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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Thirty years of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: its potential for women and girls with disabilities

**Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with
disabilities, Heba Hagrass***

Summary

In the present report, submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution 53/14, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, seeks to contribute to the discussions and review of the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by providing an analysis of how that landmark framework has included and impacted women and girls with disabilities. It also provides an overview of how synergies between the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be employed to strengthen the international policy framework on gender equality for women and girls with disabilities, while reaffirming the human rights-based model of disability.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, submits the present report to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution 53/14. It contains a description of the activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur in 2024 and a thematic study of the potential of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for women and girls with disabilities, 30 years after its adoption, in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

II. Activities of the Special Rapporteur

Country visits

2. The Special Rapporteur carried out her first official country visit to Kyrgyzstan in September 2024, and she is thankful to the Government for its cooperation during the visit. The report on the visit will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-eighth session.

Engagement with stakeholders

3. In March 2024, the Special Rapporteur presented to the Human Rights Council her first thematic report, in which she took stock of the work and achievements of the mandate during the 10 years since it was created in 2014 and described her vision for the mandate,¹ and the report of the previous Special Rapporteur, Gerard Quinn, on his country visit to Georgia.² In November 2024, she presented her first thematic report to the General Assembly, in which she examined how persons with disabilities have been included and consulted in the review and follow-up processes on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³ All of the reports are available in accessible formats. Also at the fifty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, she moderated the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities and organized a side event celebrating 10 years of the mandate, with the participation of her two predecessors.

4. In 2024, the Special Rapporteur participated in numerous conferences and meetings organized by United Nations entities, States, civil society organizations and others. In January, she participated as a speaker in the second Euro-Mediterranean Conference on the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, held in Amman. In February, she addressed the sixty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, focusing on the influence of digital transformation on inclusive growth and social justice, including for persons with disabilities.

5. In March, she participated in the launch of the third European Disability Forum manifesto on the rights of women and girls with disabilities in Europe, sharing insights on her experience and aspirations in her role as Special Rapporteur. Also in March, she contributed through a video message to the opening meeting of the thirtieth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, presenting her vision for the mandate and emphasizing her willingness to continue collaborating with the Committee.

6. In April, she travelled to Vienna to take part in the twenty-fourth Alliance against Trafficking in Persons Conference, where she addressed vulnerabilities linked to human trafficking and disabilities. Later that month, she attended the twelfth International Research and Practice Conference, on the theme of “Autism. Challenges and solutions”, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where she advocated for inclusion strategies for persons with autism.

7. In June, the Special Rapporteur was in New York for the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where she spoke at the opening meeting and participated in multiple side events. These discussions covered topics such as the situation of persons with disabilities in Gaza, the

¹ [A/HRC/55/56](#).

² [A/HRC/55/56/Add.1](#).

³ [A/79/179](#).

feminist future of disability rights, employment equity, health access and innovative approaches to autism inclusion.

8. In August, the Special Rapporteur participated as an expert in a regional dialogue focusing on older women and women with disabilities in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Regional Office for Arab States, the League of Arab States and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. In September, she delivered a keynote address at the seventh Community-based Rehabilitation/Community-based Inclusive Development Africa Conference, held in Entebbe, Uganda, where she engaged with disability networks in Africa.

9. In October, before presenting her thematic report to the General Assembly, she participated in a United Nations event dedicated to transforming care systems and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, to mark the International Day of Care and Support. On 6 November, she delivered a keynote speech at the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum, organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Cairo, addressing disability-inclusive urban development and accessible housing. During the session, she was also interviewed by United Nations News on the urgent need to make cities safe and inclusive for persons with disabilities. On 13 and 14 November, the Special Rapporteur participated in the Arabic Regional Pre-Summit for the Global Disability Summit 2025, co-hosted by the Higher Council for Rights of Persons with Disabilities of Jordan and the International Disability Alliance, in Amman. Also on 14 November, she contributed to a Privacy International podcast exploring disability rights in the digital era.⁴

10. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur joined several press releases and statements to highlight the challenges and barriers that persons with disabilities face in different contexts. She led a statement concerning the harrowing situation of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip following the military assault by Israel.⁵ The statement was based on a communication outlining concerns over serious violations of the human rights of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.⁶

11. The Special Rapporteur issued a joint statement to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, urging relevant stakeholders to prioritize the rights of women and girls with disabilities, ensuring their inclusion in all areas of society and greater alignment between gender equality and disability rights frameworks.⁷ The Special Rapporteur also participated through video messages in several campaigns and events related to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, organized by various United Nations entities.

12. On 3 and 4 December 2024, the Special Rapporteur was in Kuwait to participate in a regional consultative seminar concerning the reproductive health of women and girls with disabilities, organized by the Kuwait Union of Women's Associations. On 6 December, the Special Rapporteur remotely briefed the Security Council at an Arria formula meeting, co-organized by Guyana, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict and related humanitarian crises convened five years after the adoption of landmark Council resolution 2475 (2019).

13. Finally, from 9 to 13 December, she participated in the annual meeting of special rapporteurs, independent experts and chairs of working groups of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

⁴ See <https://privacyinternational.org/video/5470/data-and-disability-rights-digitised-world>.

⁵ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/tragedy-within-tragedy-un-experts-alarmed-harrowing-conditions-palestinians>.

⁶ See communication ISR 18/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29381>.

⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/disability/sr-disability/statements/2024-12-3-stm-international-day-pwds.docx>.

Communications

14. Summaries of communications sent and replies received during the period covered by the present report are available in the communications reports of the special procedures⁸ and in the communications database of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

III. Women and girls with disabilities and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

15. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2025, the Special Rapporteur decided to focus on how this landmark framework addresses and promotes the rights and specific requirements of women and girls with disabilities. Over the past three decades, the global normative framework on the human rights of persons with disabilities has evolved significantly, largely shaped by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur re-examines the texts of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, considering the principles and standards of the Convention, to identify areas requiring better alignment.

16. The Special Rapporteur also explores intersections between the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention and the 2030 Agenda, assessing the synergies and complementarity of these frameworks to advance the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls with disabilities.

17. At the end of the report, the Special Rapporteur draws conclusions and presents recommendations for States and other stakeholders to better guarantee the rights of women and girls with disabilities in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to reenergize commitments therein with a human rights-based approach to disability.

18. To inform her report, the Special Rapporteur engaged in desk research and a review of international frameworks, literature and available data, including regional reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

A. Background

19. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by 189 States at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995. This pioneering document is one of the most comprehensive global policy frameworks for realizing gender equality and empowering women and girls in key strategic areas. It emerged from the recognition that, despite progress made in the decades preceding its adoption, gender inequality and systemic discrimination against women and girls persisted worldwide. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action set out strategic objectives and concrete actions in 12 critical areas⁹ to address the barriers that women and girls face, particularly if they experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

20. The text built upon previous international agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the outcomes of the World Conferences on Women in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985), and incorporated a human rights perspective.

21. On the margins of these conferences, civil society organizations held forums to strategize and network for advocacy purposes. However, women with disabilities and disability rights organizations had to push hard and overcome substantial resistance to have their voices heard during civil society discussions leading to the adoption of the Beijing

⁸ See [A/HRC/57/3](#).

⁹ Poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; media; environment; and the girl child.

Declaration and Platform for Action. Leading up to the Conference, many mainstream women's organizations and event organizers viewed disability issues as peripheral. This perception, coupled with logistical and accessibility barriers, posed challenges to participation. For instance, the NGO Forum on Women in Huairou, China, which ran parallel to the official Beijing Conference, did not guarantee accessibility measures for women with disabilities to attend.

22. Subsequently, Mobility International USA spearheaded the organization of the First International Symposium on Issues of Women with Disabilities, which was attended by 200 women from 22 countries. This event was crucial for strategizing regarding advocacy approaches, fostering cross-disability dialogue and exchanging national and personal experiences and barriers that women with disabilities faced worldwide. The overall goal was to bring key messages to the NGO Forum on Women and show how disability intersected with all feminist issues.

23. At the NGO Forum on Women, women with disabilities created the Disability Community Tent as a central hub for networking and workshops. Despite the Forum's severe accessibility barriers – including workshops held on inaccessible floors – women with disabilities succeeded in making their voices heard. They managed to influence the language of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which included 32 references to disability, marking a significant improvement in visibility for women and girls with disabilities.

B. Reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

24. The Commission on the Status of Women is an intergovernmental body and a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, established in 1946, which is tasked with the promotion of gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women. In 1996, the Council expanded the Commission's mandate to include monitoring and reviewing progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is done during the Commission's annual two-week sessions, where States, civil society and United Nations entities meet. States agree on actions to accelerate progress and promote women's and girls' enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields. Facilitated by UN-Women, non-governmental organizations accredited with the Council can participate actively in the sessions of the Commission through oral and written statements.

25. The Economic and Social Council adopts resolutions on a multi-year programme of work for the Commission in which it sets two main themes to be discussed in the upcoming sessions.¹⁰ The main output of the Commission's sessions is the agreed conclusions by Member States on those thematic priorities, which contain recommendations to Governments and other relevant stakeholders to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local levels.

26. The first review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action took place in June 2000, at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, during which Governments adopted a political declaration¹¹ and further actions and initiatives to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.¹² Exceptionally, the Commission on the Status of Women acted as preparatory committee for the special session and prepared a report ahead of it.¹³

27. Many of the actions identified women with disabilities as primary targets. Governments were urged to adopt and promote a holistic approach to respond to all forms of violence and abuse against girls and women, including those with disabilities, and to address their diverse needs. Governments were also requested to implement policies and programmes

¹⁰ See Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/15.

¹¹ General Assembly resolution [A/S-23/2](#).

¹² General Assembly resolution [A/S-23/3](#).

¹³ [A/S-23/2](#). At its sixty-ninth session (2025), the Commission will decide on its future multi-year programme of work.

that fully addressed the specific requirements of women and girls with disabilities, to ensure their equal access to education at all levels, including adequate rehabilitation programmes, healthcare and services and employment opportunities, to protect and promote their human rights and to eliminate existing inequalities between women and men with disabilities.

28. In his report entitled “Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action”,¹⁴ the Secretary-General recognized small and country-specific levels of progress for women and girls with disabilities related to their integration into society and rehabilitation, increasing their visibility, creating specific programmes to address gender-based violence against them and improving accessibility to the criminal justice system and to education.

29. As part of the preparations for the review, women with disabilities also gathered ahead of the main event, which further strengthened their movement, even though some last-minute accessibility barriers hindered participation.¹⁵

30. Similar reviews took place under the umbrella of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2005,¹⁶ 2010¹⁷ and 2015.¹⁸ In those reviews, women and girls with disabilities were mostly addressed as one of several vulnerable groups more prone to marginalization and in need of specific protection and targeted policies. The lack of financial resources to address such shortcomings was also repeatedly reported. No analysis was made of the specific requirements of women and girls with disabilities and of the diverse needs within this group due to further intersections.

31. At the time of the 25-year review, in 2020, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic hit the world, and related events were either cancelled, postponed or needed to be adapted to those challenging times. However, three outcomes are important to mention.

32. First, the Secretary-General, in his report,¹⁹ recognized that women and girls who experienced multiple forms of discrimination, including based on disability, had benefited from the least progress. While some good examples were mentioned, compounded inequalities were highlighted for women with disabilities with respect to education, employment, poverty, access to reproductive health services and information, heightened risk of gender-based violence and access to adequate social protection.

33. Owing to the pandemic, the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had to be shortened to a one-day procedural meeting. A political declaration²⁰ was adopted, in which women and girls with disabilities were mentioned once, among other groups of women and girls experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability and marginalization throughout their life course, but the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities was not acknowledged.²¹

34. Probably the most significant process surrounding the 25-year review was the civil society-led process convened by UN-Women and co-chaired by the Governments of France and Mexico, namely, the Generation Equality Forum.²² Initiated in 2021, the Forum aimed at accelerating investment in and implementation of gender equality, in particular the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda.

35. At the Forum, a five-year action agenda, the Global Acceleration Plan, for gender equality was launched, which defined the most critical actions needed to accelerate progress in the following years. Despite having intersectionality as one of its core principles, the Plan

¹⁴ E/CN.6/2000/PC/2, E/CN.6/2000/PC/2/Corr.2 and E/CN.6/2000/PC/2/Corr.3.

¹⁵ See

https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/documents/ida_beijing_reportfinal_16-03-2023.pdf.

¹⁶ E/CN.6/2005/2 and E/CN.6/2005/2/Corr.1.

¹⁷ See E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2.

¹⁸ See E/CN.6/2015/3.

¹⁹ See E/CN.6/2020/3.

²⁰ E/2020/27-E/CN.6-2020/10, chap. I.A.

²¹ See https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/05/PB_69.pdf.

²² See <https://forum.generationequality.org/>.

addressed women and girls with disabilities only briefly and mostly in relation to sexual and reproductive health and access to information. Besides that, women and girls with disabilities were most often addressed within a list of groups in special situations of vulnerability.

36. Women with disabilities and their representative organizations reported difficulties in engaging and meaningfully participating in the Generation Equality Forum, owing in particular to a lack of accessibility measures, including accessible information about the Forum and how to participate. The organizers did not actively seek the opinions of women with disabilities, and they were not included in the bodies governing the process.²³

37. In response, a civil society organization established a platform to advocate for the inclusion of women and people of marginalized genders with disabilities in spaces and debates focused on advancing gender equality. Women Enabled International, with financial support from the Disability Rights Fund, started the Inclusive Generation Equality Collective, a network of feminists with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities from all regions. The Collective provided a platform with an understanding of how each one of the critical actions disproportionately impacted women with disabilities and how the outcomes should include them.

38. A key objective of the Inclusive Generation Equality Collective was to secure accessibility for women with disabilities in the Generation Equality Forum and to make the process disability inclusive. The members of the Collective themselves faced numerous accessibility barriers during the Generation Equality Forum, which resulted in limited participation of women with disabilities.²⁴ The voices of women with disabilities were not prioritized in the discussions, no assistance was available to solve accessibility issues, there were no captions and there was no sign language interpretation offered, and the related web platform and documents were not accessible for participants with visual impairments, among other things.²⁵

39. These prompted the Inclusive Generation Equality Collective to adopt a Feminist Accessibility Protocol²⁶ to ensure that in the future, women and girls with disabilities are not excluded from the spaces that shape progress towards gender equality at the global, regional, national and local levels.

Review and appraisal in 2025

40. In 2022, the Economic and Social Council tasked the Commission on the Status of Women with undertaking a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on its thirtieth anniversary, in 2025.²⁷ The review was to include an assessment of current challenges that affected the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a gender perspective.

41. The Economic and Social Council called on States to undertake national-level reviews of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and on regional commissions to undertake regional reviews. The latter would feed into the

²³ See <https://www.disabilityrightsfund.org/2021/11/30/the-creation-of-the-inclusive-generation-equality-forum/>.

²⁴ See <https://womenenabled.org/igec/>.

²⁵ See Inclusive Generation Equality Collective, Letter to UN-Women ahead of the Generation Equality Paris Forum, May 2021, available at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WONpRHHytBsGaUHTLTRxZ8mg_0cenge0x7nFGW36AsE/vie/wform?edit_requested=true; and European Disability Forum, Femmes pour le Dire, Femmes pour Agir, Inclusive Generation Equality Collective, International Disability Alliance, Sightsavers and Women Enabled International, Letter to UN-Women and the Government of France about accessibility barriers at the Generation Equality Forum, August 2021, available at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HRqGnggeFqsAt-l695GqaJf1MszmIUffkTZLXQATVc/viewform?edit_requested=true.

²⁶ See <https://womenenabled.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Feminist-Accessibility-Protocol-English.pdf>.

²⁷ Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/5.

2025 review to be undertaken by the Commission at its sixty-ninth session, which would end with an outcome document with conclusions and recommendations.

42. During 2024, the regional commissions prepared synthesis reports of the national reviews presented by States in their regions.

43. In Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa organized the Africa Ministerial Conference on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as part of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, to discuss the regional synthesis report.²⁸ As a result, an African common position was adopted,²⁹ calling for actions through all the thematic clusters of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The regional synthesis report highlights the fact that progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in several African States remains insufficient and that the lack of disaggregated data, including on disability, remains a challenge. It is noted, however, that some States introduced legislation to address violence against women in particularly vulnerable situations, such as those with disabilities.

44. A parallel report authored by a task force comprising Disabled Women in Africa, Humanity and Inclusion, the International Disability Alliance and the World Federation of the Deaf³⁰ stressed that women with disabilities in Africa still faced systemic barriers to the realization of their human rights. These included socioeconomic exclusion, reproductive violence, lack of meaningful participation in national and regional decision-making processes and lack of power and decision-making in politics and in disability rights spaces that often prioritize men for their leadership.

45. In Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe, together with the UN-Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, held an interministerial meeting to reinvigorate political commitment to advance gender equality. The regional synthesis report³¹ mentions women with disabilities among those groups for which social protection benefits or services provide enhanced support. However, it noted some challenges. For example, while women are often the primary caregivers for children with disabilities, there is a lack of financial assistance directed towards them. Also, the disaggregation of data by disability for informed policies is still insufficient.

46. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a special regional consultation took place at the sixty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The regional review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action³² was adopted. The review highlighted some progress for women with disabilities, including successful initiatives for the redistribution of the provision of care and support for persons with disabilities. The challenges for women and girls with disabilities relate to persistent quality and access gaps in social protection, lack of political participation and the need to boost women's leadership in civil society organizations, including those focusing on disability or made up of persons with disabilities.

²⁸ Economic Commission for Africa and UN-Women, "Africa regional review summary report: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 2020–2024", available at <https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/50260/b454125.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

²⁹ See https://uneca.org/eca-events/sites/default/files/resources/documents/gender-poverty-social-policy/beijing-30/b_30_africa_outcome_doc_amended_revised_by_the_drafting_committee-letty-jennet_comment_2nd_nov24-clean_copy_002.pdf.

³⁰ See https://www.hi.org/sn_uploads/document/B30-Powerful-yet-overlooked-REPORT-24Oct2024.pdf.

³¹ ECE/AC.28/2024/3.

³² ECLAC, Action for equality, development and peace in Latin America and the Caribbean: draft regional report on the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 30 years on, in synergy with the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda, document LC/MDM.66/3.

47. Women's and feminist organizations in the region published a manifesto regarding the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action,³³ emphasizing the need to ensure access for different groups of women, including those with disabilities, to adequate infrastructure, devices and technologies to allow their full integration into social, political and economic life, and the need to guarantee the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities.

48. In Asia and the Pacific, a ministerial conference on the review of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action was convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The regional synthesis report³⁴ highlights several challenges that remain for the realization of the rights of women and girls with disabilities. These relate to their multidimensional poverty rate, limited access to social protection benefits and lower labour force participation when compared with their male counterparts. Another remaining challenge is their lack of representation in political spaces and bodies compared with women without disabilities and men with disabilities, even within national machineries on disability matters. With regard to the impact of environmental and climate-driven disasters on women with disabilities, it is noted in the report that despite some good practices, they are frequently excluded from early warning, relief or emergency response programmes owing to the inaccessibility of infrastructure, information and services.

49. The Asia Pacific Declaration of Women and Girls with Disabilities for the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action was published by the civil society organization Rising Flame (with 35 contributors and over 200 endorsements). The Declaration called on States to ensure inclusive, equitable and sustainable financing to achieve the commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It called for urgent action to protect the human rights of women and girls with disabilities, ensure inclusive intergovernmental processes, including during the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and advance the perspectives and recommendations of women and girls with disabilities in all their diversities.³⁵

50. In Western Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in partnership with the UN-Women Regional Office for Arab States and the League of Arab States, conducted a regional review. During a high-level regional meeting, the Muscat Declaration was adopted, in which the region's commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was reiterated. The Arab regional report³⁶ highlights the need to leave no one behind and contains information on the efforts made by some countries to support women in marginalized situations, such as those with disabilities, including improvements in social protection. Also noted in the report is the fact that some countries have introduced special programmes to protect women with disabilities against violence, such as toll-free lines or rehabilitation and employment programmes.

51. An online dialogue with experts on older women and organizations for women and girls with disabilities on the regional review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was held in August. The Special Rapporteur participated as an expert and voiced concerns reflected in the present report. Key messages from the workshop³⁷ included the lack of disaggregated data based on gender and disability in the region; the need to fully move from the medical model of disability to a human rights-based model; the lack of an intersectional approach in policies and laws on disability and gender; a call to consider the situation of women that provide care and support for persons with disabilities; and a

³³ See <https://feim.org.ar/2024/12/04/manifiesto-de-organizaciones-y-redes-de-mujeres-y-feministas-de-america-latina-y-el-caribe-frente-a-beijing-30-foro-de-ongs-feministas-y-de-mujeres-de-america-latina-y-el-caribe/> (in Spanish).

³⁴ *Charting New Paths for Gender Equality and Empowerment: Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review* (United Nations publication, 2024).

³⁵ See https://risingflame.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Asia-Pacific-Declaration-of-Women-with-Disabilities_Final.pdf.

³⁶ See <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/executive-summary/arab-report-progress-implementing-beijing-declaration-platform-action-thirty-years-on-summary-english.pdf>.

³⁷ See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/2400500E_Final%20Key%20messages.pdf.

recommendation to adopt further measures to ensure women with disabilities access to education, employment, positions of leadership and digital technology.

52. The Special Rapporteur wishes to continue to contribute to this review and appraisal exercise through the following analysis, in the hope that it will shed further light on the challenges that women and girls with disabilities face in obtaining benefits from the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and how this could be addressed in international discussions and national implementation.

IV. Legal and policy framework

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its twin-track approach to gender

53. In the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States parties recognize the right to full and equal participation in society as a key requirement for the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities. They emphasize gender equality and address the rights of women and girls with disabilities, acknowledging that they face unique challenges and intersecting forms of discrimination owing both to their gender and to their disability.

54. In the Convention, gender issues are addressed in two interconnected ways to ensure that the rights of women and girls are effectively promoted and protected. Gender is mainstreamed in all of its provisions to ensure that the general rights and protections apply equally to women and men, but there are also specific measures for women and girls with disabilities.

55. In the preamble, it is recognized that some persons with disabilities are subjected to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination based on personal characteristics, such as sex. Further, women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation. In addition, one of the general principles of the Convention is equality between men and women (art. 3). This means that in legislation, policies, strategies and other measures related to the rights of persons with disabilities, the intersection between gender and disability must be considered, the voices of women and girls meaningfully heard, and their concerns and requirements adequately addressed.³⁸

56. The situation of women and girls is specifically addressed in article 6, which requires States parties to take measures to guarantee that their human rights are fully and equally respected and to ensure their full development, advancement and empowerment. Within the right to be free from exploitation, violence and abuse (art. 16), States parties are also obliged to implement effective legislation and policies, including women-focused legislation and policies, to ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and abuse against persons with disabilities are identified, investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted. Lastly, with regard to inclusive social protection and an adequate standard of living (art. 28), States are required to take measures to ensure access to social protection and poverty reduction programmes, in particular for women and girls.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the promise of gender equality by 2030

57. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive global framework, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2015. It contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity by 2030. In the Agenda, there is an emphasis on leaving no one behind, with a focus on addressing inequalities and advancing the rights of marginalized groups, including women and girls with disabilities. It also highlights the need to collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, disability, age and other factors to monitor progress and design inclusive policies.

58. Several Sustainable Development Goals and their targets explicitly or implicitly address the requirements and rights of women and girls with disabilities. For example, the

³⁸ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 3 (2016), para. 7.

indicator for target 1.3, on implementing social protection systems for all, requires that data be collected on access to such systems by sex and disability. This is crucial in order to shed light on the compounded inequalities that women with disabilities endure.

59. Further, Goal 4, on ensuring quality education, mentions persons with disabilities in target 4.5, on eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to education. Goal 8, on sustainable economic growth and decent work, has as a target (target 8.5) the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for persons with disabilities, which also represents a key opportunity to address the specific intersection of gender and disability.

60. Target 10.2, within Goal 10, on reducing inequality, prescribes the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of factors such as disability and sex, which requires the gathering of disaggregated data on this intersection (which is reflected in the indicator). Targets 11.2 and 11.7 of Goal 11, on ensuring inclusive cities for all, mention persons with disabilities and women in relation to access to transport systems and green and public spaces.

61. Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, does not address those with disabilities in any of its targets and related indicators. Even if they are not specifically mentioned in target 3.7, on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, such access is pivotal for women with disabilities. Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies, has many key aspects relevant to women with disabilities, who ought to be especially considered even if they are not mentioned directly, for example in terms of ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (target 16.7) and promoting non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development (target 16.b).

V. The intersection between gender and disability

62. Intersectionality is a conceptual framework that acknowledges how multiple and overlapping identities – such as gender, disability, race, national and ethnic origin, and socioeconomic status – interact to shape individual and collective experiences of discrimination and marginalization. An understanding of intersectionality is essential in addressing the compounded discrimination faced by individuals who belong to more than one marginalized group.

63. Through an intersectional analysis, a group that is otherwise considered homogenous is seen as encompassing diverse identities. At the same time, such an analysis recognizes that identities and experiences are ever-changing, fluid and context-specific. It also looks at how identities interact with institutions, structures, systems, practices and behaviours in different spheres, usually shedding light on patterns of discrimination that might have been invisible to policymakers or that are not adequately addressed.³⁹ When tackling any issue from an intersectional perspective, the voices and lived experiences of those affected must be heard and considered.

64. Both the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women emphasize the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to fully realize the rights of persons with disabilities, especially women and girls.

65. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes that persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group and that women and girls with disabilities face unique forms of discrimination that arise from the interplay between gender and disability.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women highlights how systemic discrimination against women is intensified for those who also experience other forms of exclusion, such as that based on disability.⁴¹ Together, these bodies stress the

³⁹ See [A/HRC/57/67](#).

⁴⁰ General comment No. 3 (2016), para. 5.

⁴¹ General recommendation No. 28 (2010), para. 31.

necessity of dismantling structural barriers that perpetuate compounded discrimination through comprehensive and intersectionality-informed policies.

66. The intersection of gender and disability creates specific vulnerabilities that are often overlooked in mainstream human rights discourse. Women and girls with disabilities encounter distinct challenges in multiple spheres, including access to education, employment, healthcare, political participation and protection from violence and abuse.

67. Furthermore, the compounded discrimination based on gender and disability significantly restricts economic independence and stability for women with disabilities. They are more likely to live in poverty, face wage gaps and encounter barriers to employment compared with both men with disabilities and women without disabilities. They also face a lack of reasonable accommodations at the workplace and are often excluded based on deeply rooted stigmas regarding their capacity and value in society.

68. Women and girls with disabilities are at heightened risk of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence and exploitation, but also other disability-related forms of violence, such as that committed by care providers or other residents in institutions, all of which require integrated approaches to protection and inclusive support services. Frequently, shelters established to assist women who are victims of violence are not accessible to women with disabilities.

69. Furthermore, they often face systemic barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services. Discrimination in this context includes forced sterilization, denial of informed consent related to health practices and lack of accessible information. They also face barriers to accessing justice, stemming from stereotypes that question their credibility and capacity to participate in legal proceedings. Both Committees urge States parties to ensure that legal systems are inclusive and that procedural accommodations are provided to support women with disabilities in seeking redress for violations.⁴²

70. Women and girls with disabilities are not a homogeneous group, and their personal characteristics and specific impairments interact with their gender and disability creating unique experiences of discrimination. Some groups of women with disabilities, such as older women, Indigenous women, refugees, internally displaced and migrant women, women in detention settings, women living in poverty, women from different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds, women with multiple disabilities requiring high levels of support, women with albinism, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, as well as intersex persons, experience barriers differently. A thorough understanding and awareness of these intersections by authorities and policymakers are crucial to fully protect and fulfil their rights.

71. For example, older women with disabilities are in an exceptional situation compared with older women without disabilities or older men with disabilities. They are often prone to economic dependency and poverty and are more likely to be subjected to violence, abuse and neglect and to be placed in institutions owing to their higher life expectancy compared with men.⁴³

72. Another example is Indigenous women with disabilities, who are subjected to more barriers and discrimination than their male counterparts, including with regard to access to sexual and reproductive health services or exposure to harmful practices, domestic violence and insecure employment, among other things.⁴⁴

VI. Women and girls with disabilities in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

73. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action explicitly mention women and girls with disabilities 32 times, highlighting the need for their inclusion in efforts to advance

⁴² Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 3 (2016), paras. 25–29; and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 33 (2015).

⁴³ [A/74/186](#), para. 9; and [A/HRC/54/26](#), para. 18.

⁴⁴ [A/HRC/57/47](#), para. 62.

gender equality across various domains and underscoring the importance of addressing their specific requirements.

74. The Beijing Declaration acknowledges that women and girls experience multiple layers of discrimination, often compounded by other factors such as disability, race, age, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. It calls for intensified efforts to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights for women and girls with disabilities (para. 32).

75. The Beijing Platform for Action incorporates the rights and requirements of women and girls with disabilities across some of its strategic objectives. It identifies women with disabilities as among the most disadvantaged groups requiring targeted initiatives to reduce poverty (para. 60). It also highlights the importance of eliminating discrimination in education, with specific measures to address illiteracy among women (paras. 80 and 81) and promote vocational training and continuing education to enhance work opportunities for women with disabilities (para. 82 (k)).

76. In the area of health, the Platform for Action highlights the intersection of disability and aging, calling for tailored health services that address the specific needs of women with disabilities (para. 101). It also calls for gender-sensitive health programmes that cater to women with disabilities throughout their lives (para. 106 (c)) and access to supportive services for women with disabilities of all ages (para. 106 (o)).

77. Violence against women is another critical focus, as women with disabilities are recognized as particularly vulnerable (para. 116). The Platform for Action calls for special measures to prevent violence against them (para. 126 (d)) and ensure access to information and services for them (para. 124 (m)).

78. The Platform for Action calls for support to programmes that enhance self-reliance and economic opportunities for women with disabilities (para. 175 (d)). It highlights the need for employment equity and workplace adjustments, along with legal protections to address systemic discrimination and support employment retention (para. 178 (f) and (j)). In addition, leadership training is recommended to build self-esteem and strengthen decision-making capacities among women and girls with disabilities, to encourage them to take decision-making positions (para. 195 (a)).

79. The Platform for Action also underscores the importance of generating and disseminating gender-disaggregated data on the participation of women with disabilities to inform planning and evaluation efforts (para. 206 (k)). It calls for ensuring access to information on and services in the field of violence against women, as well as their active participation in and economic contribution to all aspects of society (para. 232 (p)). Accessible dissemination of human rights information in alternative formats suitable for persons with disabilities is also emphasized (para. 233 (a) and (b)).

80. For girls with disabilities, the Platform for Action highlights the compounded barriers they face and their right to equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (para. 270). It calls for the provision of tailored services and devices, suitable related support services to their families, and appropriate education and skills training to enable their full participation in society (paras. 278 (d) and 280 (c)).

VII. Critical reading in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

81. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there has been progress in the recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities, mainly through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The following section identifies how the Convention can complement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action so that policies and actions towards their implementation are disability-inclusive and follow a human rights-based model of disability.

A. Injecting key principles of the Convention

82. The Convention has been groundbreaking in moving away from medical and charity models of disability to a human rights-based model rooted in the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities (rights-holders), who should be equally able to participate and be included in their communities. It requires States and other stakeholders to build and promote inclusive societies and implement accessibility measures so that persons with disabilities can benefit from their communities as much as all other members.

83. Given that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action predates the Convention by over 10 years, key aspects of the full enjoyment of the rights protected under the Convention and the human rights-based model of disability were not articulated in the original text, including issues related to autonomy and legal capacity and equal recognition before the law, accessibility inclusion and participation.

84. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, women and girls with disabilities are considered a group in a situation of vulnerability and disadvantage who should be protected and especially empowered. Further, with regard to the issue of health, it calls for Governments, the United Nations system, health professionals, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, donors, pharmaceutical industries and the mass media, to increase financial and other support for preventive, appropriate biomedical, behavioural, epidemiological and health service research on women's health issues and for research on the social, economic and political causes of women's health problems and their consequences, including disabilities. Mentions of the need for self-esteem training to assist women and girls with disabilities and empower them are also resorted to throughout the text. Such references point to the remnants of the medical model of disability within the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

85. In article 12 (1) of the Convention, States parties reaffirm that persons with disabilities have the right to recognition as persons before the law. In article 12 (2) States parties recognize that persons with disabilities should enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all areas of life: to hold rights (legal personhood) and to act upon those rights (such as managing property or making medical decisions). Article 12 directly challenges traditional practices that deny or limit capacity, including guardianship or conservatorship systems based on the perception that persons with disabilities are incapable of managing their own lives, and introduces the concept of supported decision-making, which is a rights-based alternative to decision-making. Supported decision-making respects the autonomy, will and preferences of individuals, offering assistance rather than replacing the decision-making process.

86. For women and girls with disabilities, who experience compounded discrimination and the stigma of being perceived as incapable of managing the different social and economic aspects of their lives, based both on their disabilities and, oftentimes, on their gender, an acknowledgment of their right to be recognized as rights holders in the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is crucial. This is key as it lays the foundation for protecting many other rights outlined in the Convention.

87. Accessibility represents another key principle of the Convention which should be injected into all processes and actions to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Accessibility is primarily addressed in article 9 of the Convention, but it is also reflected in other provisions as a cross-cutting obligation that underpins the realization of many other rights.⁴⁵ The Convention requires States parties to ensure accessibility measures for persons with disabilities to access the physical environment, transportation, information and communications technologies, and all other services and facilities open to the public (healthcare, education, workplaces, and cultural or recreational spaces). This is a key prerequisite for independent living and inclusion in the community for persons with disabilities.

88. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action refer indirectly to accessibility when reflecting on access to information and services linked to violence against women and

⁴⁵ As noted in articles 21, 24, 25 and 27 of the Convention.

information on human rights. However, accessibility should be a cross-cutting concept to guarantee that women and girls with disabilities can benefit from the commitments made therein. The review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action should give voice to the need to develop legislation and policies to enforce accessibility standards and invest in infrastructure and technologies to remove existing barriers.

89. Accessibility is closely related to guaranteeing women and girls with disabilities the possibility to participate and be meaningfully included in all discussions affecting them. Meaningful participation is a central principle in ensuring that persons with disabilities can engage fully and effectively in political, social, cultural and economic life. Articles 4 and 33 of the Convention should be the basis for the discussions about the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in decisions that affect them.

B. Intersectionality

90. As outlined above, intersectionality is a key concept in capturing the multifaceted challenges that women and girls with disabilities face because of the intersection of their gender and disability. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action it is acknowledged several times that some groups of women and girls are in especially disadvantaged circumstances owing to factors such as disability.

91. However, intersectionality involves more than just one factor that might create further challenges for some women and girls. It requires a thorough analysis of how this intersection plays out in practice (including by collecting data disaggregated by gender and disability) and which concrete measures should be encouraged to tackle them. It requires a twin-track approach, acknowledging that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action applies to all women and girls, including those with disabilities, but also dedicating part of the commitments to unpacking how certain issues specifically impact women and girls with disabilities. Some of those issues are outlined below.

Sexual and reproductive rights

92. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action call for the design and implementation of gender-sensitive health programmes that address the needs of women throughout their lives and that consider the special requirements of women and girls with disabilities. It further calls for women and girls with disabilities to receive appropriate support services. There is, however, no specific analysis of the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities and the challenges they face in practice.

93. Women and girls with disabilities are subject to stigma and stereotypes related to their sexuality, as they are often perceived as asexual or hypersexual, and they are thus denied the right to make decisions about their own bodies and get the information they need in accessible formats. Women and girls with disabilities who are placed in institutions, especially those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, are at a higher risk of being denied their sexual and reproductive rights. Women and girls with disabilities are furthermore more likely to be exposed to harmful practices, such as forced and involuntary sterilization, forced contraception and forced abortion.⁴⁶

94. Raising awareness of these stereotypes and the need to target them with specific measures is a crucial aspect to be included in the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Especially important is a commitment to guarantee the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities through the provision of inclusive and accessible information and services and to eliminate harmful practices. Doing so would further align and support commitments contained in target 3.7 of the 2030 Agenda.

⁴⁶ [A/72/133](#), paras. 18, 23, 25, 29 and 30.

Inclusive education, employment in the open market and economic empowerment

95. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action refer to securing education and employment for, and thus economically empowering, women and girls with disabilities. However, alignment with the Convention language and key principles is missing.

96. For women and girls with disabilities, it is essential to be granted access to the mainstream education system, which is in turn a key factor with respect to their prospects of being employed in the open market and securing economic independence. The latter is all the more important, considering that, worldwide, girls are less likely to receive quality education, owing to cultural norms, safety concerns or financial constraints.

97. Persons with disabilities, and especially women, are more likely to live in poverty, as they face barriers to secure employment and incur additional disability-related expenses that others do not have.

98. Moreover, like other women, women with disabilities who are employed often have a wage gap compared with men. They are also more likely to work in the informal market and are less represented in leadership positions. Furthermore, they shoulder a disproportionate part of the unpaid domestic work and caregiving responsibilities, which reduces their opportunities for paid work.

99. It is therefore essential that the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action include States' obligations to secure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning, in accordance with article 24 of the Convention. Furthermore, they should address the policy and legislative gaps in accessing employment for women with disabilities and call for specific measures to introduce reasonable accommodations at the workplace when required. Also, the voices and lived experiences of women with disabilities must be heard, and their participation, including in leadership positions, must be strongly promoted.

100. Stating this clearly as a commitment for women and girls with disabilities in the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would also be in line with those in the 2030 Agenda and encourage the acceleration of progress, especially of Goal 4, on quality education for all, and Goal 8 and its target of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women with disabilities.

Right to independent living

101. According to article 19 of the Convention, persons with disabilities have the right to live independently, be included in the community and access community-based services and support. Article 14 prohibits the deprivation of liberty on the basis of disability. However, in practice, many countries continue to institutionalize persons with disabilities, confining them in segregated facilities and often denying them access to community life, autonomy and dignity.⁴⁷

102. Furthermore, persons with disabilities (especially intellectual or psychosocial disabilities) who are committed to institutions are often subjected to forced treatment,⁴⁸ contrary to article 25, in which non-coercive approaches in healthcare are emphasized, and article 15, in which it is stated that States parties should take measures to prevent persons with disabilities from being subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

103. Women and girls with disabilities tend to be excluded and isolated when choosing their places of residence owing to paternalistic stereotyping and patriarchal social patterns. They are also at higher risk of violence and abuse, particularly forced sterilization and contraception, and inadequate sexual and reproductive health services in institutional settings.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 5 (2017), para. 16.

⁴⁸ [A/HRC/40/54](#), para. 85.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 37.

104. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action failed to acknowledge the practice of institutionalization of women and girls with disabilities, including in psychiatric facilities and congregate residential settings, its dramatic effects on the enjoyment of their rights and the need to move away from such practices. Independent living, which is closely linked with the recognition of legal capacity, should be included in the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as an essential enabler for women and girls with disabilities to have their human rights fully protected and respected.

105. Similarly, independent living is a prerequisite for women and girls with disabilities to participate meaningfully in the community, including in political discussions and leadership positions. Furthermore, it is essential in keeping the commitment to leave no one behind when advancing Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peaceful and inclusive societies, and the target of ensuring inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

Support to families of persons with disabilities, especially mothers

106. The Convention embraces a model of support for persons with disabilities who are adults. Though children with disabilities may initially need care in early childhood, as their capacity evolves, they should progress to a model of support, allowing them to gain greater control over their lives. For adults with disabilities, ongoing support is essential. In practice, families, and most often mothers, are the primary providers of care and support for children with disabilities and continue this role into adulthood.

107. The family environment is fundamental in shaping the development and learning of children with disabilities, and, in turn, significantly influences their potential for independent living and social inclusion during their life course. When families lack adequate support and resources, the rights of persons with disabilities are adversely impacted, leaving them more vulnerable to neglect, abuse or even institutionalization.

108. Currently, women and girls (particularly mothers, including those with disabilities) provide a disproportionate share of care and support to children with disabilities throughout their lives, alongside other household and community responsibilities. This is largely done in an invisible, unpaid and unrecognized manner, and often without adequate support, resulting in ongoing challenges to their mental health and economic independence, among other things.

109. Accordingly, women who provide care and support to persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities themselves, and their specific requirements ought to be acknowledged in the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform.

110. The need to provide appropriate related support services to the families of girls with disabilities is mentioned in the Beijing Platform for Action. Furthermore, the Beijing Declaration calls for the equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and the Platform recognizes that the care of children, the sick and the elderly is a responsibility that falls disproportionately on women. The Platform also calls for the promotion of the harmonization of work and family responsibilities and the commitment to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, as nationally appropriate. This is also in line with target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

111. Given the growing recognition of the need to establish care and support systems that are robust, resilient, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and age-sensitive⁵⁰ to foster sustainable and resilient societies and economies, as a critical component of sustainable development, the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action should especially encourage commitments in this direction and spotlight the concrete situation of women (and especially mothers, including those with disabilities) who provide care and support to persons with disabilities.

⁵⁰ See Human Rights Council resolution 54/6; and General Assembly resolution 77/317.

112. These women face specific challenges and barriers, may be isolated from their societies and endure economic insecurity. They should be supported with dedicated policies and programmes.

VIII. Emergency and crisis response

113. The texts of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action did address some forward-looking topics. In the Platform for Action it is noted that some women and girls are particularly affected by environmental disasters (para. 46) and vulnerable to violence in situations of armed conflict, foreign occupation, wars of aggression, civil wars, terrorism and hostage-taking (para. 116), including murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy (para. 114). The Platform for Action set a solid basis for identifying and addressing the particular impact of environmental disasters and climate change, as well as situations of armed conflict, on women and girls with disabilities.

114. Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities outlines that necessary measures States parties should take to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

115. In addition, the Security Council, in its resolution 2475 (2019) on the protection of persons with disabilities in conflict, refers specifically to the need to provide sustainable, timely, appropriate, inclusive and accessible assistance to civilians with disabilities affected by armed conflict, including reintegration, rehabilitation and psychosocial support, to ensure that their specific needs are effectively addressed, in particular those of women.

116. During crises, persons with disabilities and especially women and girls, are among the first and most seriously affected and face disproportionate risks and systemic barriers to benefiting from civilian protection and humanitarian responses. During the conduct of hostilities, they are most likely to be killed, owing to barriers to fleeing and seeking safety amid often inaccessible evacuation orders. They face a higher risk of famine, dehydration and health complications because of the lack of accessible humanitarian assistance, and are more prone to violence, abuse and abandonment as a result of the destruction of infrastructure and services, including assistive devices.

117. The review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action presents a pivotal opportunity to continue to make these specific challenges more visible and call for concrete commitments to protect women and girls with disabilities during crises, including through tailored humanitarian assistance, as well as for disaggregated data-collection and monitoring and analysis of their situation. Further, their contribution to conflict prevention, mediation and conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery ought to be properly recognized, and their meaningful and inclusive participation in those settings guaranteed.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

118. Over the past 30 years, progress has been made to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities within the global gender equality framework. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in conjunction with subsequent reviews, has amplified visibility for this group, as well as recognition of the unique challenges and the compounded discrimination they face. However, systemic barriers, limited accessibility and a lack of meaningful inclusion persist, preventing the full realization of their rights. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has significantly contributed to shifting paradigms from a medical to a human rights-based model of disability, providing a robust framework for mainstreaming disability rights.

Nonetheless, and as shown by regional and national reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, gaps remain in implementing the text in the light of the main principles of the Convention, particularly in areas such as legal capacity, independent living and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

119. Looking ahead, the upcoming review and appraisal offers a pivotal opportunity to re-energize commitments to gender equality with a nuanced understanding of the needs of women and girls with disabilities. Central to this effort must be an intersectional approach that ensures their inclusion in all aspects of policymaking, implementation and monitoring. By prioritizing accessibility, meaningful participation and targeted measures to address their distinct requirements, stakeholders can create a more inclusive and equitable framework that genuinely leaves no one behind and upholds commitments in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

B. Recommendations

120. During the 2025 review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and those to follow, States should:

(a) Shed light on the challenges and barriers that women and girls with disabilities continue to face to the full realization of their human rights, using a twin-track approach that considers their specific requirements and mainstreams them in all commitments. In so doing, States should meaningfully consult and listen to women and girls with disabilities, making processes at the national, regional and international levels fully inclusive and accessible to them;

(b) Consider establishing the topic of the present report and the situation of women and girls with disabilities in general, as one of the thematic priorities in the upcoming multi-year programme of work for the Commission.

121. In implementing the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and subsequent reviews, States should:

(a) Strengthen national legal and policy frameworks to align them with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and uphold the rights of women and girls with disabilities, particularly as concerns accessibility, legal capacity and meaningful participation;

(b) Repeal substitute decision-making mechanisms and guarantee autonomy and support systems for women and girls with disabilities;

(c) Disaggregate data collection by gender and disability to inform evidence-based policies and monitor progress effectively;

(d) Ensure inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities in the mainstream education system, in accordance with the obligations under article 24 of the Convention;

(e) Implement and fund policies that ensure access to equitable employment opportunities for women and girls with disabilities, guaranteeing accessibility to the workplace, incorporating reasonable accommodations when relevant and addressing the gender pay gap;

(f) Promote the leadership of women with disabilities in the public and private sectors, including within the disability movement, through targeted policies and programmes;

(g) Gather specific data on the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities and develop policies and programmes to address harmful practices and violations of those rights, including bodily autonomy, and raise awareness among the public, and especially healthcare providers, about the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities;

(h) Adopt inclusive laws and policies to prevent gender-based violence and develop specialized programmes to protect women and girls with disabilities from gender-based and disability-specific violence and exploitation. States should also ensure the accessibility of support and justice mechanisms and remove the physical and information and communications barriers therein, including by countering stereotypes and stigma against women and girls with disabilities in relevant institutions. Further, victims should be ensured access to inclusive support services;

(i) Recognize the tasks related to the care and support of persons with disabilities that are usually performed by women (often mothers), and ensure adequate financial, psychological and informational support to them;

(j) Protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities during crises, especially armed conflicts, and meaningfully involve them in their prevention and resolution. In particular, States should introduce an approach to climate action that effectively includes women and girls with disabilities, who are among the most impacted by climate change.

122. In fulfilling their different mandates, United Nations agencies should work to:

(a) Ensure that all gender equality frameworks explicitly address the rights of women and girls with disabilities, in line with the rights and principles under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

(b) Support States and civil society in implementing disability-inclusive policies, through technical assistance, training and funding, in initiatives to advance gender equality;

(c) Ensure that all United Nations-led forums, publications and events related to gender equality are fully accessible, including by providing sign language interpretation, captioning and alternative formats for communication;

(d) Establish monitoring and reporting processes specifically targeting the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in gender equality programmes;

(e) Consider adhering to the Feminist Accessibility Protocol, to ensure that all organized meetings, activities and events related to gender equality are made accessible for women and girls with disabilities and involve them and their representative organizations in the design and planning of such meetings and events.

123. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders should:

(a) Promote the meaningful participation of women with disabilities in leadership roles within disability rights and feminist movements;

(b) Push for the adoption of intersectional approaches in gender equality policies that consider the compounded discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities;

(c) Develop and support community-led initiatives and support networks that empower women and girls with disabilities, particularly in crises;

(d) Partner with media, academia and the private sector to raise the awareness of the rights of women and girls with disabilities and their contributions to gender and disability rights movements.