

12th Conference of the States Parties of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Main Topic: “Ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities in a changing world through the CRPD implementation”.

Cross-cutting theme: "Awareness raising".

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1. - Human Rights Model

The human rights model of persons with disabilities enshrined on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities CRPD cautions about the changes in the society, which will make persons with disabilities' interaction with the environment more dynamic, leading the States and societies to take the inclusion and participation challenges of our sector. It is irrevocable that when we talk about persons with disabilities, we talk about rights and no favors.

2. - 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda on sustainable development has a similar inclusion and participation perspective, which declares to be based on human rights.

Human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and provide a core substratum to the development scope, which must be sustainable, inclusive and accessible.

From these crossroads (rights and development), the States must channel actions and take concrete measures to eliminate barriers from the environment, and generate appropriate conditions for the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society.

3. - Accessibility

From my experience in the last two decades in relation to persons with disabilities, their rights and development (Ad-Hoc Committee for CRPD, CRPD Committee and now as Special Envoy), I can sustain that the most cross-cutting legal concept is **accessibility**, which extends its scope to the physical space, information, communications, technology, goods, products, services, processes and procedures.

Almost at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, accessibility is clearly seen as a legal umbrella covering different concepts like age-friendly cities or child friendly cities (WHO and UNICEF, respectively). Why am I mentioning this? Because only accessibility can be legally claimed since it is enshrined in the CRPD.

Besides, the 2030 Agenda states on SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, highlighting target 11.2 related to accessible transport and target 11.7 related to accessible green areas and public spaces.

4. - HLPF High Level Political Forum

The HLPF reviews the States national voluntary Reports, complying with the Sustainable Development Goals. During the three years review period (2016 – 2018), 113 members states have been subjected to the Voluntary National Review, representing more than 50% of the countries members of the United Nations, which evidences a strong commitment of the States with the sustainable development: 22 countries in 2016, 43 countries in 2017 and 46 countries in 2018. Last year, only 16 countries referred to accessibility, which is equivalent to 34,78%.¹

5. - HLPF – Smart Cities

The HLPF reviews make us question how much have we advanced and how much we can move forward, especially when the technological world amazes us with the called “smart cities”, corresponding to that *“innovative that uses the information technology and telecommunication (ITCs) and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services, and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of present and future generations, including environmental aspects”*. (International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

For persons with disabilities, as well as older persons, the “modernity achievements” must be a real horizon on their lives, contributing to their concrete autonomy and independence, not turning into other barrier for their full and effective inclusion in society. At

¹ 47 Voluntary National Reports are forecasted for 2019

the same time, a permanent and inclusive training of the population becomes a major challenge for the 21st century, not leaving space for a digital gap, which would mean exclusion.

The challenge of a really smart city will be to understand the needs of our diverse, dynamic and interactive evolving humanity, including the technological accessibility as a whole, keeping into account the universal design of communications, information, products, services and the users corresponding training. If not complying with these accessibility standards, the technological city will not be truly smart.

It is necessary to highlight the initiative of a network of entities, which is promoting at municipality level a global agreement for accessible cities, which already embraces 12 cities committed to this purpose. I invite the States and municipalities to become familiar with this project in order to joint efforts.

6. - Business Role

I remark that the human rights and sustainable development frames are prevailing for the States and all community members; hence, for business.

Since the 2030 Agenda is based on Human Rights, and on the other hand there exist the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011), we may draw important applications from this correlation (from paragraph 67 of the 2030 Agenda):

- *Said private entities must **avoid and prevent** their own activities from causing or helping to cause negative consequences on the human rights, and as a consequence over the sustainable development, facing those consequences when arising. As seen, the first business contribution to the 2030 Agenda will be preventive.*
- *According to the outlined principles, business must make an explicit political commitment, reflected on policies and procedures to protect human rights, including their activities impact assessments. Therefore, a second contribution to the 2030 Agenda will be the adoption of policies and actions directly contributing to the Agenda progress, for example the SDG 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, production that must also be accessible.*
- *A third contribution of business with the 2030 Agenda will be a leadership adoption and deepening towards the progress of a sustainable development. In that regard, I call on business to allocate some percentage of their profits on sustainable investments, translated into cities and other human settlements with universal accessibility (SDG 11). Said investment will provide feedback to the same private business that exists within a society of persons with access to accessible cities and surroundings, enjoying the well-being. There will be a concrete return to the Company by consumers living a “healthy” life, while enjoying their accessible cities*

and surroundings (not only physical spaces, but also transport, information, communications, technology, etc.)

Certainly, I think that the States can and must be partners with the private sector. I am convinced that more accessibility will mean more inclusion and participation in terms of the exercise of human rights, fundamental freedom and sustainable development for everyone

7.- COSP

The COSP, as a mechanism of the CRPD includes the participation of the States Parties, and therefore has the power to promote that the HLPF emphasize the awareness raising on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, giving priority to the universal accessibility targets, not to leave millions of persons in the world behind sustainable development.

The HLPF should deepen on the key part of the human diversity, measuring concrete actions on planning and collaborative management, in compliance with the universal accessibility standards. Only this will let us celebrate the entire accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda.

8.- Sub-themes: 12COSP

The accessibility is so important that, for example, when we talk about the sub-themes of this Conference: Technology, Health, Access to culture, sports and leisure, for these three areas it's crucial to implement universal accessibility.

I inform that the General Assembly is developing the political declaration of the High-level Meeting on universal health coverage "Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World". The text includes two references to persons with disabilities: their access to the health services and information (p28) and when it emphasizes "No one is left behind" (p58). However, I call on the General Assembly to transversally consider in this document the disability perspective, and in particular the universal accessibility as a norm for a quality health services provision. Additionally, it must be considered the provision of reasonable accommodation and support, when required, to render the appropriate health care to millions of persons with disabilities worldwide; said components must be included in the training for those who provide health care.

9. - Secretary-General decisions and mandate

In accordance with the UN Secretary-General decisions to embody the human rights model for persons with disabilities, and to make accessibility transversal to all the UN System, the States, private sector and civil society can count on my mandate as UN Secretary-General

Special Envoy on Disability and accessibility, which I manage on a multi-directional manner from the rights and development perspective to contribute towards effective awareness for inclusion.