

## CONCEPT NOTE

### DESA/DSPD FORUM ON DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT<sup>1</sup>

#### Accessible and Inclusive Urban Development

Co-sponsors: Governments of Singapore, Ecuador, Japan and UAE,

in collaboration with UN Habitat

Conference Room 6, United Nations Headquarters, 11 June 2015, 13:15-14:45

#### Background

All over the world, countries are facing rapid urbanization. The proportion of the world's urban population is expected to increase to approximately 57 per cent of the world's population by 2050.<sup>2</sup> Of the projected increase, 90 % will come from Africa and Asia.<sup>3</sup>

Urbanization as a global phenomenon will directly affect the lives of the world's over 1 billion or 15-20% of the world's population who live with disabilities. Unfortunately, many countries face real and formidable challenges in urban planning, often due to capacity constraints, lack of municipal resources and competing priorities. Ill-planned urbanization has in many cases present significant challenges, and has put pressure on the equitable provision of quality public services and insufficient and inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate design of housing and public buildings, and limited access to accessible and affordable public transport. These barriers have contributed to growing inequalities and exclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups.<sup>4</sup> Making cities and towns accessible to and inclusive for all people, including persons with disabilities, is essential for sustainable urban development and also a human rights imperative.

#### *Advancing accessible and disability inclusive urban development*

The international community, in the Outcome Document of the UN High Level Meeting on Disability and Development, reaffirmed its commitment to advancing a disability-inclusive development agenda, emphasising among other issues, the importance of accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities in the urban development context.<sup>5</sup> As the UN is presently discussing the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, it is important to emphasise the need for cities and human settlements to be inclusive, safe and sustainable. This political commitment also needs to be translated into actions and measures to ensure universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces, to adequate and affordable housing, urban and peri-urban transport and basic services for all urban dwellers, whether or not they have a disability.<sup>6</sup>

Significant progress has been made in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities across the world. As of May 2015, 154 have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and national and local legislations are increasingly being passed to protect and promote the rights and advancement of persons with disabilities. Processes leading to the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda have also recognised the critical need to focus on empowering people living in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities. Disability is embedded in the development framework, for instance the

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1 The Forum on Disability and Development, officially launched in 2013, is an initiative of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). It aims to contribute to the on-going global efforts towards an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-2015 development framework and agenda, through an exchange of experiences, expertise and innovative ideas to develop practical solutions for pressing issues with regard to disability-inclusion in development.

2 African Development Bank, <http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/urbanization-in-africa-10143/>.

3 UN Habitat, State of the African Cities Report (2014)

4 *ibid.*, African Development Bank,

5 General Assembly resolution 68/3.

6 Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, see [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/970&Lang=E)

Sustainable Development Goal No.11, 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' includes targets for persons with disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III) and its related preparatory processes will provide critical opportunities for urban policy makers and practitioners, as well as the disability community, to review the progress made, assess the remaining challenges and recommend changes to urban policy and practices to allow for accessible and inclusive urban development. This will ensure that the "New Urban Agenda" will be more accessible, user-friendly and inclusive of all people's needs, including persons with disabilities. A comprehensive framework for inclusive urban development should guide international, national and local efforts, including the development of disability inclusiveness indicators, coordinated evaluation and monitoring initiatives, financing mechanisms for accessibility, and technical guidance that empower local entities to facilitate and enable the participation of persons with disabilities in urban planning, development and management.

### **Forum on Accessible and Inclusive Urban Development**

The United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development of Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Governments of Singapore, Ecuador, Japan and UAE, in collaboration with the UN Habitat, will co-organize a Forum on Disability and Development with a focus on accessible and inclusive urban development on 11 June 2015.

#### **Objectives**

To contribute to the preparatory process leading up to Habitat III and its emerging "New Urban Agenda", this Forum is expected to:

- (1) provide a forum to exchange experiences, discuss remaining challenges and share practical expertise on strengthening policy and improving practices in promoting and financing disability-inclusive urban development, focussing on the areas of accessible and inclusive infrastructure, design of housing and public buildings and spaces and transport;
- (2) emphasise the need for inclusive, accessible, sustainable and equitable urban planning and policies, and for a comprehensive framework to factor in the needs and rights of all, including persons with disabilities.
- (3) make recommendations on furthering comprehensive disability-inclusive urban development in the processes leading up to HABITAT III as well as in the New Urban Agenda framework and its implementation.

#### **Panelists**

Ms Chia Yong Yong, President of SPD and Nominated Member of Parliament, Singapore

Mr Hiroshi Minami, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Japan

Representative of Ecuador

Ms. Yamina Djacta, Director of UN-Habitat liaison office in New York

Dr. Victor Santiago Pineda, University of California Berkeley and Director of World Enabled + Inclusive City Lab

#### **Contributors:**

H.E Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, UAE

H.E Kerryanne Ifil, President of Senate, Barbados

#### **Moderator:**

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<sup>7</sup> See targets 11.2 'By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons' and 11.7, 'By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities'.

UN DESA

For further information, please visit UN Enable site at [www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities), or call the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, DESA by email to [enable@un.org](mailto:enable@un.org)