

# Easy Read and Plain Language at the United Nations



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# **I. WHY IS ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION IMPORTANT?**

# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“Communication” includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, **plain-language**, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including **accessible information** and communication technology”

(art. 2)

## **II. SITUATION AT THE UN**

# 1. Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities




➔ Gerard Quinn, since 2020



➔ Mandate to disseminate his reports in Easy Read


# 2. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights




United Nations Human Rights Council  
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

## Climate change and the rights of people with disabilities

Climate change is about the earth getting warmer and the problems this causes for people and the planet we live on.



Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change (A/HRC/44/30)



### 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council

Plain English version of:  
**The impacts of climate change on the human rights of people in vulnerable situations (A/HRC/50/57)**

Report of the Secretary-General

*What is the aim of this document?*  
This report has been written in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 47/24. This report examines the negative impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights of people in vulnerable situations.

*Who is this report for?*  
This report is for people who:

- draft, design, or are interested in climate policy as it affects people in vulnerable situations,
- advocate for the rights of vulnerable people in the area of climate change, or
- are interested in the area of climate policy generally.

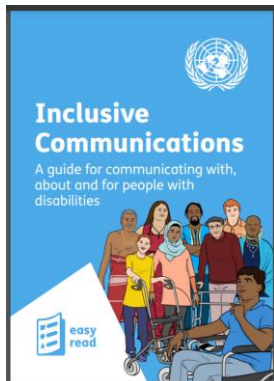
**Note:** This is not a United Nations official document.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights must also publish some Easy Read and plain language reports

# 3. United Nations Secretariat



- ➔ United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy  
Available in Easy Read  
It does not mention plain language or Easy Read



- ➔ Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines  
Available in Easy Read  
It mentions plain language and includes a definition of Easy Read



## 4. Division of Conference Management (UN Geneva)



**2017-2018:** First pilot project to adapt core CRPD documents into plain English (outsourcing).

**2018:** One document adapted in-house as an ad hoc reasonable accommodation for a member of CRPD.



**2018-2019:** Second pilot project to adapt a few more CRPD documents into plain English (outsourcing).

# III. CHALLENGES

# 1. Choosing your format / Identifying your audience

**Plain language** makes information accessible for a wide audience, including some persons with disabilities, but not all

**Easy Read** makes information accessible for persons with intellectual/learning/cognitive disabilities, among others

**Other terminology:** easy-to-understand; clear writing; Easy English

## 2. Multilingualism

- Multilingualism is of particular importance to the UN.
- The balance among the six official languages has been an ongoing concern of Member States.



# 3. In-house capacity vs external providers dilemma

Consider this:

- Training on plain language/Easy Read
- High staff turnover
- Creating new mandates or job profiles
- Deciding on the validation process by end-users
- Deadline management
- Quality control mechanism: ensuring accuracy and usability
- Guidelines and support for staff and external editors

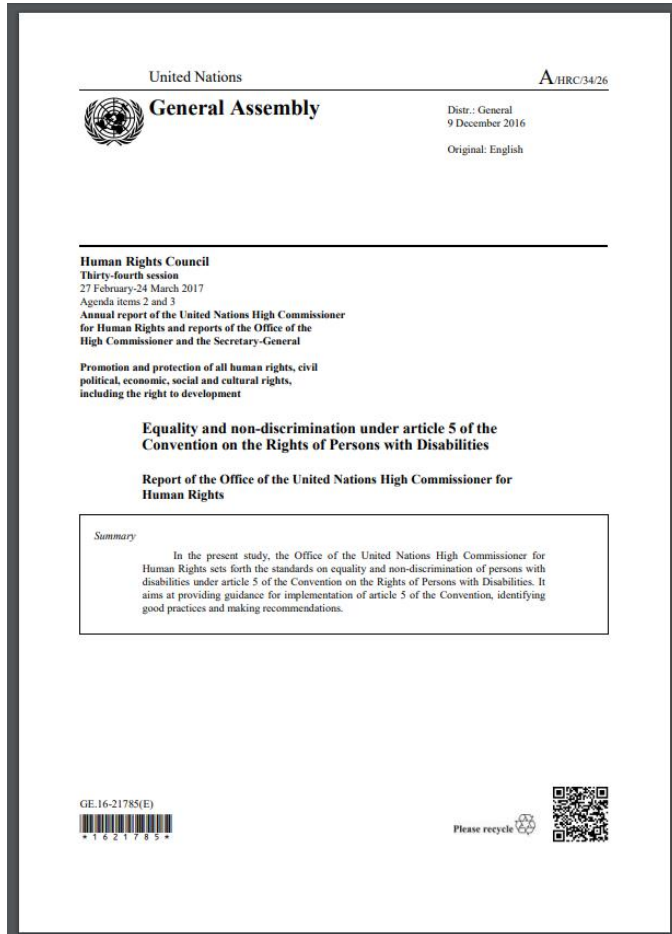


## 4. Other challenges

- Document prioritization: Which documents first?
- Funding
- Storage & dissemination: easy-to-understand + easy to find
- Raising awareness among staff at all levels + sustainable approach to clear writing



# 5. Practical aspects: using templates



Most United Nations reports use a standard cover.

# 5. Practical aspects: using templates

UN Easy Read documents use different templates. This is confusing.





## 6. Practical aspects: images and definitions



➔ The images we use must be:

- culturally acceptable
- clear
- inclusive of all races, religions, ages, gender...
- well designed

➔ Definitions of difficult words should be clear, accurate and used consistently across documents and reports.