

United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group  
for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Joint Statement of Commitment to the Convention



United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group  
for the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)  
United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Regional Commissions  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Secretariat

Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)  
Department of Management (DM)  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Department of Public Information (DPI)  
Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)  
The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (HABITAT)  
United Nations Regional Commissions  
(ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA)



Abir Abdullah/World Health Organization (WHO)

## Background

1. The purpose of this statement is to articulate the commitment of the United Nations system to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity as laid out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2. The Convention and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 December 2006. They are legally binding international instruments which clarify States parties' obligations to respect and ensure the equal enjoyment of all human rights by all persons with disabilities. These landmark instruments mark a "paradigm shift" in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities from being objects of pity and charity to rights holders. In drafting these documents, the Member States made it clear that disability should be seen as an evolving concept and that it is the result of the interaction between a person and his/her environment.

3. The Convention sets out specific actions for States parties, and calls upon the international community to play a key role in its implementation. Recognizing the importance of international cooperation and its promotion, the Convention calls for States parties to undertake appropriate and effective measures in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities, to support national efforts for the realization of the purpose and objectives of the Convention.

4. Therefore, in recognition of the commitment to the internationally agreed development goals; the need for system-wide coherence within the "delivering as one" framework; the importance of inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work of the United Nations; the need for a participatory approach; and the role of the United Nations in supporting Member States and specifically States parties, we are demonstrating our will to ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities by working towards the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work of the United Nations.

### General principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

1. Respect for the inherent dignity, autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own decisions, and independence of persons
2. Non-discrimination
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5. Equality of opportunity
6. Accessibility
7. Equality between men and women
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

5. In order to fulfill these commitments, we have formed an Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Through this group, the United Nations system will support the States parties by means of a framework of coordinated planning and action. The IASG will ensure that the programmes and policies of the United Nations system are inclusive of persons with disabilities, and will work to strengthen recognition of and respect for the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The IASG will increase the scale and effectiveness of the United Nations system's involvement in disability issues.

## **Our Commitment to the Convention's Principles, Substantive Rights and Provisions**

6. We recognize that the United Nations system has a critical role to play in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, including children. Within the context of the Convention, the United Nations system is committed to promoting, protecting, and ensuring its general principles, as defined in Article 3, both in the work of the United Nations system with external partners, and in its internal policies. In addition, the United Nations system is committed to developing operational principles.

7. We, the Secretariat, including the regional commissions, and agencies of the United Nations, commit to promoting, protecting, and ensuring the explicit rights and provisions that are set out in the Convention within the United Nations system and, as appropriate, to provide support to the States parties to the Convention.



Ernesto Rolandelli/World Health Organization (WHO)

## The Way Forward: Joint Strategy and Action Plan

8. To this end, we have agreed to draft a common strategy and action plan which will constitute the basis for the concerted and coordinated work of the United Nations system related to persons with disabilities and support the States parties as they ratify and implement the Convention. Each of us is committed to strengthening our own actions in accordance with our mandates and our specialized areas of expertise, and at the same time we will be working collectively to support States parties' implementation of the principles of the Convention.

9. The strategy and action plan will reflect Articles 32 and 38 of the Convention regarding international cooperation and will focus on the internal and external measures the UN system will need to take to promote the purpose and objectives of the Convention.

10. Therefore, based on the obligations laid out in Articles 32 and 38, as well as in General Assembly Resolution 61/106, the work of the Inter-Agency Support Group will focus on the following six areas:

### Rights set out in the Convention

Equality before the law without discrimination  
Right to life, liberty and security of the person  
Equal recognition before the law and legal capacity  
Freedom from torture  
Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse  
Right to respect physical and mental integrity  
Freedom of movement and nationality  
Right to live in the community  
Freedom of expression and opinion  
Respect for privacy  
Respect for home and the family  
Right to education  
Right to health  
Right to work  
Right to an adequate standard of living  
Right to participate in political and public life  
Right to participate in cultural life

- **Policies.** As stipulated in Article 32(1), the international community will undertake appropriate and effective measures to support the purpose and objectives of the Convention. As such, the IASG will develop a strategy and an action plan that promotes, protects and ensures the rights of persons with disabilities. For this purpose, inputs from experts outside the United Nations system, including from persons with disabilities and/or organizations of persons with disabilities, will be requested.
- **Programmes.** Article 32(1)(a) states "ensuring that international cooperation, including international development programmes, are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities." In that regard, and building on the existing guidelines by members of the group, the IASG will work to ensure that Country Programme Guidelines are inclusive of, and accessible to, persons with disabilities.

- **Capacity-building.** Article 32(1)(b) states the obligation of "(f)acilitating and supporting capacity-building, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices." An element of the strategy will be to support capacity-building by increasing knowledge of the Convention. The capacity building efforts will be targeted both externally and internally, namely towards States parties and civil society organizations, as well as within the United Nations system. Members of the IASG will develop indicators to gauge progress in that regard. Training programmes on the rights of persons with disabilities will be developed and implemented. In addition, the IASG will promote awareness-raising, advocacy, ratification of the Convention, and implementation of its provisions. The IASG will augment substantive understanding of the rights and provisions through general and technical comments aimed at operationalizing the Convention.
- **Research and access to knowledge.** Article 32 (1)(c) calls for "(f)acilitating cooperation in research and access to scientific and technical knowledge." The UN system will strengthen its efforts on data collection and analysis of information collected by the UN system, and will share knowledge on the Convention through publications and documents. Furthermore, members of the IASG will, in their areas of expertise, promote and/or support the research and access of knowledge by States, organizations of persons with disabilities and other private or public bodies.

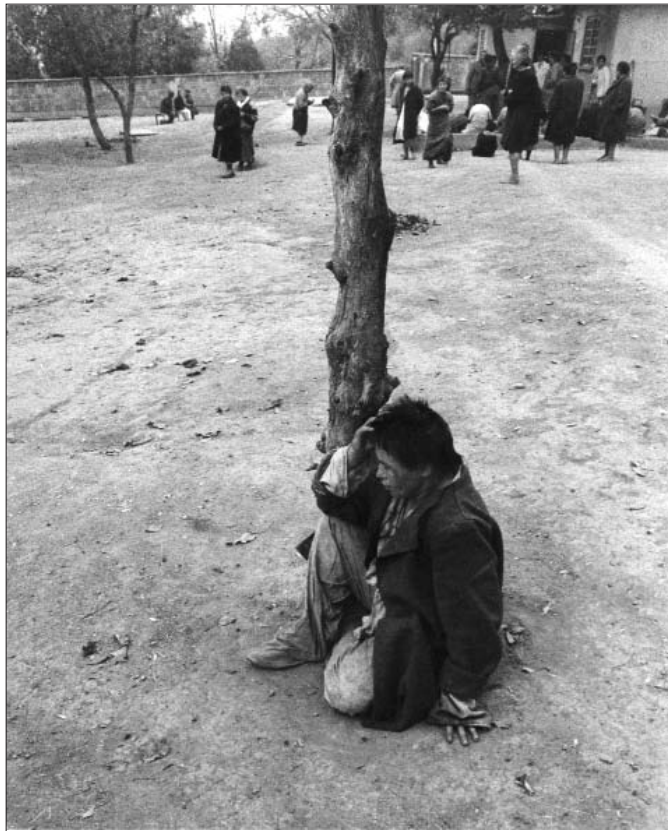
- **Accessibility.** Article 32(1)(d) stipulates "providing, as appropriate, technical and economic assistance, including by facilitating access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technologies, and through the transfer of technologies." The UN system will provide persons with disabilities within and outside the UN system with the assistance necessary for reasonable accommodation to UN facilities, programmes, and information. Removing barriers and increasing accessibility are key components of reasonable accommodation.



Christian Creutz/World Health Organization (WHO)

Members of the IASG will work within their respective entity to recommend approaches to support reasonable accommodation requirements of staff members, visitors, delegates, and all others who work with the United Nations system. Members of the IASG will ensure that within their respective entity, reasonable accommodation is made in terms of recruitment, website, materials, facilities, and in other regards. Each entity will consult with persons with disabilities during the process of proposing and implementing the changes required to provide reasonable accommodation.

- **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.** Article 38 entitles specialized agencies and other UN organs to be represented before the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Committee may invite them to give expert advice. At the request of States parties, entities of the United Nations system can assist States parties to meet their obligations in relation to the periodic reporting process; follow-up on Committee recommendations by providing expert advice to the Committee; and submit reports to the Committee on the implementation of the Convention. The IASG can provide a forum to coordinate actions in this area.



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