

Question 1

Considering systemic trends – challenges and opportunities - what course-correction is needed globally to ensure fulfilment of the commitments in the Doha Declaration and in what specific areas of action? (4 minutes – 475 Words)

Thank you Moderator. Excellencies, I am honored to be speaking at this roundtable as the Youth Fellow of the International Disability Alliance, which represents the 1.3 billion persons with disabilities globally.

Persons with disabilities, making up 16% of the global population, remain among the most marginalized groups globally. The latest UN Disability and Development Report from 2024 has once again outlined the persistent barriers and substantial gaps in the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals for and with persons with disabilities.

These gaps are apparent across social development indicators. Persons with disabilities are much more likely to live in poverty than others. Persons with disabilities are only half as likely to be employed compared to others. Persons with disabilities are on average three times more likely than others to not have access to healthcare. Disability-related costs, such as costs for accessible transportation, devices and personal assistance further exacerbate inequalities.

IDA has been clear that social development cannot be attained in the absence of the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities.

In this regard, the International Disability Alliance and its Youth Committee welcomes that the Doha Declaration commits to disability inclusion and rights-based social progress. The Declaration explicitly commits to the full and effective inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Declaration also demands that social development policies and programmes integrate persons with disabilities as both development agents and beneficiaries in all aspects of development.

The fulfilment of these commitments is critical to ensure that we are not left behind. For youth with disabilities, I would like to highlight two specific points.

First, governments and the UN system must commit to meaningful youth inclusion, not as token representatives, but as partners and leaders to co-design policies and monitor implementation.

This includes information sharing, dialogue, mutual respect, and shared decision-making across the full policy cycle.

Second, it is critical to finance youth participation and provide core funding to organizations of persons with disabilities. Organizations of persons with disabilities bring critical accountability to ensure the genuine inclusion of persons with disabilities across the social development agenda, through the principle of 'nothing about us, without us'. Importantly, OPDs bring the essential lived experience necessary to drive lasting change.

Our hope, as youth with disabilities, is that the Doha Declaration will set out a roadmap to ensure our full and equal participation and to guarantee the resources and systems necessary for dignity and inclusion across the three pillars of social development

We must translate these commitments into action, and we are demanding that all stakeholders implement the Doha Declaration in partnership with youth with disabilities.

I will conclude by emphasizing that youth with disabilities are not the leaders of tomorrow, we are the changemakers of today.

Question 2

What specific follow-up actions, commitments and partnerships can help strengthen the three pillars of social development in the decades ahead? (4 minutes – 396 words)

Thank you Moderator for this critical question on the specific and necessary actions to ensure inclusive social development for and with persons with disabilities.

I would like to highlight that earlier this year, the IDA Youth Committee released a Youth Call to Action for the 2025 Global Disability Summit, which addresses concrete actions to ensure inclusion across all three pillars of social development, and which was developed by young persons with disabilities themselves.

On poverty eradication, we are calling for disability-inclusive social protection programs that ensure financial security and dignity and integrate disability-specific benefits with mainstream social protection systems. This includes universal access to affordable personal assistance services, inclusive healthcare and accessible transportation and taking into account additional disability-related costs.

On full and productive employment and decent work for all, we must raise awareness of the existence of disability-related employment policies and promote the ownership of such frameworks. We must ensure that anti-discrimination policies are accompanied by the appropriate capacity and resources for implementation. We are calling for mandatory employment quotas and support-based employment systems for persons with disabilities. Young persons with disabilities in particular require accessible vocational training, paid internships and mentorship programs. We also call for due prioritization to entrepreneurship programs and accessible business development initiatives for persons with disabilities.

Social integration relates to every aspect of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We underscore the need for community-based support systems that promote a communal approach, rather than isolation and institutionalization, as enshrined in Article 19 of the CRPD. We call for an end to barriers that exclude young persons with disabilities from education, ensuring universal access to inclusive and equitable quality education with reasonable accommodations. We call for the development and implementation of policies that ensure equitable universal healthcare access, eliminating biases, stigma and discrimination in healthcare delivery. Central to all these efforts is the leadership and meaningful consultation of organizations of persons with disabilities across all spheres of development.

If there is one key takeaway, it is that organizations of persons with disabilities have a critical role to play across the three pillars of social development, bringing lived experience to understanding, documenting, and addressing the complex realities that persons with disabilities face. And we are ready to bring our expertise to new and strengthened multistakeholder partnerships, which are absolutely necessary to drive inclusive social development and ensure lasting change.

Question 3

Concluding remarks (1 minute – 105 words)

Thank you. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this distinguished panel today, and I would like to conclude by emphasizing that we must expand the representation of young persons with disabilities across global human rights and sustainable development frameworks and initiatives. Young persons with disabilities bring invaluable insights that cannot be sidelined. They are innovators and changemakers and should be included in decision-making at all levels. We will continue to demand the leadership of young persons with disabilities, and I would conclude by encouraging everyone in this room to read and implement our ten-point Youth Call to Action. Thank you very much.