

Presentation of UNDIS – COSP Plenary session

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) is a dynamic, transformative and comprehensive approach to building the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the United Nations' work.

Development of a system-wide approach to disability inclusion was mandated by the Executive Committee of the Secretary-General in April 2018, at which the Committee discussed the United Nations and the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Through its Decision 2018/20, the Executive Committee put forward a number of tasks. First, that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General with the support of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities conduct a review of the United Nations system's current approach to both accessibility and to mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities across the Organization's operations - addressing issues of mandate, capacity, resources, systems, operational guidance and institutional-support structures. Second, that, building on existing work, on the above-mentioned review and on the initial findings of the JIU study, the sub-working group of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, plus the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, develop a policy, action plan and accountability framework to strengthen systemwide accessibility and mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities across the Organization's operations. And third, that guidance be issued to the United Nations system on issues relating to accessibility and employment of persons with disabilities, including standards for United Nations premises.

The review found that consistent and systematic mainstreaming of accessibility and disability inclusion remained limited across all pillars of work, at all levels, and recommended that a system-wide policy and accountability framework be developed to ensure a coordinated approach to disability mainstreaming across all operational and programmatic functions of the United Nations system. The findings were discussed at a meeting of the Senior Management Group (SMG) in December 2018, at which SMG members reaffirmed the need for a system-wide approach policy, action plan and accountability framework.

An extensive and inclusive process of consultations for and drafting of the UNDIS was conducted between October 2018 and March 2019 led by the IASG-CRPD sub-working group. More than 300 individuals from close to 60 UN entities, inter-agency networks, and civil society organizations were engaged through dedicated briefings and workshops and provided written inputs to the draft documents. Furthermore, Member States and persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were regularly consulted and actively participated throughout the development.

Following a piloting and validation process of the UNDIS with 21 United Nations entities, the High-level Committees for Management and for Programming (HLCM and HLCP) and the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) adopted in April and May 2019 respectively, the UNDIS, including its policy, its entity accountability framework, and the commitment to develop an accountability framework for United Nations Country Teams.

The UNDIS policy sets out United Nations vision on disability inclusion, reaffirming a common commitment at the highest levels of the organization, and identifying the areas and functions on which the United Nations will focus to realize the objective of achieving disability inclusion. It underscores the human rights-based approach to disability, and the importance of accelerating efforts to promote

inclusion of persons with disabilities and their human rights in order to achieve globally agreed commitments set out in the United Nations treaties, conferences and summits.

To support the policy, the UNDIS accountability framework provides practical tools to encourage, measure and reflect progress of its implementation by United Nations entities, country teams, and the system as a whole. Its first component, the Entity Accountability Framework, contains system-wide 15 Performance Indicators that specify core areas of responsibility for the United Nations system, its entities, and individual departments and units, in relation to mainstreaming disability inclusion. The indicators, which will be rated against a graduated scale, address areas including strategic planning; programming; capacity development; hiring practices and human resource management; accessibility; and reasonable accommodation.

The second component of the accountability framework is the United Nations Country Team Accountability Scorecard. This tool, which is currently under development, will provide a framework for Country Teams to measure progress of mainstreaming disability inclusion in inter-agency, country-specific contexts, in line with the objectives of the UNDIS policy.

Reporting against the accountability framework will take place annually, and will be supported by detailed technical and guidance notes. With the approach of progressive improvement, reporting will entail providing an evidence base for progress made, and developing remedial action plans when necessary. It is expected that 2020 will be the first reporting year of the UNDIS.

In this regard, entities should start to consider how the UNDIS policy and accountability framework can be tailored to meet their individual contexts, and how their institutional and operational setup can be enhanced to more actively engage and support persons with disabilities, and mainstream disability inclusion. A dedicated capacity will soon be established under Special Policy Advisor to the Secretary-General to support the United Nations system to successfully roll out and implement the UNDIS, as well as provide technical expertise and capacity building support.

While successful implementation of the UNDIS requires a whole of house approach, persons with disabilities must remain at its core. Recalling the slogan 'nothing about us without us', the UNDIS seeks to build trust and confidence with persons with disabilities, including staff with disabilities, to ensure that they are valued and respected in their dignity and rights, and that they find the United Nations system to be an enabling environment to fully and effectively participate on an equal basis with others.

More broadly, the UNDIS provides a foundation for sustainable and transformative change on disability inclusion through all pillars of the United Nations' work. Its successful implementation will also play a key role in enabling the United Nations system to support Member States in their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Agenda for Humanity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, among other international human rights instruments and development and humanitarian commitments.