

Tuesday 11 June 2024 (General Assembly Hall)

10.00 am to 1.00 pm

Three minutes

Intervention by Pascal Bijleveld, CEO ATscale, Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, hosted by UNOPS

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Pascal Bijleveld and I am CEO of ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, hosted by UNOPS.

Assistive technology is addressed in multiple articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), advocating the promotion of research, development, production, availability, and appropriate use of assistive technology.

The world so far has failed to meet the global need for assistive technology (AT), particularly in lower income countries, where only 10% of people have the AT they need. This gap is caused by multiple and persisting barriers that have resulted in underinvestment in the sector, including lack of financing to purchase assistive products and numerous inefficiencies in the marketplace. Another bottleneck is a lack of coordination among ministries and departments, which translates into a lack of a coordinated national response, leading to a fragmented and under-resourced sector.

ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, is the only partnership for assistive technology that takes a cross-sectoral, coordinated, country-level approach towards sustainable systems change and market shaping in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), ensuring that assistive technology can be available, accessible, and affordable for everyone, everywhere.

In recent years, ATscale has begun to make significant investments in countries where the need is great. We now have a footprint in 28 countries where we seek to drive sustainable system change, strengthening enabling ecosystems to increase national capacity to procure and provide assistive technology.

We are also advancing multiple market-shaping initiatives across relevant domains such as mobility, vision, and hearing. Just last week we launched the first assistive products market report which provides greater visibility and transparency into the most dynamic AT markets.

Finally, it is crucial that we continue to raise awareness of this critical issue. We are building new momentum and, this year, are spearheading a global awareness campaign. Last week, we celebrated the first world day for assistive technology on June 4th, which has had a huge uptake. There is also a resolution that has been tabled at the UN General Assembly on Assistive Technology, which we hope will be adopted this year!

We are already working with many member states and we thank you for your support. However, to address the huge inequity we need to do much more to increase the political will of member states, to stimulate supply and ignite demand in countries where the need is great.

I call on all of you to do more to support equitable access to Assistive Technology. The world needs this, millions of people need this.

Thank you