with this strategy, begun the process of building and implementing a framework for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.**

**In recent years, our focus has been on the mainstreaming of the goals and the objectives of the Convention in the global agenda, strengthening the international normative and operational frameworks to advance the rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities in society and development.**

**To facilitate and promote the design and the implementation of such efforts, DESA has been collaborating closely with experts in the field, for its research on and analysis of inclusive development; and it has been vigorously promoting evidence-based policymaking and reporting. Additionally, we continue to build multi-stakeholder partnerships, to best support Governments in their ongoing efforts in mainstreaming disability in their policies and strategies for SDG implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.**

**In order to mainstream disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, DESA has been identifying and building upon the interlinkages across the pillars, promoting the Convention and the disability inclusion in the SDGs to shape the current economic, social and humanitarian action.**

**One salient example is the 2018 UN Flagship Report on “Disability and Development – Realizing the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities”. This report is the first UN publication to address, at the global level, the nexus between disability and the SDGs, based on multi-stakeholder efforts. Preparing it has required consultations of over 200 experts from UN agencies and International Financial Institutions, Member States, and civil society, including research institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities.**

**This Flagship Report is a global analysis based on an unprecedented amount of data, legislation, and policies from over 100 countries, focused on understanding the socio-economic circumstances of persons with disabilities and the challenges and barriers they face in their daily lives. The publication is also the first global compilation and analysis of internationally comparable data based on the Washington Group on Disability Statistics’ short set of questions; and the first publication to use big data - more than 1.2 million**

**crowd-sourced data points – to inform on the accessibility of physical spaces. The report also examines new areas, like the role of access to energy to enable persons with disabilities to use assistive technology, for which no global research was previously available. Furthermore, the Flagship Report explores the intersections between the SDGs and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as other international relevant norms and standards relating to disability. Against the backdrop of all available evidence, the report identifies good practices, recommends urgent actions, and traces a roadmap for the achievement of the SDGs by, for, and with persons with disabilities. DESA is also in the process of making the findings of the report universally available by producing accessible versions of the publication. The audio version, which removes barriers for persons with visual impairments, was released yesterday and an easy-to-read version will be issued later this year.**

**In this context, it is important to note that it is not possible to make progress without building statistical capacity. Thus, the Statistics Division of DESA has been compiling, analysing, and disseminating data on disability through the UN Disability Statistics Data Portal. This activity is a response to the United Nations Statistical Commission’s request, made during its 49th Session in early 2018, for the Statistics Division to compile and analyse national information to understand observed differences in national estimates of disability. The Statistics Division has since collected extensive, national-level information on the prevalence of disability: by type and on the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the portions of populations with and without disabilities, including details of their living arrangements and living conditions. These new and expanded data standards represent an**

**important update from the previously disseminated statistics models of the early 2000s. This data also demonstrates a considerable increase in the number of countries collecting data on disability. Nevertheless, more must be done to collect and make available better data for inclusive disability policies and programmes. DESA will continue to conduct activities to assist developing countries in strengthening the capacity of their national statistical systems, to produce more robust and fit-for-purpose official disability statistics.**

**Besides Statistics, in response to General Assembly resolution 72/162, DESA has been working on the Secretary-General's report on the rights of persons with disabilities, focusing on the issues of accessibility. DESA has spent the past twelve months engaging in an extensive study on the status of accessibility worldwide to identify current gaps and to provide guidance on best practices. All Member States, relevant UN agencies, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and a great number of civil society organizations, particularly organizations of persons with disabilities, were contacted to contribute to this report. This undertaking has resulted in a repository of country-level information on actions and interventions aimed at enhancing accessibility of infrastructure and Information and Communication Technology, and it includes information on more than 100 countries. The SG report and its findings will be submitted later this year to the General Assembly.**

**Another action that DESA is engaged in relates to “sports as an enabler of sustainable development” in line with the Assembly's commitment. We have co-organized for COSP12 a side-event with Manhattan Multicultural Counseling and with United for All Peoples, called “One Billion Voices -**

**Making the Invisible Visible: The Power of Sports and Expressive Arts.” In collaboration with the wider Sport for Development and Peace community, civil society and persons with disabilities, we will continue to promote sport as a vehicle to foster sustainable development and to enhance the inclusion and participation of person with disabilities.**

**Finally, DESA continues to respond to the Governments’ requests for technical cooperation to strengthen their capacity in implementing the Convention. African governments, in particular, have turned increasingly to DESA for cooperation in bridging this gap and supporting national efforts to advance the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities implementation. For example, the DESA is currently working with Namibia in developing capacity and raising awareness of the Convention and wider possibilities for disability inclusion. In this capacity DESA has been holding capacity development workshops at the local level, using its Toolkit on Disability for Africa. The Toolkit targets government employees and members of civil society, particularly those from organizations of persons with disabilities, to advance disability-inclusive development, aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Similarly, DESA is supporting the Government of Uzbekistan in the organization of a regional workshop aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge concerning the implementation of the Convention.**

**Excellencies,**

**Esteemed Participants,**

**The implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy will require not only data and statistics on the situation of persons with disabilities in relation to the SDG implementation, monitoring and evaluation; but also complex analysis that would provide a basis for the disability inclusion in the work of the United Nations. DESA, as a key UN entity in promoting inclusive development, is committed to the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and we stand ready to support all stakeholders in this momentous endeavour.**

**I thank you.**

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