



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-seventh session**

Bangkok and online, 26–29 April 2021

Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission: Committee on Social Development**Report on the sixth session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, held its sixth session online on 24 and 25 September 2020.

The Working Group was established in 2013 to provide technical advice and support for the full and effective implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

During the sixth session, the Working Group reviewed progress made on the implementation of the Incheon Strategy since its fifth session, with a particular focus on goal 1 on poverty and employment, goal 6 on gender equality and women’s empowerment and goal 7 on disaster risk reduction. It also held discussions on present and potential initiatives to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic and on the preparatory process for the conclusion of the Decade. In addition, it adopted a set of recommendations to support the implementation of the Incheon Strategy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific may wish to consider the report of the Working Group with a view to providing guidance on the implementation of the Incheon Strategy.

* ESCAP/77/L.1.

I. Decisions

1. At its sixth session, held online on 24 and 25 September 2020, the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, decided that the thematic focus of its next session would be on the remaining four goals of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific: goal 2 on participation in political processes and in decision-making; goal 5 on early intervention and education of children with disabilities; goal 9 on the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and goal 10 on subregional, regional and interregional cooperation.

II. Recommendations

2. During discussions at its sixth session, the Working Group made the following recommendations.

Coronavirus disease and persons with disabilities

3. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members¹ to pay special attention to, and take measures to promote, the physical and mental well-being of persons with diverse disabilities in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including persons with severe disabilities and in particular persons with respiratory care needs, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons with autism, deaf persons, blind and partially sighted persons, and persons with disabilities in institutions.

4. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to study the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities in a comprehensive manner and to develop holistic and integrative measures across sectors, beyond temporary measures aimed at mitigating the short-term impacts of the pandemic, to empower persons with disabilities and systematically address barriers to disability inclusion.

5. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to support the work of organizations of persons with disabilities, including grassroots organizations, with regard to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to develop legislation and policies to mandate the accessibility of information on the pandemic in alignment with international guidelines and standards, and to provide relevant training to public entities and other stakeholder organizations to ensure the timely provision of critical public information in accessible formats, including easy-to-read versions.

7. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to increase the accessibility of communication for deaf people to allow them to access information on an equal basis with others, including through accessible resources on the Internet and in a diversity of sign languages.

8. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to develop legislation and policies to promote the development of accessible digital

¹ The term “members and associate members” in the present document refers to all members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which are listed in full at www.unescap.org/about/member-states.

technologies and platforms to facilitate continued access for persons with disabilities to employment and essential goods and services through remote working and e-commerce.

9. Working Group members were encouraged to submit case studies in writing to the secretariat by 31 December 2020, including good practices and lessons learned in developing and implementing disability-inclusive COVID-19 responses.

10. Working Group members wishing to participate in the reference group for the development and review of the ESCAP web page dedicated to COVID-19 and persons with disabilities were requested to indicate their interest in writing to the secretariat by 30 November 2020.

11. Working Group members were encouraged to raise awareness about the resources available on the dedicated web page within their respective countries and constituencies.

Incheon Strategy goals

12. Working Group members were encouraged to submit case studies in writing to the secretariat by 30 November 2020, including good practices and lessons learned in the areas of employment for persons with disabilities, in particular on sheltered workshops, supported employment and social firms; gender equality and women's empowerment; and disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

13. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to strengthen the collection, management and analysis of disability-disaggregated data across all sectors, including through improved interministerial coordination and enhanced institutional capacities in the area of statistical development and management.

Employment

14. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to protect the livelihoods of persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond by engaging in advocacy and coordination with employers to ensure continued employment and by supporting entrepreneurship, including by promoting the use of accessible digital technologies to facilitate remote working and e-commerce.

15. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to collaborate with employers and other stakeholders to train persons with disabilities in skills that were relevant to the labour market and adaptable to rapidly developing technologies, including those that empowered persons with disabilities to utilize digital technologies to work or manage businesses remotely.

16. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to provide enhanced support to employers to facilitate the smooth and productive employment of persons with disabilities, including incentives, technical advice, sensitization and training services, and updated information on existing disability inclusion policies.

17. The secretariat was requested to share a policy paper on employment for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific with Working Group members by 31 December 2020. Working Group members were requested to disseminate the paper within their respective countries and constituencies.

18. Working Group members were encouraged to engage with their counterparts in labour ministries to improve the collection, management and analysis of disability-disaggregated statistics on employment, including by ensuring that disability-specific indicators were integrated into regular labour-market surveys.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

19. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to take measures to empower women and girls with disabilities, including actions to promote their representation in decision-making bodies in government and other sectors.

20. The Working Group called upon the disability and women's movements in Asia and the Pacific and related organizations to strengthen ties and upon organizations of women with disabilities in the region to come together in solidarity to empower women and girls with disabilities and advance their rights.

21. The Working Group called upon organizations of women with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific to share experiences, expertise, information and resources to effectively advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities and address common challenges and barriers in that regard.

22. The Working Group requested the secretariat to facilitate regional networking among organizations of women with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction

23. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to ensure that persons with diverse disabilities, including persons whose disabilities might not be visible and those who were in institutions and facilities, were not left behind in disaster risk reduction and management systems, laws, policies and programmes.

24. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to ensure the meaningful representation, participation and training of persons with disabilities in all phases and aspects of disaster risk reduction and management.

25. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to engage in multi-stakeholder collaboration to harness the varied experiences and expertise of all actors in disaster risk reduction and management, including local, grassroots and community-based organizations, humanitarian actors, and experts in universal design-based accessibility improvements and their professional organizations.

26. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to develop and strengthen national and local statistical systems to ensure that disability-disaggregated data were available to facilitate the design, implementation and monitoring of all phases of disaster risk reduction and management.

27. Working Group members were requested to provide feedback on improving the ESCAP e-learning tools on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction² in writing to the secretariat by 28 February 2021.

Resource mobilization

28. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members as well as other donors to mobilize more resources for the Asia-Pacific Multi-donor Trust Fund in support of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.

Conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

29. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to consider the following aims in their deliberations on the direction of disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific beyond the conclusion of the Decade in 2022:

(a) To emphasize the importance of the full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, including through organizations of persons with disabilities at the regional, subregional, national and grassroots levels, in making decisions about the way forward in promoting disability rights and disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific beyond the conclusion of the Decade in 2022;

(b) To promote the mainstreaming of disability inclusion into the implementation and reporting of international and regional instruments and frameworks on sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, at the regional, subregional and national levels;

(c) To strengthen the implementation and, where applicable, enforcement, of international and regional instruments and frameworks specific to disability rights and disability-inclusive development at the national and local levels;

(d) To encourage the harmonization of disability statistics at the regional level, including through multi-stakeholder collaboration and the utilization of big data;

(e) To emphasize the importance of adequate public resource allocation to ensure the furtherance of disability inclusion in all aspects of policy, in line with the human-rights-based approach;

(f) To take measures to increase the participation and representation of persons with disabilities in political processes and in decision-making in government and other sectors;

(g) To reshape and expand on the narrative of disability and disability-inclusive development to include economic perspectives, for example the recognition of the contributions of persons with disabilities to sustainable development, while emphasizing the need to apply the human-rights-based approach to disability-inclusive development.

² The tools are available on the ESCAP “Make the Right Real” portal at www.maketherightreal.net/learning.

30. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members, in the context of their deliberations on the direction of disability-inclusive development in the region beyond the conclusion of the Decade, to consider requesting the secretariat to provide technical support in the following areas:

(a) Developing regional, subregional and national initiatives to support members and associate members in fully implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

(b) Conducting in-depth studies on national implementation of the Convention, including on the extent to which Convention commitments have been harmonized with national legislation and on barriers impeding the full and effective implementation of the Convention;

(c) Providing technical support to Governments in reviewing gaps and barriers to Convention implementation and in translating international and national frameworks into national legislation and policy, including effective implementation thereof, at all levels of government;

(d) Continuing to serve as a platform for members and associate members to share experiences, expertise, information and resources on disability inclusion, and further collating and disseminating good practices and innovative solutions that can be adapted and replicated.

31. The Working Group requested the secretariat to continue and enhance its collaboration with other United Nations entities in the implementation and review of activities carried out in the context of the Decade.

Other matters

32. The Working Group requested the secretariat to provide an update on the implementation of the ESCAP Disability Inclusion Policy and ESCAP disability inclusion implementation plan for the period 2020–2021 at its seventh session.

III. Proceedings

A. Review of the implementation of decisions and recommendations emanating from the fifth session of the Working Group
(Agenda item 4)

33. The Working Group had before it the report on its fifth session (ESCAP/75/7).

34. Representatives of India and the Republic of Korea made statements.

35. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) Consortium; Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region; and Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region.

36. The secretariat provided a status update on the implementation of decisions and recommendations recorded in the report on the fifth session. The Working Group was also informed of the actions taken by its members and the secretariat in line with the decisions and recommendations.

37. Working Group members shared information about disability-inclusive initiatives and projects. Some of the good practices that were highlighted covered the areas of awareness-raising, community-based inclusive

development, data collection, disability-inclusive business, disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, disability-inclusive sports, information and communications technology (ICT) accessibility, international cooperation, and sign language interpretation services.

38. Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region, invited Working Group members to attend its webinar on employment and work conditions for persons with disabilities in the post-COVID-19 era, to be held at the end of November 2020.

B. Discussion on COVID-19 and persons with disabilities, including initiatives to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic

(Agenda item 5)

39. The Working Group had before it information notes containing the policy brief on ensuring disability rights and inclusion in the response to COVID-19 (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/1), the report on the webinar on protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/2) and the briefing note on the new ESCAP project on protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/3).

40. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Malaysia; Russian Federation; and Samoa.

41. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region; Pacific Disability Forum; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; Shuchona Foundation; South Asian Disability Forum; World Blind Union Asia-Pacific; World Federation of the Deaf Regional Secretariat for Asia; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

42. The secretariat gave a presentation on disability-inclusive government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific and introduced its project on protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of COVID-19. The secretariat reported that at least 44 out of 49 member States had taken measures to mainstream disability considerations into COVID-19 responses. Working Group members were also briefed on a new ESCAP project with funding support from Rehabilitation International. The project consists of two components: the provision of seed funding for pilot initiatives that further the protection and empowerment of persons with disabilities during the pandemic and its aftermath; and the development of an accessible web page dedicated to COVID-19 and disability inclusion, to be hosted on the ESCAP "Make the Right Real" portal. The secretariat then sought the feedback of the Working Group regarding the elements of its project design.

43. Working Group members underscored the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the context of COVID-19, for example inaccessible communication channels, employment difficulties, limited social protection coverage, restricted participation in recreation and social activities, and obstacles in obtaining relief goods. They also shared their experiences in supporting and protecting persons with disabilities during the pandemic.

44. The following suggestions were put forward by Working Group members: to take holistic and integrative measures beyond the temporary COVID-19 response to address the needs of persons with disabilities systematically; to pay attention to mental health strategies; to provide

COVID-19 information in a diversity of sign languages; to comply with ICT accessibility standards; to enhance the accessibility features of e-commerce sites; to offer special service hours to accommodate persons with disabilities; to facilitate the prioritized distribution of personal protection equipment to persons with disabilities; to ensure the accessibility of virtual business platforms and e-recruitment systems; to train persons with disabilities in the skills necessary to work online; and to increasingly move the delivery of training courses to an online platform.

45. Several Working Group members acknowledged the relevance and timeliness of the new ESCAP project, expressed interest in participating in it and commended ESCAP for its efforts to establish a dedicated COVID-19 web page. It was recommended that the secretariat upload resources that were specific to different communities and to develop brief and easy-to-understand materials that would enable persons with disabilities to assist themselves.

46. The DAISY Consortium invited Working Group members interested in creating accessible materials to join its upcoming training programmes.

C. Review of recent progress in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022
(Agenda item 6)

47. The Working Group had before it information notes on the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/4), employment for persons with disabilities (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/5), empowering women and girls with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/6) and ensuring disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management in Asia and the Pacific (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/7).

1. Goal 1 on reducing poverty and enhancing work and employment prospects

48. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; China; and Malaysia.

49. Representatives of Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region, and Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region, made statements.

50. Ms. Barbara Murray, a disability specialist on a senior consultant contract with ESCAP, presented research on employment for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. She introduced the employment trends for persons with disabilities in the region, highlighting the impacts of technological changes.

51. The Working Group took note of the measures taken by member States to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, including quota schemes, employment equity and non-discrimination laws, job retention measures and social protections as well as financial and technical assistance to employers and employees. Additionally, to prepare persons with disabilities for employment in formal or informal settings, member States had provided vocational training and employment services, improved accessibility of the working environment and carried out awareness-raising campaigns.

52. Working Group members shared information about their progress on goal 1 of the Incheon Strategy. Measures to reduce poverty and enhance work and employment prospects for persons with disabilities included the following: formulating laws, regulations, national action plans and targeted policies; establishing standard operating procedures to protect persons with disabilities;

enhancing employment service systems; providing disability allowances for persons with neurodevelopmental disabilities and insolvent persons with disabilities; supporting students with disabilities in continuing on to high-level education; reserving seats for persons with disabilities in vocational training institutes; and organizing ICT skills training programmes. Working Group members also highlighted initiatives to encourage persons with disabilities to return to work in the post-pandemic period, including incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities, career carnivals and skills training programmes.

53. In addition, Working Group members shared about challenges in promoting employment for persons with disabilities. They identified a gap between laws, which were well-developed, and the employment situation of persons with disabilities, which remained unsatisfactory. Moreover, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, persons with disabilities might not be able to work in offices and/or might be reluctant to draw upon the services of personal assistants owing to the fear of infection.

54. The following suggestions were put forward by Working Group members: to explore the development of a quota system for the informal sector to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities; to take measures to ensure that skills training programmes for persons with disabilities were adaptable to rapidly evolving technologies; to develop and strengthen job coaching programmes to empower persons with disabilities to gain and remain in employment; and to encourage partnerships between government and the private sector to promote the continued employment of persons with disabilities during and after the pandemic.

2. Goal 6 on ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment

55. The representative of China made a statement.

56. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United; Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; and Shuchona Foundation.

57. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the topic of empowering women and girls with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, focusing on the following three themes: economic empowerment; sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and gender-based violence. Working Group members were invited to discuss how to safeguard the right to make autonomous decisions and how to remove barriers in accessing support services for women and girls with disabilities.

58. Working Group members elaborated on their efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities, which included highlighting the rights of women and girls with disabilities in laws and disability- or gender-related policies as well as work plans to eliminate poverty among persons with disabilities.

59. Working Group members emphasized that gender was a cross-cutting theme and that women and girls with disabilities were particularly vulnerable owing to social stigma and cultural norms. It was noted that gender inequality existed within many organizations of persons with disabilities.

60. Working Group members provided the following suggestions to economically, socially and emotionally support and empower women and girls with disabilities: to strengthen the linkages between the gender movement and the disability movement; to develop a regional platform where Governments and civil society organizations could compile data and resources, share experiences and advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities in a more harmonized way; to increase the representation of women with disabilities in decision-making bodies; and to create more toolkits and resource materials across the region with a view to upholding the rights of women and girls with disabilities. Working Group members also stressed the need to set up an intervention programme, involving close collaboration between governments and organizations of persons with disabilities, to protect women and girls with disabilities from the increased risk of domestic violence due to the lockdowns imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

61. The Working Group was informed of a call to action to enable sisters with disabilities to join in shaping the future issued by China Disabled Persons' Federation with support from ESCAP, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-Women) and Rehabilitation International. The Working Group also took note of the Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, issued by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

3. Goal 7 on ensuring disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management

62. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; India; Japan; and Samoa.

63. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Autism Network; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Disability Forum; Pacific Disability Forum; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

64. The secretariat gave a presentation on realizing disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction in which it listed the following challenges: lack of relevant policies; stigma and discrimination; data gaps in disability identification and disaggregation; lack of universal design-based accessibility; violence and segregation; and difficulties in recovery from disasters.

65. Working Group members noted that the needs of persons with physical disabilities were different from those with invisible disabilities. They underscored that persons with autism and persons with psychosocial disabilities should not be left behind in COVID-19 responses and disaster preparedness activities. In particular, persons with psychosocial disabilities residing in institutions with no social distancing measures as well as poor health-care and sanitation conditions were at high risk of contracting COVID-19. Additionally, Working Group members indicated that many disaster management professionals were not aware of guidelines published by the Governments, and disability-inclusive COVID-19 response guidelines had not been available at the beginning of the pandemic in some countries.

66. Working Group members shared good practices on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, including the following: conceptualizing and translating international and regional instruments on disability into national and local actions; issuing national policies on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction

and disaster management rules; establishing a mechanism to engage persons with disabilities in various disaster risk reduction activities at various administrative levels; ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all phases of disaster management; setting up a task force on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction; working with governments, organizations of persons with disabilities, humanitarian actors and other civil society organizations to promote community-based disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction; investing in people, infrastructure and essential services; designing shelter homes to be accessible to persons with disabilities; developing disability-inclusive online resources and e-learning tools on disaster preparedness; organizing training workshops; and implementing international cooperation projects on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

67. Suggestions put forward by Working Group members included the following: to pay attention to environmental degradation and its consequences; to broaden the scope of disasters to include crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic; to improve access to decision-making bodies for persons with disabilities; to localize disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction measures; to cooperate closely with organizations of persons with disabilities; and to collaborate with professionals, such as architects, and their professional organizations to improve universal design-based accessibility.

68. Significantly, some Working Group members emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic should not be a barrier for States parties to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

D. Review of resource mobilization for progress in the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

(Agenda item 7)

69. The representative of the Republic of Korea made a statement.

70. The secretariat gave a presentation on the status of resource mobilization for the Decade. The Working Group noted the financial contributions from the Governments of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and from Rehabilitation International, and the in-kind support from the Government of the Republic of Korea. Working Group members were informed of the status of the Asia-Pacific Multi-donor Trust Fund. The contributions to the Fund from the Governments of Australia, China and the Republic of Korea supported the secretariat in the following areas: providing technical advice to member States; conducting research and disseminating information; providing capacity-building for member States and other key stakeholders; providing reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to enable and facilitate their participation in ESCAP events and activities as well as in sessions of the Working Group; and conducting advocacy and outreach including the “Make the Right Real” campaign.

71. Civil society organizations that were members of the Working Group were encouraged to apply in 2020 for the grant available through the Make the Right Real Fund of the Republic of Korea.

E. Preparatory process for the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

(Agenda item 8)

72. The Working Group had before it information notes on the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/4) and the regional road map for

implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/8).

73. The representative of Bangladesh made a statement.

74. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United; Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region; Pacific Disability Forum; South Asian Disability Forum; Shuchona Foundation; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

75. The secretariat gave a presentation on the proposed preparatory process for the conclusion of the third Decade (2013–2022) in which it introduced the evolving vision and concept of the three consecutive Decades and gave a brief overview of the achievements thus far. The secretariat then discussed unfinished business and opportunities with regard to the Decade and elaborated on the provisional road map towards the conclusion of the Decade.

76. Guest speaker Mr. Monthian Buntan, Member of the Senate, Thai Parliament, and member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, highlighted the following areas for consideration beyond 2022: strengthening the implementation of international and regional policy frameworks; streamlining indicators and reporting requirements on disability-inclusive development; moving beyond the social welfare sector and further collaborating with the economic sector; and integrating big data and disability statistics at the regional level.

77. The Working Group acknowledged the positive disability-inclusive development achievements at the grassroots and regional levels. With regard to the conclusion of the Decade and preparing the way forward thereafter, Working Group members highlighted the following key areas of focus:

(a) Linking the road map to other development initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(b) Mainstreaming disability perspectives into relevant international instruments;

(c) Exploring the preconditions to inclusion such as accessibility, non-discrimination and community-based inclusive development;

(d) Ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in determining the way forward, including in decision-making and political processes affecting them;

(e) Recording and reviewing the regional progress on disability inclusion in partnership with academia;

(f) Setting up a repository of information on initiatives carried out to realize the Incheon Strategy and meet the objectives of the Decade;

(g) Allocating sufficient budgetary resources for disability-inclusive development, including for organizations of persons with disabilities;

(h) Ensuring that public service systems are disability-inclusive and that they safely accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities;

(i) Encouraging and facilitating the design, implementation and monitoring of collaborative projects on disability inclusion;

(j) Addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable groups such as persons with psychosocial disabilities.

F. Date and venue of the next regular session

(Agenda item 9)

78. It was agreed that the seventh session of the Working Group would be held in Bangkok under the assumption that a physical meeting would be possible in 2021.

G. Any other matters

(Agenda item 10)

79. Representatives of India and Pakistan made statements.

80. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Disability Forum; DAISY Consortium; and Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region. A representative of the Nippon Foundation made a statement as an observer of the Working Group.

81. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the ESCAP Disability Inclusion Policy and the ESCAP disability implementation plan for the period 2020–2021. It reaffirmed the United Nations commitment to disability inclusion across all pillars of work and in all areas of operations and programming. Working Group members requested the secretariat to share the United Nations and ESCAP disability inclusion documents and expressed willingness to provide technical support where required.

82. Owing to data collection difficulties arising from the pandemic, it was suggested that the timeline of the national survey for the conclusion of the Decade be extended and that the secretariat accept data reported in the form of absolute numbers rather than percentages.

83. Working Group members were encouraged to promote the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They were also informed that the International Day of Sign Languages had been recognized by the United Nations over the past two years and that a series of resource materials on sign languages were in the process of development.

84. Working Group members were invited to attend the international conference on the theme “Mental health: looking beyond COVID-19”, which was held online on 8 October 2020 and jointly organized by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities of India and the University of Melbourne.

IV. Organization

85. The Working Group held its sixth session on 24 and 25 September 2020. Owing to the COVID-19 situation and ensuing travel restrictions, the meeting was held online.

86. The secretariat provided sign language interpretation services and real-time captioning developed by ESCAP using Microsoft Azure artificial intelligence for participants with hearing disabilities.

A. Attendance

87. Representatives of the following Government members of the Working Group attended the sixth session: Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Malaysia; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Thailand; and Timor-Leste.

88. Representatives of the following civil society organization members also attended: ASEAN Autism Network; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United; DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples' International, Asia-Pacific region; Pacific Disability Forum; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; Shuchona Foundation; South Asian Disability Forum; World Blind Union - Asia-Pacific; World Federation of the Deaf Regional Secretariat for Asia; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

89. Representatives of the Nippon Foundation and the United Nations Population Fund attended as observers.

90. The following guest speakers contributed to the session: Ms. Barbara Murray, disability specialist on a senior consultant contract with ESCAP; and Mr. Monthian Buntan, Member of the Senate, Thai Parliament, and member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

B. Election of officers

91. The Working Group elected the following Bureau officers:

Chair:	Ms. Ling Xu (China)
Vice-Chair:	Ms. Abia Akram (Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United)

C. Agenda

92. The Working Group adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Review of the implementation of decisions and recommendations emanating from the fifth session of the Working Group.
5. Discussion on COVID-19 and persons with disabilities, including initiatives to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic.
6. Review of recent progress in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.
7. Review of resource mobilization for progress in the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.
8. Preparatory process for the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.

9. Date and venue of the next regular session.
10. Any other matters.
11. Conclusion.

Annex

List of documents

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/75/7	Report on the fifth session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022	4
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