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Panel discussion on the “Implementation of the Post-2015 development agenda in light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”

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I thank you for the opportunity to take part in this discussion panel, in which important questions are being raised: *How to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals? What should be the role of the UN systems and mechanisms to accompany this process?* These are fundamental questions for those of us working to make development processes—and especially the 2030 agenda—inclusive, by leaving no one behind.

We have undoubtedly advanced. We have achieved recognition, and seized important opportunities to improve the situation of persons with disabilities. More than 15 years ago, when the Millennium Development Goals were negotiated, we were completely absent: we were not part of discussions, agendas, goals, indicators nor of course, of the implementation processes. We neither had statistics, nor internationally comparable methodologies. Unlike today, there was no clear understanding of the crucial importance of including everyone to succeed in the eradication of poverty, or in achieving universal access to education and health.

Today, we have learned that the inclusion of the most excluded, such as persons with disabilities, is essential for more effective and efficient public programs and social benefits. In these 15 years, we have learned that policies that are inclusive of persons with disabilities are a sound investment in the society as a whole, and that exclusion has economic and social costs that our countries can no longer ignore.

The United Nations system has made significant efforts in adjusting and updating its frameworks to include and allow the active participation of persons with disabilities. We have today an International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a Committee of experts of the convention, and a Conference of State Parties. In addition—and as a direct result of the adoption of the convention—we have an Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention, the UN Fund to promote the rights of persons with disabilities (UNPRPD) and, more recently, the Special Rapporteur mandate that I represent.

Important efforts have also been made to generate methodologies for collecting statistical data, mainly through the work of the Washington Group, but also by the WHO, UNICEF, ILO and the UN Division of Statistics.

In this context, we have great chances to ensure that the SDG 2030 Agenda includes persons with disabilities. However, it is important to ask *how can we ensure that the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are inclusive of persons with disabilities? How can we measure progress towards the creation of communities that are more respectful of the demands of persons with disabilities? How can we make sure that the efforts of the different stakeholders build on one another, thus advancing to the common goals in a coordinated way?*

First, political commitment at the highest levels is fundamental. In the international sphere, the High-level Political Forum must consider how the inclusion of persons with disabilities in State implementations will be monitored. The same political commitment is required at the national level, to guarantee that the priorities established in the implementation processes are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Second, it is important that actions are accompanied by adequate monitoring and evaluation systems, which must include impact studies of inclusive policies, in order to separate the ones that work from those that don’t. For this, it is necessary to improve the systems for collecting and disaggregating data in the countries.

I would like to remark that, beyond the need to develop new guidelines and methodologies, it is important to make sure that, in the short term, countries implement the recommendations and international guidelines that already exist. We need to identify the gaps that remain in the production of information on disability, and utilize all information available to the maximum extent.

Third, we need to engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Participation of organizations representing persons with disabilities is fundamental, and they must be consulted in every case. States must ensure that the perspective of persons with disabilities is part of every implementation. Their participation in relevant decision-making is not only an international obligation, but also a basic good governance practice, which ensures more effective and efficient decisions.

Now, *where should we aim our efforts to ensure that the processes of implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda are inclusive of persons with disabilities?*

It is imperative that all stakeholders and mandates that work to promote inclusive development and the rights of persons with disabilities align their activities with the new 2030 Agenda. For that, it is key to encompass the work of the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. These are complementary instruments, which should function in coordination, to ensure coherence and efficiency among the different systems of monitoring and evaluation. It is worth reminding that the convention is not only a human rights instrument, but also one dedicated to social development: it informs the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a disability perspective, providing both the conceptual and normative frameworks.

From my mandate, in addition to contribute to adopting new goals, benchmarks and indicators, we are proposing States two main lines of action to advance in building inclusive policies for development. First, on making social protection systems that respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, reduce their poverty levels and promote independent life and inclusion in the community. And second, on facilitating decision-making processes that are consultative and participatory.

Finally, it is fundamental to ensure that all these different actors work in a coordinated manner in the implementation of the SDGs to avoid duplication of efforts, produce articulated responses and to guarantee that the implementation is coherent with the convention,

In this line, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), through this Commission, may want to consider the creation of a permanent space in which the agencies, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (this Special Rapporteur and the Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility) inform periodically about the activities to advance in the implementation of the SDGs in regards to persons with disabilities. This would allow the Commission for Social Development on the one hand to receive, analyze and process essential information to advocate at the High-level Political Forum, and on the other hand to play an important coordinating role avoiding duplication of efforts among the different stakeholders, so monitoring activities of the Agenda 2030 remain coherent.

In addition, this space should maintain States informed about the challenges and tasks ahead to advance in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while allowing them to share best practices, shortcomings, challenges and their technical needs. Discussions in this space would provide useful input for States to elaborate their reports to the High-level Political Forum.

In the short term, it is urgent to work with the 17 States that are presenting reports in the coming session—Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Korea, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Uganda and Venezuela—to ensure that their reports include at the very minimum a consultation with persons with disabilities and their organizations.

It is true that we face many challenges, but it is also true that we have many more means than ever before to advance in the right direction. Through my mandate, I will continue to cooperate with global, regional and national efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, promoting policies that are inclusive of persons with disabilities, and advocating for the involvement of the international cooperation from an inclusive perspective. *We can’t wait any longer; no more excuses to exclude persons with disabilities.*

Thank you.

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