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**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights  
questions, including alternative approaches for improving the  
effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

### **Participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in review and follow-up processes on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

#### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution [53/14](#).

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\* [A/79/150](#).



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

### *Summary*

In the present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [53/14](#), the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, examines how persons with disabilities have been included and consulted in the review and follow-up processes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Meaningful participation is a human rights imperative under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities. The Sustainable Development Goals could be a catalyst for the practical implementation of the Convention, yet with six years left until 2030, progress has been slow and persons with disabilities are being left behind. Ensuring that their voices are heard is therefore critical to make good on the commitment to leave no one behind and to design and review policies and measures that can effectively accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Strong and inclusive review and follow-up processes are further important as discussions that will shape future international cooperation and the post-2030 Agenda are taking place in the next years.

The Special Rapporteur identifies different entry points at the national, regional and international levels for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to share their experiences, challenges and barriers to benefit effectively from sustainable development. Multiple spaces for consultation and participation exist but are not always accessible and inclusive of persons with disabilities. The report includes some of the key obstacles to meaningful participation, on the basis of inputs received from different stakeholders, as well as conclusions and recommendations on how to overcome existing barriers.

## I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, presents her first report to the General Assembly after taking up her functions in November 2023. In her first report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/55/56) presented in March 2024, she took stock of the first 10 years of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and outlined her thematic priorities and vision for the mandate: “connecting to push forward”. She notably underlined her commitment to promote the disability rights agenda at different levels, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The focus on the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the review and follow-up processes on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda arises in the context of only 17 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals being on track.<sup>1</sup> Growing inequalities, escalating conflicts, expanding climate crisis and enduring effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic are affecting progress towards achieving the Goals, with a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities. The 2030 Agenda gives the means practically to realize the transformation envisioned in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Nearly 20 years since the adoption of the Convention, and with only six years remaining until 2030, the voices and experiences of persons with disabilities must be heard and included more than ever to make concrete changes in their lives and ensure the full enjoyment of their human rights.

3. As States engage in processes to make international cooperation more effective in order to deliver a better present and safeguard the future, persons with disabilities should not be left behind. This is even more important as discussions on the post-2030 Agenda will start in the coming years. Otherwise, inequalities and exclusion might become unsurmountable for the next generations. Since taking up her functions, the Special Rapporteur followed with keen interest the preparations for the Summit of the Future in 2024 and its outcome document, the Pact for the Future. She advocated for a disability rights perspective to be included in the Pact and engaged with a variety of stakeholders in this respect, particularly as part of her travel to New York to attend the sixty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, in February 2024, and the seventeenth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, in June.

4. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur therefore seeks to examine how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have been included in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The main rationale is that meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all actions that concern them is a human rights requirement under the Convention, as well as a prerequisite for effectively addressing inequalities and discrimination. She first outlines the interlinkages between the Convention and the 2030 Agenda and the way persons with disabilities have been integrated into the Sustainable Development Goals. She then considers existing practices for engagement in reviews at the national, regional and international levels, as well as in other related processes, before shining a spotlight on barriers hindering their effective participation. At the end, the Special Rapporteur draws conclusions and recommendations to States and other stakeholders to strengthen meaningful participation.

5. To inform her report, the Special Rapporteur issued a call for inputs and received 36 responses<sup>2</sup> from States, organizations of persons with disabilities and other

<sup>1</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/>.

<sup>2</sup> Inputs received can be consulted at [www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-inputs-reaching-furthest-left-behind-participation-persons-disabilities](http://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-inputs-reaching-furthest-left-behind-participation-persons-disabilities).

stakeholders. She is thankful to all those who contributed and shared valuable information. The preparation of the report further entailed extensive desk research and document review.

## **II. The two-way street between the rights of persons with disabilities and sustainable development**

6. The Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals share the same objectives for persons with disabilities and are mutually reinforcing. The 2030 Agenda seeks ambitious and transformative change for the world and places those in the most vulnerable and marginalized situations at its centre. At the same time, sustainable development can only be disability-inclusive if it follows the principles and standards of the Convention.

### **Nexus between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

7. The 2030 Agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and grounded, inter alia, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. It is therefore intrinsically linked to the Convention, and States parties to the Convention must ensure that all policies and strategies developed to advance the 2030 Agenda are disability-inclusive and compliant with the Convention.

8. The Sustainable Development Goals provide an overall framework on what needs to be achieved for persons with disabilities throughout the 17 Goals and targets but without any specific guidance on how to ensure that disability is mainstreamed throughout. The Convention provides a guiding framework when designing policies and programmes for the implementation of the Goals, ensuring that inequalities and exclusion experienced by persons with disabilities are not perpetuated.

9. Several articles in the Convention are cross-cutting and should therefore be considered when implementing all the Goals in the 2030 Agenda, including but not limited to article 5 on equality and non-discrimination and article 12 on equal recognition before the law; articles 6 and 7 referring to women and children with disabilities and the intersectional discrimination they face, as well as specific considerations they should be given; and article 8 on the obligation to raise awareness regarding persons with disabilities and to foster respect for their rights and dignity. In the same way, article 9 on accessibility shall always be considered in measures to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. Importantly, the Convention provides a human rights framework for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, through articles 4.3 and 33.3. In its general comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities confirmed that the effective and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, is at the heart of the Convention. The general comment specifically references the 2030 Agenda, whereby States should strengthen the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and actively involve and closely consult with persons with disabilities, through their representative

organizations, on the monitoring and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level.

11. Specific linkages to the Convention also arise for many of the Sustainable Development Goals. Advancing Goals 1 and 2 aiming to eradicate poverty and end hunger, for example, requires that State parties consider article 28 of the Convention, related to an adequate standard of living and social protection. Social protection is a key enabler for persons with disabilities to be able to have dignified lives and live independently while alleviating and preventing poverty. Similarly, article 25 is key to achieving Goal 3 on health and well-being as it places upon States the obligation to take appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services without discrimination. Goal 4 requires establishing inclusive education systems across all levels, in line with article 24 of the Convention. Goal 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, particularly through employment and decent work for all, can easily be linked to article 27 of the Convention.

12. Data collection is a key requirement for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals, as identified in target 17.18, which focuses on enhancing national capacities to significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by disability and other characteristics. Similarly, under article 31 of the Convention, States are required to collect data disaggregated by disability, to enable them to formulate and design policies with a view to implement the Convention.

13. Additionally, in line with article 32 of the Convention, persons with disabilities are to benefit on an equal basis with others of international development efforts and cooperation, and thus, structural barriers shall be removed to enable persons with disabilities to participate in and benefit from international cooperation processes and outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

14. Valuable guidance has been developed to create a practical outline of the linkages between the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals to support implementation and follow up to the 2030 Agenda with a disability rights perspective. Of particular note is the resource package issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2020, which contains concrete guidelines and tools to assist policymakers in developing laws, policies and programmes toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under the guidance of the Convention.<sup>4</sup> It further includes training materials and videos to support capacity-building in this area, as well as human rights indicators, aimed at tracking implementation of the Convention and simultaneously contributing to monitoring the Goals.

### **Implementing the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities**

15. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda marked a turning point for disability inclusion in global development policies. In line with the commitment to leave no one behind, a disability rights lens should be applied and mainstreamed in the implementation of the whole 2030 Agenda. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda explicitly mentions persons with disabilities in some of its Goals, namely, those on inclusive and equitable quality education; sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; full and productive employment and decent work for all; reduced inequalities within and among countries; making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (with respect to data, monitoring and accountability). Persons with disabilities are further included in 7 of the 169 targets and 10 of the 231 indicators. Thus, a twin-

<sup>3</sup> See A/75/186, para. 22.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/en/disabilities/sdg-crpd-resource-package](http://www.ohchr.org/en/disabilities/sdg-crpd-resource-package).

track approach to disability inclusion should be followed in implementing the 2030 Agenda: mainstreaming across all the Sustainable Development Goals in combination with specific disability-focused action.

16. The 2018 *Disability and Development Report*<sup>5</sup> shone a spotlight on the numerous barriers to the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the life of their communities and found that they were not sufficiently included in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The findings painted a clear picture of exclusion and inequality across the different spheres covered by the Goals, and as such disability was required to be mainstreamed in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

17. Six years later, the 2024 *Disability and Development Report*<sup>6</sup> indicates that persons with disabilities are being left behind and that implementation needs to accelerate dramatically in many areas to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for them. This limited progress has been accentuated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit persons with disabilities particularly hard, for example, in terms of employment, education and access to services, support and technologies.

18. According to the 2024 report, only five of the Sustainable Development Goals indicators are on track to achieve targets for persons with disabilities by 2030, while for 30 per cent of the targets progress is insufficient and for 14 per cent the target has been missed or progress has stalled or gone into reverse. Wide gaps persist between persons with disabilities and others, especially in terms of food insecurity, health, access to energy, and information and communications technologies, poverty and employment. These gaps are wider for women with disabilities, Indigenous persons with disabilities, persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and persons with disabilities living in rural areas. Only a few areas registered progress, for example, in terms of laws and policies protecting the right of persons with disabilities to education, which now exist in 87 per cent of countries.

19. To illustrate the existing gaps, persons with disabilities continue to be more likely to live in poverty, and progress in coverage by disability benefits has been slow. Food insecurity affects 55 per cent of persons with disabilities in developing countries, and children with disabilities are more prone to have signs of malnutrition. Compared with others, persons with disabilities are much more likely not to have access to health care when they need it, with one reason being inaccessible health facilities. In many countries, persons with disabilities are less likely to have access to safe drinking water and necessary sanitation and hygiene facilities.

20. Only 27 per cent of persons with disabilities are employed, and young people with disabilities are twice as likely as those without disabilities to be in neither employment, education or training. Digital inclusion and accessibility remain a significant challenge. In many countries, persons with disabilities continue to be deprived of legal capacity and face persisting barriers in gaining access to justice. All of these examples relate to key rights enshrined in the Convention and are fundamental for persons with disabilities to live in dignity, have control over their daily lives and be part of their communities. Clearly, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities is severely off track, and persisting inequalities and discrimination continue to undermine their human rights.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://social.desa.un.org/publications/un-flagship-report-on-disability-and-development-2018>.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://social.desa.un.org/publications/un-flagship-report-on-disability-and-development-2024> (only the executive summary was available at the time of writing).

### III. Participation of persons with disabilities in the review and follow-up mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda

21. As part of the 2030 Agenda, States committed to a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework at the national, regional and global levels. The follow-up and review processes aim to track progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets and to identify solutions and best practices, on the basis of evidence and data disaggregated by several characteristics, including disability. In line with the commitment to making these processes open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people, persons with disabilities ought to be included in the review and follow-up mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels.

22. Indeed, in order not to leave anyone behind, the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities are critical to ensure their experiences and challenges are reflected and integrated when assessing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as in related efforts to support and accelerate implementation. And, as outlined above, the participation of persons with disabilities is not only a sound policymaking and programming consideration, but also a human rights imperative.

#### A. National review and monitoring processes

23. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda can succeed only through country-led policies, strategies and programmes with national ownership constituting a key principle for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The review and follow-up on implementation at the national level is the starting point for effectively tracking progress, identifying gaps and ensuring accountability.

##### Policy, coordination and review mechanisms

24. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, States have developed different ways to align their policies, plans and review processes to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, which have grown and complexified over the years. These frameworks vary significantly across countries and offer a multitude of entry points for civil society and other actors to engage and participate in national Sustainable Development Goals reviews and follow-up processes.<sup>7</sup> Persons with disabilities, and their representative organizations, must be included in national policies and strategies and related coordination and review mechanisms to ensure that all voices are heard, especially of those left furthest behind. Disability inclusion, however, does not appear to be systematic in these mechanisms. Information shared with the Special Rapporteur does, nonetheless, contain some positive examples that can serve as good practice to others.

25. Many States have taken steps to align existing or new national development plans and strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals, while others have developed Goals-specific policies, strategies or action plans. Either way, persons with disabilities should be included in consultations to develop, review and monitor national policies and strategies on sustainable development. Some contributions received indicate that this has been the case. Synergies can also be created between national policies and strategies on sustainable development and on the rights of persons with disabilities where they exist. For instance, Ecuador reported on the alignment of its national agenda for the equality of persons with disabilities for the

<sup>7</sup> See [www.un.org/en/desa/world-public-sector-report](http://www.un.org/en/desa/world-public-sector-report).

period 2021–2025, prepared in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, with its national development plan.<sup>8</sup>

26. In line with the 2030 Agenda, States undertook to develop national indicators to complement the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals. However, contrary to the global indicators expressly referring to persons with disabilities, some national indicators omit to include persons with disabilities, therefore leading to a lack of disability-disaggregated data. Here again, the participation of persons with disabilities in the development and reviews of national indicators is key to ensure they do not remain invisible to policymakers.

27. In terms of consultative bodies to formalize the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, in Spain, for example, a sustainable development council functions as an advisory and awareness-raising body in support of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, a committee of representatives of people with disabilities is among the 50 members of the council, composed of civil society, businesses, academia and others, and provided a report on disability and accessibility to the 2023 progress report of the national 2030 sustainable development strategy.<sup>9</sup>

28. Regular reporting on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is increasingly pursued at the national level taking a variety of forms. Civil society – and organizations of persons of disabilities – have not only contributed to such reporting but also taken initiative to issue studies and shadow reports to highlight the gaps as well as successes in implementation of the Goals, and offer valuable grass-roots level perspectives. Organizations of persons with disabilities and civil society can also provide helpful expertise and connections to raise awareness about the Goals and related national processes with their constituencies. For example, organizations of persons with disabilities in Argentina prepared alternative reports in accessible formats with analysis of different Goals-related targets.<sup>10</sup>

29. Subnational and local governments are increasingly involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by creating coordination and reporting mechanisms at their level. Some information shared with the Special Rapporteur illustrates that persons with disabilities have been included in voluntary local reviews, for example, in Government-led provincial consultations in Zimbabwe.<sup>11</sup>

### **Voluntary national reviews**

30. The voluntary national reviews received by far the most attention and traction in terms of national-level review and follow-up on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. These country-led reviews provide an opportunity to share experiences between States who present them to the international community at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. By 2023, 189 States and one regional organization (the European Union) had presented their reviews, with many having already reported twice.<sup>12</sup> The voluntary national reviews process galvanized the development of national ecosystems around follow-up and review of the Goals, going well beyond the formal presentation of the report at the United Nations and

<sup>8</sup> See submission from Ecuador.

<sup>9</sup> See submission from Spain.

<sup>10</sup> See submission from International Disability Alliance, and [www.faica.org.ar/documentos/documentos-y-publicaciones-de-faica/informe-alternativo-argentina-2022.pdf](http://www.faica.org.ar/documentos/documentos-y-publicaciones-de-faica/informe-alternativo-argentina-2022.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> See submission from Sightsavers, and [www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/TCND/voluntary-local-reviews-africa/Victoria-Falls-VLR.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/TCND/voluntary-local-reviews-africa/Victoria-Falls-VLR.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> See [https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023\\_VNR\\_Synthesis\\_Report.pdf](https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023_VNR_Synthesis_Report.pdf).



opening opportunities for systematic civil society participation, albeit variable across countries.<sup>13</sup>

31. Most voluntary national reviews specifically refer to persons with disabilities, although to a varying degree. Persons with disabilities are consistently identified among groups at risk of being left behind, and many reports outline legal and policy measures to address inequalities and exclusion. Such information is valuable, but reporting generally appears to be more descriptive rather than assessing the concrete impact on persons with disabilities. Most disability-specific reporting revolves around well-known key issues, such as anti-discrimination laws and policies and related institutional arrangements; social security; employment; education; health; accessible physical environment, including transport; and disability-disaggregated data. The thematic focus largely mirrors those Sustainable Development Goals that specifically target persons with disabilities, while disability-focused reporting on other Goals is harder to notice.

32. States have increasingly undertaken consultative preparatory processes as part of the voluntary national reviews, for example, through multi-stakeholder platforms, consultations led by civil society, calls for inputs, draft reviews, validation of information and data, and presentation of shadow reports by civil society. In some countries, different stakeholders therefore have a multitude of opportunities to engage and contribute.

33. The Special Rapporteur received examples of disability inclusion in the voluntary national reviews processes highlighting the positive role of civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities to facilitate outreach, collect information and suggest solutions. In Kenya, the national umbrella organization of persons with disabilities is actively engaged in the “SDGs Kenya Forum” – a civil society platform that co-chairs the technical working committee set up by the Government to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As such, the organization contributed to the civil society report annexed to the 2024 voluntary national review of Kenya after consulting organizations of persons with disabilities at the local and regional levels and identifying progress made, existing gaps and recommendations for addressing them.<sup>14</sup>

34. Ideally, the voluntary national review reports themselves should outline the multi-stakeholder consultative processes undertaken and whether they were inclusive of persons with disabilities. This seems to be far from the norm as only 9 of the 37 reviews prepared for 2024 specifically identify persons with disabilities as part of the stakeholders consulted in the review process, most often without providing details about how such consultations were conducted.<sup>15</sup> Information submitted to the Special Rapporteur also points to persons with disabilities being excluded from meaningfully participating in review consultation processes.<sup>16</sup>

35. Existing guidelines on voluntary national reviews preparation stress the need for inclusive and participatory review and follow-up processes on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in line with the founding principles of the 2030 Agenda. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs issues a regularly updated handbook for the preparation of voluntary national reviews, including examples and suggestions on multi-stakeholder engagement and identifying representative voices from marginalized groups.<sup>17</sup> In his common reporting guidelines for voluntary national

<sup>13</sup> See [www.un.org/en/desa/world-public-sector-report](https://www.un.org/en/desa/world-public-sector-report).

<sup>14</sup> See submission from Light for the World. Civil society report can be consulted at <https://sdgkenyaforum.org/vnr-2024>.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>.

<sup>16</sup> See submission from International Disability Alliance.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/VNR%20Handbook%202024%20EN.pdf>.

reviews, the Secretary-General advises that reviews provide information on stakeholder engagement, especially specific groups such as persons with disabilities.<sup>18</sup> The operational common approach guidance note on human rights and voluntary national reviews further highlights meaningful participation as the most effective tool to achieve the social and developmental transformation envisaged in the 2030 Agenda.<sup>19</sup> The United Nations also organizes global and regional workshops to support States in conducting their voluntary national reviews, offering a space for peer learning and sharing of knowledge, including on ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

### **United Nations support for the inclusion of a disability rights perspective in national-level processes**

36. The United Nations system has a key role to play in supporting States in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In recent years, efforts to strengthen capacity on disability inclusion have stepped up, and several strategies and guidance have been adopted to advance disability inclusion and the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in consultations and design of sustainable development tools.

37. Through the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the United Nations system committed to improving its performance on disability inclusion with one of the stated aims being to support States in achieving the 2030 Agenda and implementing the Convention. The implementation of the Strategy is progressively resulting in the increased capacity of the United Nations system at the country level to ensure disability inclusion, which encompasses consulting persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The role of the United Nations country teams is critical in this respect – all 131 country teams report on the implementation of the strategy, and intensified efforts are vitally needed to improve performance on the 72 per cent of the Strategy’s indicators are not yet being met.<sup>20</sup>

38. Participation is one of the foundational elements of the Strategy, and its implementation has fostered increasing and more systematic consultations with organizations of persons with disabilities, including at the country level. That said, more remains to be done concerning the need to engage persons with disabilities in their diversity, and not just on disability-specific issues but on all areas of work.<sup>21</sup> The 2021 system-wide guidelines on consulting with persons with disabilities provide direction in this respect while seeking to systematize the United Nations approach to consultation through a human-rights based approach to disability.<sup>22</sup>

39. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework represents the main instrument for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating United Nations activities in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country level. Leaving no one behind is a guiding principle of the Framework and calls for “ensuring the free, active and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, particularly the most marginalized”.<sup>23</sup>

40. In line with the Framework, United Nations country teams examine progress, gaps and opportunities with respect to sustainable development at the national level,

<sup>18</sup> See [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27171SG\\_Guidelines\\_2021.final.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27171SG_Guidelines_2021.final.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/sdgs/2030/2022-07-01/HRandVNRs\\_Guidance\\_Note2022.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/sdgs/2030/2022-07-01/HRandVNRs_Guidance_Note2022.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> See [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/undis\\_sg\\_report\\_2022\\_english.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/undis_sg_report_2022_english.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> See [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_disability-inclusive\\_consultation\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_consultation_guidelines.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> See <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20Cooperation%20Framework%20Internal%20Guidance%20--%201%20June%202022.pdf>.

which in turn helps to determine programming priorities to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Preparations of the document – the common country analysis – include consultations with civil society and vulnerable groups. This informs the development of the Cooperation Framework at the national level, as agreed between the United Nations and the Government, which outlines the contributions of the United Nations development system in the country.

41. The common country analysis and the Cooperation Framework, therefore, represent important tools to strengthen the participation of persons with disabilities with respect to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including reviews of related national policies and strategies. There are examples of United Nations country teams engaging organizations of persons with disabilities in this area, and some have established advisory groups of persons with disabilities that integrate a diverse range of representative organizations. However, overall, there is a need for more systematic and structured consultations that are inclusive of marginalized groups of persons with disabilities.<sup>24</sup> United Nations country teams are also increasingly engaging in the preparation of the voluntary national reviews and guiding the process in numerous countries,<sup>25</sup> providing another opportunity to ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

42. Moreover, the Development Coordination Office, which supports United Nations capacity to assist national efforts for sustainable development, is committed to making the work of the United Nations development system inclusive of persons with disabilities by adopting a disability inclusion strategy for the period 2022–2025.<sup>26</sup> That strategy follows the indicators of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and as such recognizes meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities as a key element. It further aims to strengthen accessibility and reasonable accommodation, which are essential to ensure meaningful consultation.

## **B. Global reviews and the high-level political forum on sustainable development**

43. Voluntary national reviews form the basis for the follow-up and review process at the global level conducted by the annual high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. Besides carrying out the voluntary national reviews, the forum also considers the annual Sustainable Development Goals progress report, five or six Goals at a time, with the aim of facilitating the sharing of good practices and lessons learned and promoting the system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies. A high-level segment concludes the forum, with the adoption of a negotiated ministerial declaration.

### **Participation through the major groups and other stakeholders**

44. The high-level political forum provides a solid and institutionalized mechanism for including constituencies that are at the centre of the 2030 Agenda through the framework of “major groups and other stakeholders”. The major groups and other stakeholders actively contributed to and participated in the development and adoption of the 2030 Agenda, have an active role in the forum and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/undis\\_sg\\_report\\_2022\\_english.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/undis_sg_report_2022_english.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> See [https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023\\_VNR\\_Synthesis\\_Report.pdf](https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023_VNR_Synthesis_Report.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> See <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-dco-disability-inclusion-strategy-2022-2025>.

<sup>27</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 70/1, para. 89; and 67/290.

45. The major groups and other stakeholders are invited to attend and intervene in official meetings of the forum, submit and present contributions, make recommendations on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and organize side events. The different groups are self-organized and self-coordinated and have the responsibility to ensure effective, broad and balanced participation reflecting the diversity of their respective constituencies. This institutional mechanism to guarantee participation is integral to the review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. The challenge is to ensure that participation is meaningful and accessible, and that the different groups and stakeholders remain open and reflect the diversity of their constituencies without creating situations of gatekeeping.

46. Persons with disabilities are specifically identified among the major groups and other stakeholders,<sup>28</sup> and their participation is organized through the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>29</sup> The International Disability Alliance leads the Group with the support of the International Disability and Development Consortium, with membership being open to all persons with disabilities, organizations of persons with disabilities, non-governmental and other organizations working on the rights of persons with disabilities, and non-governmental donors working within this space. The Group takes a human-rights based approach to ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities within sustainable development while considering their diversity, for example, in terms of impairments, sex, age, regional representation and other factors.<sup>30</sup>

47. The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities was successful in making the disability rights perspective visible and represented through different activities around the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Persons with disabilities have been invited to speak at least at one of the official meetings of the forum every year. The Group formally submits information on the Sustainable Development Goals and persons with disabilities relating to the themes under review at the forum, which is compiled through a consultative process with its members. It further engages in advocacy to promote disability inclusion in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in established thematic working groups, for example, on disability data or disaster risk reduction and climate action. Through engagement with the United Nations, it has also raised awareness and knowledge concerning accessibility for persons with disabilities to take part in the forum and provided recommendations for accessibility of meetings.<sup>31</sup>

48. Early after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the organizations leading the Stakeholder Group issued a comprehensive guide and a toolkit on the Sustainable Development Goals and persons with disabilities to raise awareness and understanding about the linkages between the Goals and the Convention.<sup>32</sup> They further shared extensive reports and observations about the Group's participation at the high-level political forum, how persons with disabilities were included and the impact of activities. Although less frequent and comprehensive in recent years, these resources are valuable for the disability community and beyond to be informed about disability inclusion in the global Goals review processes.

### **Preparatory processes and regional forums for sustainable development**

49. The high-level political forum on sustainable development draws upon a cycle of substantive preparations consisting of regional preparatory forums convened by

<sup>28</sup> See General Assembly resolution 67/290, para. 16.

<sup>29</sup> See [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/stakeholder-group-persons-disabilities](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/stakeholder-group-persons-disabilities).

<sup>30</sup> See terms of reference for the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities, 2017 – available at [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/stakeholder-group-persons-disabilities](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/stakeholder-group-persons-disabilities).

<sup>31</sup> See [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/accessibility-sgpd](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/accessibility-sgpd).

<sup>32</sup> Available at [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/2030-agenda-crpdpd](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/2030-agenda-crpdpd).

the Economic and Social Commissions of the United Nations; expert group meetings focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals under review; official inputs submitted by different stakeholders; and the preparation of voluntary national reviews. It is important for a disability-rights perspective to be mainstreamed throughout these preparatory processes to achieve the meaningful participation and consultation of persons with disabilities in the review and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.

50. The Expert Group Meetings, organized by the United Nations system, bring together diverse experts and stakeholders to review progress on commitments towards the different Sustainable Development Goals. They identify good practices and lessons learned, areas of particular concern, challenges and opportunities for accelerating implementation, and consider interlinkages with other Goals. Persons with disabilities and experts on disability rights have participated in some of the meetings<sup>33</sup> and they should be regularly represented to ensure that disability inclusion is mainstreamed when reviewing the Goals and reflecting on ways forward.

51. Background notes prepared to inform the thematic sessions of the forum offer limited insights into the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities. Between 2017 (when thematic reviews of individual Goals started) and 2023, about one third of background notes published on the pages of the forum referred to persons with disabilities. However, more than half of the references pertain to vulnerable groups in general, with little disability-specific information and recommendations.

52. At the regional level, the annual regional forums for sustainable development offer platforms for assessing progress and exchanging best practices, lessons learned and policy solutions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda while considering regional priorities and specificities. The five regional forums are convened by the United Nations regional economic and social commissions. They are expected to include the participation and consultation of civil society and other stakeholders.<sup>34</sup>

53. Regional civil society forums and engagement mechanisms have been established to facilitate civil society inputs into the regional forums on sustainable development. Led and coordinated by civil society, some of these mechanisms include persons with disabilities among their constituency groups.<sup>35</sup> Depending on the region, these mechanisms appear more or less known and inclusive of persons with disabilities. They offer opportunities for coordination and cooperation between different constituencies, thus bringing disability into play with other intersections, as well as providing opportunities to engage on a subregional level. Other examples point to positive regional cross-constituency exchanges and advocacy, such as a 2024 Youth Forum organized by civil society organizations before the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, where young people with disabilities can share their perspectives and the challenges they face in the implementation, monitoring and decision-making processes on the Sustainable Development Goals before participating in the regional forum itself.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In June 2020, the previous Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas, participated in the virtual expert group meeting on the theme “Responding to the economic shock, relaunching growth, sharing economic benefits and addressing developing countries’ financing challenges”.

<sup>34</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 70/1, para. 80; and 67/290, para. 13.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (<http://asiapacificrcem.org>) and the ECE Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (<http://ece-rcem.org/>).

<sup>36</sup> See submission by Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women and its partners, Blind Youth Association of Nepal and Women with Disabilities Development Foundation.

## High-level events and efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

54. Every four years, the high-level political forum meets under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of heads of State and Government, to follow up and comprehensively review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Two such forums, known as Sustainable Development Goals Summits, have taken place so far: one in 2019 and one 2023. Both resulted in the adoption of a political declaration.

55. In 2019, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit reaffirmed the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda while recognizing that progress had been slow in certain areas and announcing over 100 Goals-related accelerators. A key message was that partnerships with civil society were crucial to achieve the Goals. In the political declaration, States reiterated the commitment to leave no one behind and put the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, at the centre of their policies and actions.<sup>37</sup> Against the backdrop of limited progress and multiple crises facing the world, the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit placed the emphasis on accelerating the implementation of the Goals. The 2023 political declaration contains more references to persons with disabilities, including a commitment to ensuring that they actively participate in and equally benefit from sustainable development efforts.<sup>38</sup> The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities engaged in advocacy at the forums to promote better disability inclusion in adopted declarations.

56. Both Sustainable Development Goals Summits further sought to promote accelerated actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Actions to accelerate achievement of the Goals are initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments and any other non-State actors – individually or in partnerships – to accelerate implementation of the Goals.<sup>39</sup> The actions are intended to help inspire and mobilize other actions around the world to promote the implementation of the Goals, as well as build resilience and inclusive recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 442 actions were listed in the online database at the time of writing, with some related to the commitment not to leave persons with disabilities behind.<sup>40</sup> A recent study found that around half of the actions took a multi-stakeholder approach and targeted vulnerable groups that are left behind.<sup>41</sup> While it is challenging to assess the extent to which persons with disabilities participate in the actions – as initiators, partners or beneficiaries – the initiative offers another space for participation and inclusion in the 2030 Agenda.

57. The two Sustainable Development Goals Summits were held back-to-back with the High-level Dialogues for Financing for Development to ensure that financing was commensurate with Goals-related commitments and to advance implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the United Nations framework for mobilizing resources to implement the Goals. As a follow-up process, and in addition to the High-level Dialogues, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda established the annual forum on financing for development follow-up, which brings together Governments, civil society and businesses to examine past challenges and propose future actions to align and mobilize resources for the Goals.

<sup>37</sup> See General Assembly resolution 74/4.

<sup>38</sup> See General Assembly resolution 78/1.

<sup>39</sup> See <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/action-networks/acceleration-actions>.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/inclusive-entrepreneurship-persons-disabilities-dr-congo>; <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/social-inclusion-persons-disabilities-arab-region-accelerated-inclusion-millions>; and <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/disenio-e-implementacion-de-un-sistema-nacional-de-cuidados>.

<sup>41</sup> See <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/Study%20on%20SDG%20Accelerators-%20Feb%207%202023.pdf>.



58. The 2023 High-level Dialogue, held under the theme of “Financing the Sustainable Development Goals for a world where no one is left behind” concluded that there was an urgent need for swift action to bridge the financial gap by scaling up public and private resources earmarked for the Goals and translating commitment into actions. Making sure that political commitments are followed with adequate resource allocation is decisive in order to make them a reality. Without investment in inclusive international development, persons with disabilities, among other groups, will not benefit from the progress made in achieving the 2030 Agenda and post-2030 agenda. Thus, the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, as well as in the annual forums, is of utmost importance.

59. To accelerate efforts to meet existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, States agreed to hold a Summit for the Future in September 2024. The Summit will produce a negotiated outcome document, the Pact for the Future, as well as two annexes – a global digital compact and a declaration on future generations. Despite being a States-led process, other stakeholders, including representatives of major groups and other stakeholders, were invited to participate in different instances leading to the Summit and to submit inputs regarding the preparation and revisions of the outcome documents, as well as participate in related virtual consultations. At the time of writing, the first revised draft of the pact for the future contained specific references to persons with disabilities, as well as other disability-inclusive language, in an apparent improvement from the zero draft, which disregarded persons with disabilities altogether.<sup>42</sup>

60. In addition, a United Nations civil society conference was held in May 2024 ahead of the Summit of the Future. The outcome package from the conference highlighted the need for overall better inclusion of persons with disabilities in these international processes, emphasized the absence of robust data disaggregated on the basis of disability and other factors, and stated that persons with disabilities should be recognized as disproportionately affected in times of conflict and crises and thus responses should be inclusive of them and address their unique vulnerabilities.<sup>43</sup>

61. In 2025, the General Assembly decided that the United Nations would host the Second World Summit for Social Development, to address gaps and recommit to the principles outlined in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and give momentum towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This Summit would represent a new opportunity to put human rights of persons with disabilities up front in social development efforts and ensure persons with disabilities are not left behind.

#### **IV. Overcoming barriers and supporting meaningful participation**

62. The 2030 Agenda opened multiple spaces for participation and consultation with persons with disabilities in the review and follow-up mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels. However, meaningful participation is hampered by a lack of accessibility and openness to persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The below barriers were identified in the submissions received for the present report.

<sup>42</sup> Documents related to the Summit can be consulted at [www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future](http://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future).

<sup>43</sup> See [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024uncsc\\_impact\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_outcome\\_package.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024uncsc_impact_for_the_future_outcome_package.pdf).

## A. Accessibility

63. Accessible information and consultative mechanisms remain a key challenge for persons with disabilities to engage in review and follow-up processes on the Sustainable Development Goals. Far too often, persons with disabilities are not aware of actions being conducted at the national, regional or international level, owing to the lack of dedicated platforms with information in accessible formats and in the local languages of persons with disabilities.<sup>44</sup> A good practice in this regard was highlighted in Argentina, where information related to the Goals is accessible in diverse formats on the Government's website, in easy-to-read versions and in sign language interpretation through videos.<sup>45</sup>

64. At the national level, even when informative meetings for civil society are organized and promoted (either by the Government or civil society coalitions) to consult and assess the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in many cases such meetings are not accessible. There is a general lack of closed captioning and sign language interpretation in online and in-person meetings, and of reasonable accommodation funds, in place to allow for the participation of persons with disabilities.<sup>46</sup> Thus, although multi-stakeholder engagement mechanisms on sustainable development are in place, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations often cannot gain access properly to consultations and information and provide their views and concerns. One example of accessible consultations that was shared related to voluntary local reviews and provincial consultations in Zimbabwe, where venues and meeting schedules were selected bearing in mind accessibility for persons with disabilities.<sup>47</sup>

65. Accessibility also remains a challenge at the international level.<sup>48</sup> Sign language interpretation is not always foreseen and available even if requested at the time of registration, thus limiting participation for those with hearing impairments – for example in consultations and meetings related to the Summit for the Future, such as virtual consultations for civil society, the virtual stakeholders' briefing on the declaration for future generations and the 2024 United Nations Civil Society Conference, held in Nairobi.<sup>49</sup>

66. Attending discussions in New York, where events that relate to the global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda normally take place, also represents an obstacle for persons with disabilities, owing to the lack of funding for their representative organizations, especially considering that their representatives might have specific support needs. This ultimately prevents many grass-roots organizations from engaging meaningfully in these discussions in the international arena.<sup>50</sup>

## B. Capacity-building for organizations of persons with disabilities

67. The multiple and complex system of review and follow-up mechanisms to the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and international levels open opportunities to include the voices of persons with disabilities but also require

<sup>44</sup> See submissions from International Disability Alliance, Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women and its partners, Blind Youth Association of Nepal and Women with Disabilities Development Foundation, and the United Nations Population Fund.

<sup>45</sup> Submission by Argentina; see also [www.argentina.gob.ar/politicassociales/ods/accesibles](http://www.argentina.gob.ar/politicassociales/ods/accesibles).

<sup>46</sup> See submissions from the International Disability Alliance and IPAS.

<sup>47</sup> See submission by Sightsavers.

<sup>48</sup> See submissions by IPAS and the World Federation of the Deaf.

<sup>49</sup> See submission from the World Federation of the Deaf.

<sup>50</sup> See submissions by the European Network on Independent Living and IPAS.



capacity and resources. Limited capacity-building and resources, including lack of information about how to engage in Goals-related processes and reviews, have been identified as a major barrier to participation in numerous submissions received. As part of the obligation laid out in the Convention to consult closely with and actively involve persons with disabilities, States should strengthen the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities to participate in all phases of policymaking – including review and monitoring mechanisms – and provide independent funding and other sources of support.<sup>51</sup>

68. Information shared with the Special Rapporteur illustrated how, in some countries, meaningful participation in the reporting on and review of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is dependent on the support from development partners.<sup>52</sup> Some good practices in terms of capacity-building have been highlighted. In particular, the BRIDGE CRPD-SDG capacity-building programme by the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium resulted in training over 1,700 organizations of persons with disabilities from different world regions on the implementation of the Convention and linkages to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The initiative had a significant impact on the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in reporting on and reviewing the implementation of both the Convention and the Goals across the world, including at the regional level.<sup>53</sup>

69. National development cooperation can also be used to provide technical and financial support to build capacity for disability rights advocacy in national and international processes.<sup>54</sup>

### **C. Ensuring cross-disability and intersectional perspectives**

70. Another challenge to meaningful participation comes from a lack of inclusion of the most marginalized groups among persons with disabilities, especially those with intersecting factors who face steeper attitudinal, social and economic barriers, such as women, young people, older persons, Indigenous people or persons living in rural areas. This prevents hearing the voices and integrating the experiences of those that are left the furthest behind into reports and reviews on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A cross-disability perspective is equally important whereby persons with disabilities with high support needs tend to have fewer chances to participate.<sup>55</sup>

71. In some submissions, it was pointed out that participation in consultations and review processes was usually open to well-established and known organizations of persons with disabilities, resulting in a lack of diverse representation. Ensuring a plurality of disability perspectives constitutes an element of meaningful participation, and more efforts are needed to include grass-roots organizations and activists in review and follow-up mechanisms.

72. United Nations entities have supported the capacity-building of organizations and networks of persons with disabilities at the national level, including by bringing a focus on those facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as women with disabilities. The United Nations Population Fund, for example, supports the capacity-

<sup>51</sup> General comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention paras. 39 and 60–64.

<sup>52</sup> See submissions from Sightsavers and Light for the World.

<sup>53</sup> Submission from the International Disability Alliance.

<sup>54</sup> Submission from Germany.

<sup>55</sup> Submission from the United Nations Population Fund.

building of women with disabilities to advocate for their rights and engage in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in several countries.<sup>56</sup> Good practices also exist with respect to United Nations programmes and initiatives to support the meaningful engagement of young persons with disabilities in decision-making, for example in Kyrgyzstan, where the United Nations country team established a disability-inclusive youth advisory board to advise on needs, concerns and involvement in advancing the 2030 Agenda.<sup>57</sup>

## D. Disability-disaggregated data

73. Limited data disaggregated on the basis of disability is consistently identified as a major obstacle to making the lived realities of persons with disabilities visible and included in reviews and follow-up mechanisms on the 2030 Agenda. In several submissions, it was indicated that national data on progress related to the Sustainable Development Goals was not disaggregated on the basis of disability, although in some instances there are plans to do so in the future. Limited data creates significant challenges in monitoring progress, as well as in designing evidence-based policies and programmes to accelerate implementation of the Goals for persons with disabilities.

74. The annual Sustainable Development Goals reports, for example, offer little information and analysis about the situation of persons with disabilities with respect to different Sustainable Development Goals. These annual studies represent the only form of official United Nations reporting that monitors global progress on the 2030 Agenda, using the latest available data and estimates. In 2022, data was available for only 2 out of the 10 Sustainable Development Goals indicators that require disaggregation by disability status,<sup>58</sup> despite better disaggregation by disability being among the most urgent needs reported by countries with respect to capacities in statistics.

75. The number of countries collecting data on persons with disabilities and using the recommended Washington Group short set of questions on functioning is increasing, making disability-disaggregated data more available. However, progress towards having data disaggregated by Sustainable Development Goals indicators is slow – at the current pace, fewer than 5 out of the 10 Goals indicators explicitly requiring disability disaggregation will have the data by 2030.<sup>59</sup> Accelerated efforts are required for disability-disaggregated data to be collected regularly in a standardized way between countries.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

**76. The meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the review and follow-up processes related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is both a human rights obligation under international law and a key tool to mainstream a disability rights perspective in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The commitment to leave no one behind, as well as engagement with key constituencies, form an integral part of the 2030**

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> See [www.un.org/youthenvoy/believe-in-better-from-policy-to-practice](https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/believe-in-better-from-policy-to-practice), chap. 5.

<sup>58</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> See <https://social.desa.un.org/publications/un-flagship-report-on-disability-and-development-2024>.

**Agenda.** With respect to the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities, this means two things, described below.

77. First, specific disability targets and indicators in the 2030 Agenda have resulted in more visibility and information in reporting and reviews at the international, regional and national levels. Disability-inclusive reporting and consultations appear mostly concentrated on sector-specific social issues, such as social protection, employment, education, health care, accessible physical infrastructure and anti-discrimination frameworks. Although these are all critical issues, meaningful participation requires persons with disabilities to be consulted on all issues affecting their lives and therefore to be systematically included in the review and follow-up processes of all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

78. Compared with past development agendas, persons with disabilities now have a seat at the table and more opportunities to share their views, experiences and concerns. However, this does not automatically translate into genuinely considering and integrating persons with disabilities and their human rights into outcome documents, policies and strategies. To ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities continue to be included, future agreements and resolutions on international cooperation should be grounded in effective consultative mechanisms and contain concrete and actionable references to persons with disabilities in order to tackle persisting inequalities and exclusion. Not doing so will lead to setbacks in achieving the transformation envisaged in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is even more important given that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is severely off track and persons with disabilities are being left behind.

79. Second, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have a myriad of entry points for engaging with the 2030 Agenda at the international, regional and national levels. This does not equal meaningful participation as many barriers continue to hinder their engagement, such as lack of accessibility to consultations and information about the Sustainable Development Goals, limited capacity and resources, lack of diverse representation and slow progress in the provision of disability-disaggregated data to effectively inform reviews and related action to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The present report highlights positive examples to support meaningful participation, but more systematic action and investment are needed to ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard and integrated.

80. The Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendations to States to ensure the meaningful inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda:

(a) Establish accessible and inclusive tools, including digital platforms, to inform and raise awareness about national policies and actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda and related consultative and review processes, such as voluntary national reviews;

(b) Establish open, inclusive, transparent and accessible consultative mechanisms for national and subnational review and follow-up processes on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with the participation of all groups at risk of being left behind. Here, persons with disabilities should be identified specifically instead of using broad terms such as “vulnerable groups”, which hinders the representation of disability-specific issues. This further includes putting in place reasonable accommodation funds to provide support as needed for cross-disability and intersectional participation;

(c) Accessibility measures should consider all types of impairments and include compliance with international web accessibility standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines;<sup>60</sup>

(d) Provide details in voluntary national reviews about how different stakeholders, and persons with disabilities specifically, were consulted and incorporate their observations and recommendations, for example as annexes. Outline the impact of policies and measures taken to achieve the Goals for persons with disabilities;

(e) Ensure that persons with disabilities are represented in all bodies tasked to monitor and review the implementation of the Goals, such as sustainable development councils, advisory committees and monitoring boards;

(f) Allocate independent funding to increase and strengthen the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities to contribute and participate in the Goals review and follow-up processes at all levels, in particular organizations at the grass-roots level and representing those at particular risk of being marginalized;

(g) Support the provision of assistive technologies and devices, as well as digital inclusion, to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda review processes and discussions on the post-2030 Agenda at all geographical levels;

(h) Build capacity to generate, compile and analyse disability-disaggregated data in line with the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning, including by reviewing and updating national indicators for those Goals targets that explicitly mention persons with disabilities, aiming at making all Goals indicators disability-inclusive;

(i) Foster partnerships between States, international organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities to leverage expertise and resources for disability-inclusive implementation of the Goals;

(j) Ensure that persons with disabilities, as well as other groups at risk of being left behind, and civil society are meaningfully and systematically consulted and their opinions duly weighted in the negotiations of resolutions and outcome documents concerning sustainable development.

81. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the United Nations system:

(a) Speed up efforts to implement the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, in particular within United Nations country teams, with a focus on increased and systematic consultations with organizations of persons with disabilities, including in processes related to the development and reviews of the common country analyses and cooperation frameworks;

(b) Step up efforts to ensure that all consultation mechanisms related to the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development are disability-inclusive and accessible, including by providing the possibility of online participation to foster the inclusion of diverse voices, such as women and girls, young people, older persons and other disadvantaged groups of persons with disabilities;

(c) Ensure that persons with disabilities are included in meetings and thematic studies on the implementation of all of the Goals, such as expert group

<sup>60</sup> See [www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/).

meetings, workshops and other preparatory processes of the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(d) Dedicate specific segments at the regional forums on sustainable development to discussing progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for and with persons with disabilities, and ensure the necessary arrangements for their meaningful participation, including through accessibility measures.

82. The Special Rapporteur recommends that international, national and private donors and foundations support capacity-building initiatives for organizations of persons with disabilities to engage effectively in the review and follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. This can include training on advocacy, compliance with the Convention, policy analysis, data interpretation, inclusive budgeting and monitoring and evaluation techniques.

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