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**Social development: social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, persons with disabilities and the family**

## **Inclusive development for and with persons with disabilities**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/189](#). It provides updates on progress and concrete steps to implement the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, highlights the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), shares findings from the *Disability and Development Report 2024* and recommends policies for implementing the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It emphasizes accessibility, economic opportunities, assistive technologies, data-informed policies and multisectoral collaboration. Upcoming summits aim to promote inclusive development, partnerships and international cooperation.

The report concludes with policy recommendations to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities. It calls for a comprehensive, inclusive approach to address policy gaps, promote accessibility and ensure disability inclusion. This includes facilitating access to assistive technologies, ensuring that policies are informed by data and fostering multisectoral collaboration between Governments, civil society and the private sector to eliminate discriminatory practices and support the socioeconomic development of persons with disabilities.

The Summit of the Future in 2024 and the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025 are opportunities to galvanize further action to promote inclusive development, leverage partnerships and enhance international cooperation to reduce inequalities and include disability considerations in national plans, strategies, programmes, emergency responses and decision-making.



## I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [77/189](#), describes progress in implementing the resolution and the outcome document of the high-level meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond, as well as other development targets for persons with disabilities. It also addresses the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and measures to mitigate its impact, as well as the participation of persons with disabilities in response and recovery efforts.

2. With six years left to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations, in the advanced unedited version of the executive summary of the *Disability and Development Report 2024*,<sup>1</sup> shows that persons with disabilities continue to be left behind. Progress is insufficient for them in 30 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets; in 14 per cent of cases, the target has been missed or progress has stalled or been reversed. This includes targets on access to financial resources, healthcare, water and information and communications technology (ICT) as well as on building the resilience of persons with disabilities during disasters and other emergencies. Only five indicators are on track to achieve their respective targets for persons with disabilities by 2030: these indicators show remarkable progress in education laws on equal access, disaster early warnings in accessible formats, online services for persons with disabilities, government ministries accessible for persons with disabilities, and monitoring of bilateral aid dedicated to disability inclusion.

3. In the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly, the Assembly expressed its commitment to ensuring that persons with disabilities actively participate in and equally benefit from sustainable development efforts. Member States committed to targeted and accelerated action to remove all legal, social and economic barriers to achieving gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, including those with disabilities, their full, equal and effective participation in all decision-making processes, and the realization and enjoyment of their human rights (see resolution [78/1](#)).

4. The Summit of the Future in September 2024 and the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025 are crucial opportunities to strengthen international cooperation and enhance the implementation of relevant international normative frameworks for sustainable development inclusive of persons with disabilities and their rights, well-being and perspectives.

5. Building on the findings of the advanced unedited version of the executive summary of the *Disability and Development Report 2024*, section II below provides a snapshot of the current situation and gaps in progress made between persons with disabilities and those without disabilities, and identifies concrete steps that global leaders and relevant stakeholders can take to accelerate the implementation of the Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Section III includes examples of policies and initiatives by Member States and other key stakeholders based on the

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://bit.ly/ddr2024>.

<sup>2</sup> To produce the *Disability and Development Report 2024*, over a dozen major databases of disability statistics from international agencies and other organizations were analysed, covering an unprecedented amount of disability data from over 100 countries. In addition, further data analyses were produced and commissioned by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its partners to fill data gaps.

information and data made available to the Secretariat. Drawing on these analyses, recommendations are presented in section IV.

## II. Situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

6. Wide gaps persist between persons with and without disabilities, in particular on indicators for food insecurity, health, access to energy and ICT and on multidimensional poverty and employment. For women with disabilities, Indigenous Persons with disabilities, persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and persons with disabilities living in rural areas, the gaps are wider. Moreover, although countries have increasingly involved persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, overall this involvement remains low.

7. The COVID-19 response was largely not inclusive of persons with disabilities, especially in the early stages of the pandemic, with discriminatory practices in treatment (persons with disabilities with similar COVID-19 symptoms were less likely to be admitted to intensive care, and priority for treatment was given to persons without disabilities in some health facilities due to triage protocols), lack of information in accessible formats and reduced access to COVID-19 testing (41 per cent of persons with disabilities versus 28 per cent of persons without disabilities did not have access to testing). The higher mortality rates of persons with disabilities may be linked to the various risks and barriers that they experienced during the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

8. Persons with disabilities lost jobs and income at higher rates than others. Early in the pandemic, in 2020, a third of persons with disabilities lost access to personal assistance, assistive technology or accessibility services – a trend driven by inflation and disruptions in supply chains that continued throughout the pandemic, including a drop of 10 per cent in exports of assistive products. Persons with disabilities faced more difficulties than persons without disabilities in accessing and being able to afford food (52 per cent versus 46 per cent), water delivery (31 per cent versus 18 per cent), energy (31 per cent versus 24 per cent), housing (28 per cent versus 24 per cent), healthcare (34 per cent versus 22 per cent), medicines (40 per cent versus 32 per cent), masks (64 per cent versus 50 per cent) and sanitizers (66 per cent versus 54 per cent). One in 5 students with disabilities dropped out of school during the pandemic and 9 in 10 did not have the ICT needed to participate in remote learning. Half of workers with disabilities faced barriers working remotely, such as inaccessible online platforms. The isolation created by lockdowns increased the risk of violence, with a quarter of persons with disabilities experiencing violence at home and almost half of women with disabilities not feeling safe at home. Lockdowns disrupted data collection, creating a lack of evidence to guide pandemic responses for persons with disabilities.

9. Not all countries introduced measures to support persons with disabilities facing these challenges. For example, only half of households with students with disabilities received financial support for the personal assistance and technology that they needed for remote learning. Less than half of countries targeted persons with disabilities in their COVID-19 social protection measures and only 10 per cent conducted rapid emergency data collections on persons with disabilities during the pandemic.

10. Compared with the *Disability and Development Report 2018*, there are now more data on persons with disabilities. Data availability is at its highest level since

<sup>3</sup> Alarcos Cieza and others, “Disability and COVID-19: ensuring no one is left behind”, United Nations workstream on COVID-19 disability inclusive health response and recovery consortium. *Archives of Public Health*, vol. 79, No. 148 (2021).

the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006. Despite these advancements, only 50 per cent of targets have indicators with enough data to assess progress. For 40 per cent of targets, there are only data to provide a snapshot at one point in time. For 10 per cent of targets, there are not enough data for such a snapshot – these include targets on extreme poverty, child mortality, the health impact of pollution, early childhood development, child labour and the impact of corruption and bribery.

11. At the current rate, the world will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities by 2030. Depending on the target, progress needs to be 2 to 65 times faster. Acceleration is particularly needed in making physical and virtual environments accessible for persons with disabilities, adopting anti-discrimination legislation, expanding social protection and implementing measures to guarantee the safety and protection of all persons with disabilities during disasters and emergencies.

12. In conjunction with preparations by the international community for the Summit of the Future in September 2024, everyone needs to step up to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities. Disability inclusion is part of the solution to realize the promise of leaving no one behind. The world needs to build on the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic to plan better for future crises.

### **Ending poverty and hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition for all persons with disabilities (Goals 1 and 2)**

13. In almost all countries, the percentage of persons experiencing multidimensional poverty is higher for those with disabilities than for those without, often more than double. Reducing this by half by 2030, in line with target 1.2, requires progress 1.3 times faster for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities earn lower wages, face additional disability-related costs and lack access to financial services. About 25 per cent of banks and automated teller machines in developed regions and 50 per cent in developing regions are physically inaccessible for wheelchair users. In 2020, only 17 per cent of countries provided universal disability benefits, with slow progress since 2017 (a 2 percentage point increase). Globally, 34 per cent of persons with severe disabilities received cash benefits in 2020, up from 27 per cent in 2016. At this rate, only 50 per cent will access these benefits by 2030.

14. In developing countries, 55 per cent of persons with disabilities experience food insecurity. In Europe, the percentage of persons with disabilities unable to afford daily protein meals decreased by 3 percentage points since 2016, but this is insufficient to eliminate hunger or food insecurity by 2030. Children with disabilities are more likely to be underweight and stunted, indicating malnutrition. Among them, 15 per cent are underweight, 27 per cent are stunted, 7 per cent are wasted and 3 per cent are overweight. During food emergencies, accessibility is crucial, yet 2 out of 5 food banks are not wheelchair accessible. In addition, more than half of restaurants, 12 per cent of supermarkets in developed countries and 38 per cent in developing countries are inaccessible for wheelchair users.

### **Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all persons with disabilities, and reducing maternal mortality and accessing sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights for all persons with disabilities (Goal 3 and targets 3.1, 3.7 and 5.6)**

15. Persons with disabilities are 15 times more likely to perceive their health as bad or very bad compared with those without disabilities. They are seven times more likely to lack access to healthcare when needed. In developing countries, over half of

persons with disabilities cannot afford healthcare, and a quarter lack or cannot afford transport to health facilities. In some developed countries, over 10 per cent face similar barriers due to cost, distance or long waiting lists. Public health interventions, such as nutrition information campaigns and regular health monitoring, often do not reach persons with disabilities. Coverage gaps between those with and without disabilities range from 5 per cent to 45 per cent. In various developing countries, over 30 per cent of persons with disabilities find healthcare facilities inaccessible; in some, this figure reaches 80 per cent. Globally, in 2022, 42 per cent of doctors' offices, 29 per cent of pharmacies and 15 per cent of hospitals were not wheelchair accessible. Progress has been insufficient, requiring doctors' offices to become accessible three times faster and pharmacies seven times faster to achieve full accessibility by 2030. Hospitals' accessibility has stagnated since 2018. In 2022, only one third of countries had incorporated disability inclusion into their national health strategies.

16. Persons with disabilities often lack access to sexual and reproductive health services. In many countries, over 50 per cent of women and men with disabilities lack comprehensive HIV/AIDS knowledge. Over 50 per cent of women with disabilities do not have their family planning needs met with modern methods, do not have skilled attendants at births, do not receive timely postnatal checks, lack autonomy in reproductive health decisions and are not empowered to exercise their reproductive rights.

#### **Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all persons with disabilities (Goal 4)**

17. While 11 per cent of children with disabilities of primary school age remain out of school, this percentage increases to 32 per cent for children with disabilities of upper secondary school age. Only 30 per cent of children with disabilities achieve reading skills, compared with 37 per cent of children without disabilities; and 23 per cent achieve numeracy skills (compared with 27 per cent without disabilities).

18. A few countries have succeeded in lowering the out-of-school rates for children with disabilities of primary school age to very low levels, on par with the levels for children without disabilities. In addition, 87 per cent of countries have laws or policies protecting the right of persons with disabilities to education, up from 74 per cent in 2016. At this rate, all countries are expected to have legislation or policies protecting this right by 2030.

19. Only 47 per cent of countries have educational materials to support learners with disabilities, up from 34 per cent in 2016; only 38 per cent have accessible physical school environments, up from 18 per cent in 2016; and only 17 per cent of countries legally guarantee an inclusive education in which learners with and without disabilities are taught in the same classrooms.

#### **Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls with disabilities (Goal 5)**

20. Available data for 2020 show that, among 25 countries, on average, 8 per cent of women with disabilities feel discriminated against due to their disabilities and 9 per cent due to their gender; 8 per cent of women with disabilities experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months; and 7 per cent of girls with disabilities aged 15 to 18 are or have been married.

21. Women with disabilities are engaged in unpaid work at levels similar to those of women without disabilities (10 per cent of both). Only 3 per cent of women with disabilities work as legislators, senior officials or managers, compared with 4 per cent of women without disabilities. They are severely underrepresented in national parliaments, local governments and national coordination mechanisms on disability.

Only two countries specifically require the inclusion of women with disabilities in electoral lists or in elected local deliberative bodies.

22. Women with disabilities face barriers in accessing economic resources, financial services and technology. As many as 20 per cent of women with disabilities live in income poverty, and the wages of men with disabilities are 17 per cent higher than those of women with disabilities. Only 15 per cent of women with disabilities compared with 20 per cent of men with disabilities conduct financial transactions with a mobile phone; only 26 per cent of women with disabilities compared with 30 per cent of men with disabilities use the Internet; 63 per cent of women with disabilities but 70 per cent of men with disabilities own a mobile phone; and 64 per cent of women with disabilities do not have access to the assistive technology that they need.

23. Only 38 per cent of countries have a gender equality law or a disability law with specific legal protections for women with disabilities; only 27 per cent address women with disabilities in their domestic violence laws and 16 per cent in their sexual harassment laws. Only 9 per cent of countries have legal requirements for accessibility to services for women with disabilities who are survivors of violence; and only 14 per cent legally protect the parental rights of women with disabilities. Only 3 per cent mention women with disabilities in their laws on incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities and on reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities.

24. Worldwide, 27 per cent of countries have specific legal protections for women with disabilities in their disability law, up from 18 per cent in 2015. At this rate, only a third of countries are expected to have these legal protections by 2030.

#### **Ensuring the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene for persons with disabilities (Goal 6)**

25. In many countries, persons with disabilities are less likely than those without disabilities to live in a dwelling with a safe drinking water source, improved sanitation and a bath or shower on the premises, with gaps reaching over 10 percentage points in some countries. A third of persons with disabilities in developing countries indicate that the toilets at their homes are not accessible. In many countries, a third or more of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, healthcare facilities and public settings are not accessible for persons with disabilities. In developing countries, 42 per cent of public places for drinking water are not accessible for wheelchair users, up from 40 per cent in 2018. In developed countries, 33 per cent of public toilets remain not accessible for wheelchair users, the same percentage as in 2018. The lack of accessible water, sanitation and hygiene facilities has an impact on women with disabilities, who are more likely than women without disabilities to miss school, work or social activities during their menstrual period.

#### **Ensuring access to energy for persons with disabilities (Goal 7)**

26. While many countries have nearly universal electricity access, significant gaps remain between persons with and without disabilities in mid- to low-access countries, sometimes exceeding 10 percentage points. In rural areas, households with persons with disabilities have less than half the access to electricity of urban areas and are twice as likely to use polluting energy such as wood and coal. Many persons with disabilities depend on electricity-run assistive technology, yet in 2023, only 39 per cent of countries had mechanisms to assist them during power cuts, and just two thirds were developed with their input. In schools, 76 per cent of primary schools worldwide have electricity access, up from 66 per cent in 2015, but in sub-Saharan Africa, only 32 per cent have electricity access, a slight increase from 30 per cent in 2015.

### **Promoting full and productive employment and decent work for persons with disabilities (Goal 8)**

27. Only 27 per cent of persons with disabilities are employed, compared with 56 per cent of persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is 10 per cent, higher than the 8 per cent for persons without disabilities. Young people with disabilities are twice as likely as young people without disabilities not to be in employment, education or training. Persons with disabilities face lower wages and overrepresentation in the informal economy and self-employment. Globally, the percentage of persons with disabilities in employment would have to increase at least 2 percentage points per year until 2030 to close the gap between persons with and without disabilities by 2030.

28. Many working places are not accessible and lack reasonable accommodation measures and assistive technologies. The accessibility of employment agencies for wheelchair users reached 62 per cent in 2022, up from 56 per cent in 2018.

### **Increasing access to ICT for persons with disabilities (target 9.c)**

29. In developing countries, Internet use is 11 percentage points lower for persons with disabilities than for those without disabilities. To close this gap, Internet access among persons with disabilities will need to increase 1.2 percentage points every year until 2030. In Europe, despite progress since 2015, persons with disabilities are twice as likely as those without disabilities to not be able to afford a computer; and 1 per cent of persons with disabilities cannot afford a telephone or a television – a percentage that has remained stagnant since 2015. In the least developed countries, an average of 20 per cent of persons with disabilities use the Internet, a level too low compared with the universal access by 2020 called for in target 9.c of the Sustainable Development Goals, a target that has been missed.

30. In developing countries, the households of persons with disabilities in urban areas are twice as likely to have access to the Internet as those in rural areas. In some countries, the gaps between women and men with disabilities exceeds 20 percentage points for Internet use and mobile phone ownership.

31. A lower percentage of persons with disabilities attest to basic ICT skills, with those with disabilities being on average 3 percentage points behind, but the gap reaching more than 10 percentage points in several countries.

32. The vast majority (98 per cent) of the top 1 million websites do not comply with international web content accessibility guidelines; and 63 per cent of national governmental online portals also do not comply – this lack of accessibility is particularly high in Africa, affecting 87 per cent of countries. In 2022, only 27 per cent of Internet cafés were accessible for wheelchair users, compared with 20 per cent in 2019.

33. In 2020, 69 per cent of countries had a regulatory framework on ICT accessibility. Europe is the region where these regulations are most common (85 per cent of countries) and Africa the least (45 per cent of countries).

### **Reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion through community support systems (target 10.2)**

34. Community services are beginning to be established in various countries to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities, but gaps remain: 43 per cent of persons with disabilities indicate that joining community activities is problematic, with 22 per cent needing more personal assistance than they receive and 44 per cent of those without any personal assistance needing this assistance.

35. Persons with disabilities who need support to make their own decisions seldom receive this support and someone else is designated to make decisions for them. Only 34 per cent of persons with disabilities say that they make decisions about day-to-day life, where and with whom to live and how to spend money.

36. The lack of community support systems has pushed persons with disabilities to be placed in institutions, in contravention to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices concerning persons with disabilities (targets 10.3 and 16.b)**

37. One in 10 persons with disabilities feels discriminated against on the basis of disability. To combat this, countries have been adopting legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in various areas, including in job hiring (79 per cent of countries) and education (54 per cent of countries). But progress has been too slow to ensure that persons with disabilities in all countries will be legally protected against discrimination by 2030. For direct discrimination in the workplace, progress should be twice as fast. Efforts to expand these legal protections are particularly needed in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa.

**Making cities and human settlements inclusive and sustainable for persons with disabilities (Goal 11)**

38. In developing countries, 33 per cent of persons with disabilities find their dwellings inaccessible. In Europe, 5 per cent live in severely deprived housing, and 10 per cent spend over 40 per cent of their income on housing costs. In North America, only 1 per cent of rented dwellings meet universal design standards. Transportation remains a significant challenge, with 43 per cent of persons with disabilities in developing countries reporting it as inaccessible. Globally, only 70 per cent of transit stations and platforms are wheelchair accessible. Recreational facilities also fall short, with a third of persons with disabilities finding them inaccessible, and 28 per cent needing modifications for easier community participation. In 2022, 81 per cent of parking lots, 73 per cent of libraries, 72 per cent of commercial buildings, 57 per cent of public buildings, 52 per cent of playgrounds and 51 per cent of museums were accessible to wheelchair users. Accessibility in developing countries has decreased since 2018, in particular in transportation. However, in developed countries, wheelchair accessibility in transit and bus stations is improving, with projections of 79 per cent and 91 per cent accessibility by 2030, respectively. In Europe, the percentage of persons with disabilities in severely deprived housing and those facing housing cost burdens has decreased since 2015. These figures are expected to fall to 2 per cent and 9 per cent by 2030, respectively. For public spaces, projections for 2030 indicate 85 per cent accessibility for car parking lots, 76 per cent for libraries, 75 per cent for commercial buildings, 60 per cent for public buildings, 55 per cent for playgrounds and 55 per cent for museums.

**Building resilience of persons with disabilities and reducing their exposure and impact from climate-related hazards, other shocks and disasters (targets 1.5, 11.5 and 11.b and Goal 13)**

39. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected during and after disasters, with mortality rates sometimes twice as high as for those without disabilities. Worldwide, 84 per cent of persons with disabilities lack disaster preparedness plans; 39 per cent struggle or cannot evacuate during sudden disasters; 28 per cent need assistance to evacuate but have none; 11 per cent find disaster information inaccessible; over 80 per cent are unaware of national and local disaster



plans; and 86 per cent are excluded from decision-making in disaster management. In conflict and displacement situations, over 30 per cent of persons with disabilities find essential services unaffordable or inaccessible due to transport or physical barriers.

40. From 2013 to 2023, disaster preparedness for persons with disabilities worsened: those without preparedness plans increased by 12 percentage points; those needing but lacking evacuation assistance increased by 15 percentage points; and those unaware of disaster risk reduction plans increased by 3 percentage points. Little progress was made in other areas: involvement in disaster management decision-making remained stagnant, and the percentage struggling to evacuate during sudden disasters decreased by only 2 percentage points. Accessible formats for laws and policies on climate change adaptation (78 per cent of countries), disaster risk reduction (96 per cent), safe evacuation from public (75 per cent) and private premises (86 per cent), disaster prevention, preparation and recovery information (96 per cent) and early warnings (100 per cent) have increased. However, most information is released only in accessible documents or as PDF files, with Braille, easy-to-understand formats and ePub less commonly used. Over 60 per cent of countries consult persons with disabilities and their organizations in developing inclusive laws, policies and measures related to climate change, disasters and evacuation.

**Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources, protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (Goals 12, 14 and 15)**

41. Persons with disabilities face barriers in acting as agents of change to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns and the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. Worldwide, only 59 per cent of recycling premises are accessible for wheelchair users, down slightly from 60 per cent in 2018; and only 67 per cent of shops selling organic and sustainable products are accessible for wheelchair users, up from 60 per cent in 2018.

42. Persons with disabilities face barriers in environmental activism. In 2021, no references to persons with disabilities were found in the academic literature covering youth environmental activism and on social media from youth environmental activism groups. When involved, persons with disabilities are often engaged as environmental learners and given few opportunities to act as environmental advocates or educators.

**Reducing all forms of violence against persons with disabilities and ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children with disabilities (targets 16.1 and 16.2)**

43. In some countries, more than 1 in 6 persons with disabilities are beaten or scolded because of their disabilities; more than 1 in 3 women with disabilities suffer sexual violence; more than 1 in 12 men with disabilities suffer sexual violence; and more than 1 in 2 children with disabilities suffer severe punishment from their caregivers.

44. Worldwide, 1 in every 3 children with disabilities suffer neglect or sexual, physical or emotional violence – they are twice as likely to encounter such violence as children without disabilities. One of the most common forms of violence is in-person bullying by peers, affecting 37 per cent of children with disabilities. Children with psychosocial disabilities suffer the highest prevalence of sexual violence (18 per cent) and maltreatment by adults (36 per cent). Children with multiple disabilities suffer the highest prevalence of in-person and online bullying (47 per cent).

45. Persons with disabilities are also victims of human trafficking for forced begging, sexual exploitation, forced labour, organ removal, forced participation in armed conflict and theft of their disability benefits.

46. Countries have taken measures to facilitate the reporting and legal prosecution of violence against persons with disabilities and created accessible services supporting victims of violence. In 2023, 58 per cent of countries had emergency numbers accessible to persons with disabilities; 59 per cent had accessible shelters; and 74 per cent provided mental health and psychological support services to victims with disabilities.

### **Ensuring equal access to justice for all persons with disabilities (target 16.3)**

47. Persons with disabilities face obstacles accessing justice. Guardianship laws remain in place in many countries, depriving persons with disabilities of their legal capacity. The justice system often lacks accessibility features and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. In developing countries, a third of persons with disabilities indicate that courts and police stations are not accessible. In some countries, more than two thirds of persons with disabilities do not have access to legal services when they need them. Many officials throughout the justice system have no training on disability inclusion.

48. Progress has been made in recent years, with more countries having moved away from guardianship laws to supported decision-making systems. There has been slow progress in improving the percentage of courts and police stations accessible to wheelchair users, from 54 per cent in 2018 to 59 per cent in 2022.

### **Developing inclusive institutions, ensuring inclusive decision-making and reducing the exposure of persons with disabilities to bribery and corruption (targets 16.5, 16.6 and 16.7)**

49. National public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities is on average 1 per cent of gross domestic product, a level that has remained stagnant since 2017. A majority of countries (77 per cent) offer online government services for persons with disabilities, up from 27 per cent in 2014 – this progress is on track to reach all countries by 2030.

50. In various countries, more than 10 per cent of persons with disabilities experience discrimination in public services. Persons with disabilities tend to be underrepresented among public service personnel, with representation lower than half their share in the national population in several countries. In some countries, employed persons without disabilities are twice as likely as persons with disabilities to work as legislators, senior officials or managers. About 30 per cent of persons with disabilities find voting not accessible.

51. In 2022, only 66 per cent of town halls, 63 per cent of governmental ministries and 48 per cent of non-governmental organizations were accessible for wheelchair users. Progress since 2018 has been insufficient. To achieve full accessibility by 2030, progress should be 4 times faster for town halls and 19 times faster for non-governmental organizations. Significant progress has been made since 2018 in the accessibility of governmental ministries (from 42 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent in 2022) and these premises are on track to achieve full accessibility for wheelchair users by 2030.

52. Limited data suggest that persons with disabilities are slightly less likely to pay or be asked to pay a bribe when interacting with government officials. During disasters, conflicts and other emergencies, persons with disabilities encounter bribery when attempting to access services.

**Providing legal identity to all children with disabilities, including birth registration (target 16.9)**

53. In some countries, registration is lower for children with disabilities than for those without disabilities. In several countries, more than 50 per cent of children with disabilities remain unregistered. These countries will have to increase the birth registration rate for children with disabilities by 7 or more percentage points every year until 2030 to ensure that all children with disabilities are registered by 2030.

**Ensuring public access to information for persons with disabilities (target 16.10)**

54. National laws on access to public information do not always address the needs of persons with disabilities: only 6 per cent of countries mention accessible formats in these laws and only 1 per cent of countries explicitly refer to accessible formats for information online. One barrier to a wider use of sign language in the provision of public information is the lower percentage of countries (3 per cent) that recognize at least one sign language as an official language.

**Mobilizing official development assistance for disability inclusion (target 17.2)**

55. Bilateral aid in support of disability inclusion – i.e. for activities that focus on disability inclusion as well as activities with other objectives but that mainstream disability – surpassed \$15 billion in 2021, corresponding to 17 per cent of total bilateral aid. Only a small portion of disability-inclusion aid (3 per cent) includes disability inclusion as the main objective of the activity; for the other 97 per cent, disability inclusion is a secondary objective of the activity for water, education or healthcare, among other things. The sectors receiving most disability-inclusion aid are transport and health.

**Enhancing the use of enabling technology: assistive technology (target 17.8)**

56. In countries with low human development index levels, only 11 per cent of the persons who need assistive products can get them; in countries with medium human development index levels, only 33 per cent can. The most frequent barrier is cost, which is experienced by 31 per cent of those who do not have the assistive products that they need. Although 90 per cent of countries have a financing mechanism to fully or partially cover the users' costs of assistive technology, in practice the cost of assistive technology is often covered out-of-pocket or by families or friends.

57. Over the past few years, promising steps have been taken to improve access to assistive technology. More than 80 per cent of countries have laws and regulations to support access to assistive technology. Adequate services, human resources and education on assistive technology have progressed more slowly, with less than 50 per cent of countries providing them. At least seven countries have developed national lists of priority assistive products to facilitate the acquisition of essential products.

58. The transfer of assistive technology from developed to developing countries can boost access to this technology worldwide. Innovations are concentrated in a few countries, with more than 80 per cent of patents for assistive technology filed in China, Japan and the United States of America.

**International trade as a means of improving access to assistive technology and empowering persons with disabilities (targets 17.10 to 17.12)**

59. Trade can serve as an incentive to promote laws and practices to ensure the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society.

Among the preferential trade agreements negotiated between 2010 and 2020, 27 per cent included such clauses, up from 0 per cent before 1970.

60. Trade can also play a major role in the availability and affordability of assistive technology. International trade in assistive products is concentrated in developed countries, which account for 74 per cent of the value of exports of assistive technology. Imports are similarly concentrated: developed countries account for 82 per cent of the value of imported assistive technology. These shares have remained stagnant since 2014. Europe, Northern America and Oceania import more than \$50 of assistive products per capita, while Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa import less than \$10 per capita.

61. Many assistive products have tariffs imposed at the border. Worldwide, the average tariff applied is 5 per cent for wheelchairs, orthotics, prosthetics and hearing aids; and 5 per cent to 10 per cent for glasses and lenses. Behind these average values lies a wide range of tariffs applied, sometimes as high as 35 per cent.

62. About 20 per cent of countries and territories are part of trade agreements with preferential tariffs on assistive products, and about 80 per cent of the tariff values in these agreements are set to 0 per cent. About 20 per cent of the least developed countries have preferential trade agreements resulting in tariffs of 0 per cent.

#### **Increasing the availability of data disaggregated by disability (target 17.18)**

63. An increasing number of countries collect data on persons with disabilities and use internationally comparable methods to do so. But capacity to use these methods is particularly lacking in the least developed countries. Since 2015, the Washington Group of questions has been used in 18 of the 21 countries that collected disability data in censuses and in many national surveys. Model disability surveys have been conducted in 14 countries. The availability of data disaggregated by disability in the Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database has increased since 2018, but slowly. At the current rate, fewer than half of the indicators explicitly requiring disability disaggregation are expected to have data by 2030.

### **III. Initiatives by stakeholders**

64. This section provides examples of policies and initiatives by Member States and other key stakeholders based on the information and data made available to the Secretariat.

#### **A. Member States**

##### **National strategies and plans of actions**

65. National strategies and plans of actions continue to be key tools for mainstreaming disability and promoting the rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities. Belarus, Chile, El Salvador, Kazakhstan, Namibia and Poland are among the Member States that highlighted their progress in aligning national disability policy frameworks and legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to incorporate accessibility and inclusion principles into their national strategies. Persons and organizations of persons with disabilities are increasingly consulted or involved at different stages of the design, decision-making and implementation of national strategies, including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The Enabling Masterplans of Singapore (road maps that guide disability policies) are collectively developed by the public, private and people sectors, including persons with disabilities and caregivers. In Luxembourg, the themes of the

national action plan were selected by two consultative bodies composed mainly of persons with disabilities and representatives of associations of and for persons with disabilities. Member States, such as Belarus and Singapore, are also enhancing enforcement, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to different degrees, through concrete quantitative indicators and targets, to ensure that policy frameworks provide measurable benefits for persons with disabilities.

### **Accessibility**

66. Enhancing accessibility, including improving the availability of services, facilities and the built environment, stands as a primary focus for numerous Member States. Luxembourg and Singapore introduced building legislation or amendments to enhance accessibility in buildings. In Luxembourg, by law, 10 per cent of the flats in an apartment building must be designed and equipped to be accessible to persons with reduced mobility. Jordan has launched a 10-year national strategy on accessibility with a focus on renovating 60 per cent of existing buildings and facilities by the end of 2029. The strategy and its implementation were developed from good practices in a number of countries, including Japan, and with the assistance of the Government of Spain and the municipality of Barcelona.

### **Social protections, social services and sustainable livelihoods**

67. Several Member States reported implementing policies and programmes aimed at providing social protection and enhancing access to and coverage of social services for persons with disabilities. The Act of 7 July 2023 of Poland on support benefits introduces a new support benefit for individuals with disabilities aged 18 or older, irrespective of income; the benefit is adjusted annually for inflation and is accessible alongside other forms of support. Other initiatives, in Belarus, Malta and Türkiye, among other countries, are meant to support families and caregivers of persons with disabilities: the home care support programme in Türkiye, launched in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, provides technical information, care and psychosocial support to family members caring for persons with disabilities. Namibia has increased its disability grant, in particular for children with disabilities.

### **Education and lifelong learning**

68. In Chile, Kazakhstan and Singapore, among other countries, Governments have fostered inclusive education and lifelong learning for persons with disabilities through comprehensive strategies encompassing policy, infrastructure, training and support. Law No. 21.544 (2023) of Chile requires private educational institutions to include school inclusion programmes. Singapore strengthened support for lifelong learning through: expansion of the early intervention programme for infants and children with disabilities; the launch of special education, teaching and learning syllabuses; strengthened school partnerships to promote integration opportunities for students and professional exchange for staff; and capacity-building for all school personnel in mainstream schools.

### **Humanitarian and disaster preparedness and response**

69. Few Member States are at the initial stage of developing and implementing national and local disaster preparedness strategies that include accessible emergency services, early warning systems and evacuation protocols specifically designed for persons with disabilities. To facilitate information transmission and reception in risk situations, Belarus provides mobile phones to persons with hearing and vision impairments.

### **Data collection and analysis**

70. Several Member States reported efforts to integrate disability data into official statistics to evaluate the situation of persons with disabilities and develop evidence-based policies. They highlighted efforts to enhance national knowledge bases and collect disaggregated disability data. In 2022, Chile designed and implemented a survey for the third national disability study, aiming to analyse the situation of persons with disabilities and monitor the 2030 Agenda. The 2021 population census in Luxembourg included a “disability status” section for the first time, implementing article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Belarus plans to operationalize an information system for accounting the accessibility of social infrastructure facilities by 2025, with data posted on a public cadastral map online. Bahrain launched a national identity card indicating disability type. Namibia used the Washington Group of questions in the 2023 housing and population census to improve data collection. Internationally, Ireland conducted a 2022 mapping of its development cooperation and humanitarian initiatives to assess their disability inclusivity.

### **Measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and promote participation in the response and recovery**

71. Measures undertaken by Governments to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and promote participation in the response and recovery included: (a) ensuring that COVID-19 information and guidance are available in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, such as in Israel, Namibia, Norway, Malta and the Philippines (in Namibia, this involved individual home visits to parents of younger children with disabilities, especially those from far remote and poor communities, and training parents on how to prevent their children and themselves from being infected with COVID-19); (b) prioritizing access to healthcare services for persons with disabilities, including ensuring the accessibility of testing sites, treatment facilities and vaccination centres, such as in Israel and the Philippines (in Israel, the Administration worked to train medical teams in hospitals so that they could properly treat persons with disabilities if their situation deteriorated); (c) providing support services, such as home care assistance, mental health support and access to assistive devices, for persons with disabilities (in Jordan, counselling and psychosocial services were provided to persons with intellectual disabilities and their families via the Habayebna platform); (d) implementing measures to support the employment of persons with disabilities, such as remote work accommodations, job retention schemes and financial assistance for businesses employing persons with disabilities (in Jordan, the Shrakaa (Partners) programme promoted the training and employment of more than 300 persons with disabilities; and Belarus actively used flexible forms of employment, such as remote work and flexible working hours, for specific population groups, including persons with disabilities); (e) ensuring continuity of education for students with disabilities through online learning platforms, accessible learning materials and support services for remote learning, such as in Bahrain, Israel and Jordan; and (f) strengthening social protection measures to support persons with disabilities and their families who may face increased financial hardship due to the pandemic, including disability benefits, cash transfers and food assistance programmes, such as in Israel (in the Philippines, financial assistance from the nationwide social amelioration programme prioritized low-income families, especially those with persons with disabilities, providing “ayudas” and physical supplies granted by local governments; and in Qatar, the validity of social security beneficiary cards for citizens was extended without the need for beneficiaries to be present).

## B. Intergovernmental organizations

72. Intergovernmental organizations have taken significant steps to enhance social inclusion for persons with disabilities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the African Union and the Caribbean Community, among others, have been involved in the development and drafting of policies. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, a legal framework that guides States members of the African Union in developing laws and policies to promote disability rights, officially came into effect after the fifteenth member State ratified it on 5 May 2024. The Caribbean Community developed a draft template for specific legislation for persons with disabilities in the Caribbean and convened a special regional advocacy conference, targeting ministers, attorneys general, senior legal officers and technical officers to advocate for the development and promulgation of specific legislation for persons with disabilities in the Caribbean. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development addressed the challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence in the employment of individuals with disabilities in its report on artificial intelligence and employment of persons with disabilities. Humanitarian and emergency preparedness have been addressed by the League of Arab States, which has developed a road map to support the rights of persons with disabilities in crises and epidemics to build resilience in the face of crises.

## C. United Nations system

73. The United Nations system continues to promote collaboration and enhance coordination among existing international processes and mechanisms to advance global disability-inclusive agendas. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs leads in supporting the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities and has conducted various activities to advance disability-inclusive implementation through capacity-building, support for intergovernmental processes (such as the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and knowledge production. The forthcoming *Disability and Development Report 2024* is one example.

74. The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, launched in 2019, contributes to more effective United Nations system support to Member States in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The strategy enhances United Nations inclusivity, with 61 per cent of United Nations country teams meeting benchmarks for disability inclusion in common country analyses and 43 per cent committing to disability rights in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in 2022. This mainstreaming of disability inclusion within strategic planning reflects the Organization's commitment to a more inclusive future for all.

75. Significant action has also been taken by other United Nations entities to promote international cooperation to advance disability inclusion. The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities fund supports stakeholders in implementing obligations under the Convention through policies and programmes. The strategic operational framework for 2020–2025 emphasizes disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals. Namibia, for instance, has received funding from the Partnership to implement a project in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) aimed at strengthening integrated systems to promote access to services for persons with disabilities.

76. Other actions are addressed towards enhancing standardization. The International Telecommunication Union has developed standards such as ITU-T Y.4219 and ITU-T F.780.2, focusing on accessible smart applications and telehealth services. The World Tourism Organization has developed the first comprehensive international standard on accessibility, covering the entire tourism value chain (International Organization for Standardization standard 21902:2021).

77. Several initiatives advance disability inclusion in crisis situations. In Afghanistan, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) collaborated with the accountability to affected populations cluster and disability working group to integrate disability-inclusive indicators into the humanitarian needs overview and humanitarian response plan. Since 2022, the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been supporting the humanitarian response in Ukraine to make it disability-inclusive, aligning early recovery and development actions with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and supporting neighbouring countries such as Georgia and Moldova in establishing systems to support Ukrainian refugees with disabilities.

78. In the area of gender quality, UN-Women has supported projects targeting women and girls with disabilities to achieve economic empowerment, ending violence against women and girls, humanitarian action, leadership, data and statistics. The UNFPA global flagship programme on disability inclusion, the We Decide programme, has provided guidelines for rights-based and gender-responsive services to address gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and young persons with disabilities. Ending violence against women with disabilities is a core element of the UNFPA strategic plan for 2022–2025. United Nations entities have also been involved in addressing challenges that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children issued a joint agenda for action, guiding Member States on including child protection in the COVID-19 response.

#### **D. Civil society organizations**

79. Civil society organizations have made significant strides in promoting the active participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes at all levels, in particular for inclusive development. Through awareness-raising, training programmes and knowledge-exchange initiatives, many organizations report advancements in inclusive development by, for and with persons with disabilities. The International Disability Alliance, in collaboration with Sightsavers and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is working on a disability capacity-building programme to enhance the disability rights movement. The World Federation of the Deaf, with CBM Global Disability Inclusion, is improving healthcare access for Indigenous deaf women in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, providing training on sex education, family planning and data collection. In addition, civil society organizations have developed practical guides for engaging persons with disabilities in emergencies, such as the International Disability Alliance policy brief on how Palestinian representative organizations of persons with disabilities assist persons with disabilities during emergencies in cooperation with humanitarian organizations.

### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

80. **Despite progress since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, many persons with disabilities still face barriers and discrimination. The data**



available for the *Disability and Development Report 2024* indicate slow progress, with only 5 of the 118 indicators consistently advancing towards achieving the targets of the Goals by 2030.<sup>4</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic worsened disparities, affecting health, employment and education for persons with disabilities. To meet the Goals, Member States must take urgent action, going beyond commitments to inclusive development and prioritizing substantial implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals that should also contribute to advancing adherence to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

81. In conjunction with preparations for the Summit of the Future and the Second World Summit for Social Development, Member States and other stakeholders should consider accelerating the implementation of the Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities, taking into consideration the following recommendations:

(a) Continue to strengthen disability inclusion into national poverty reduction strategies, programmes and actions and involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design and implementation; enhance accessibility across the delivery of social services; establish participatory and accessible mechanisms for inclusive budgeting, planning, design and implementation of urban strategies and policies; and improve coordination among various sectors (including education, health, social protection, agriculture, energy and transportation) to enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities;

(b) Review laws and policies to mainstream disability inclusion and abolish discriminatory provisions against persons with disabilities; develop mechanisms for reporting and addressing discrimination, violence and abuse; make the justice system disability-inclusive; and adopt or revise laws on access to information to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities;

(c) Increase the awareness of United Nations country teams, donors, the private sector and other stakeholders involved in aid initiatives about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and promote disability markers in tracking aid for disability-inclusive development;

(d) Promote disability inclusion as a core feature of digital development investments and programmes in Member States and throughout the United Nations system; update regulations to match technological advancements, ensuring accessible, unbiased solutions for persons with disabilities and preventing new forms of exclusion; and engage users with disabilities, their families and disability organizations in policy planning;

(e) Reduce barriers to international trade in assistive technology to ensure that international trade agreements do not perpetuate inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities; and encourage funding to promote local production of assistive products;

(f) Involve persons with disabilities in decision-making processes on disaster response and humanitarian action, including early warning systems; develop laws, policies, standards, checklists and indicators for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness, planning and response and in climate change adaptation; ensure that emergency information is inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities; maintain a register of persons with disabilities that maps their needs during and after disasters; ensure protection mechanisms in emergency and post-crisis contexts to respond to the risk for

<sup>4</sup> See <http://bit.ly/ddr2024>.

persons with disabilities to violence, abuse and exploitation; strengthen capacity among humanitarian actors on disability inclusion; and integrate technological solutions into emergencies;

(g) Strengthen and harmonize disability data into national systems using internationally comparable methods; establish regular, standardized data collection, involving persons with disabilities; build capacity in developing countries; create an accessible global data repository; and increase disability-disaggregated data in the Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database release data in accessible formats.

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