

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

**MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OPENING OF THE 17TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF
STATES PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

11 June 2024

General Assembly Hall, UNHQ, 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you at the opening of the 17th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I extend a warm welcome to delegations representing the States parties.

I also want to welcome our friends and partners from civil society, who do so much to advocate for persons with disabilities, year in and year out.

I welcome all persons with disabilities and other participants gathered here for this Conference.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted 18 years ago, has been a landmark achievement. Its near-universal ratification – 191 States so far – is a testament to our shared global commitment to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Convention was only a start of a much longer process of change and action.

Our work is not yet done.

We must continue translating this commitment into results.

That's what this Conference is all about.

In particular, this Conference will address the rights of persons with disabilities through three key lenses: technology, humanitarian emergencies and decent work.

The new Disability and Development Report 2024, which was pre-launched yesterday, provides updates on our work in these and other areas.

While the Report paints a picture of progress, it also highlights some glaring gaps where we must accelerate progress.

First – technology.

The global need for assistive technology remains largely unmet. 2.5 billion people globally need to use at least one type of assistive technology, with access ranging from as low as 3% in low-income countries to 90% in some high-income countries.

Part of the challenge is a lack of technology transfer, with about 80 per cent of innovations in assistive technology being created in just three countries – China, Japan and the United States.

Another challenge is funding, with only 0.1 per cent of disability-inclusive bilateral aid devoted to expanding access to assistive technologies.

Across the board, we need substantially increased investments into assistive technologies that enable persons with disabilities to access education, earn a living, and participate fully in their communities.

Second – humanitarian emergencies.

Persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies – such as natural disasters and armed conflicts – continue to be left behind. Currently, 39 per cent of persons with disabilities would have much difficulty, or would simply be unable to evacuate in a situation of risk or during a humanitarian emergency.

This is unacceptable. This percentage has remained almost the same since 2013. Persons with disabilities must be included in official disaster planning and preparedness processes to mitigate risks and barriers that persons with

disabilities face. From accessing evacuation, response and recovery, to essential services, such as food, water, sanitation and health services – the needs of persons with disabilities must be included and reflected.

Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable and face grave risks of being left behind the day after as we witnessed in Sierra Leone and today in Gaza.

This is particularly relevant as we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the landmark Security Council Resolution 2475, which for the first time, committed to address the disproportionate impact of armed conflict and related humanitarian crises on persons with disabilities.

Third – decent work.

Persons with disabilities experience greater risks of poverty and continue to be marginalized in their societies, in part due to barriers in employment and livelihood. The gap in employment between persons with and without disabilities is nearly 30 percentage points, a figure largely unchanged from the first Disability and Development Report published six years ago in 2018.

Moreover, persons with disabilities receive lower wages and are largely found in the informal economy and in self-

employment, where work conditions are often more precarious.

Although 79 per cent of countries have laws to protect persons with disabilities against discrimination in hiring, these protections are not always enforced and have not so far translated into more positive employment outcomes.

We must more effectively address inclusive hiring practices. We must guarantee the equality of persons with disabilities and their right to decent work and equal opportunity in employment.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The gaps are enormous, but we have the tools and frameworks to guide us.

We must be clear-eyed about the challenges before us – and redouble our focus on closing these gaps.

This 17th session of the Conference of States Parties is an opportune moment to do exactly this, and build on our work over the years.

The Summit of the Future in September is a further opportunity to carry our work forward.

The Summit will offer a once-in-a-generation chance to strengthen multilateral cooperation on critical issues, to address major gaps in global governance and financing development.

This must include the full participation of persons with disabilities, and ensure that the commitments and aspirations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities become a tangible reality for all.

Across all of this essential work, I look forward to working with the people in this room, and around the world.

Let's push forward.

Let's continue striving to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are translated into progress and results, everywhere.

Finally, let us pause for a moment in recognition of the ferocious conflicts afflicting our world today – in Sudan, and in Gaza – which continue to cause unimaginable suffering, particularly for women, children and persons with disabilities.

We continue to call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

**We are united in for working for an end to conflicts
around the world.**

Thank you.

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