Position Paper of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities for the 2026 High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development

This position paper of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities pertains to the five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17). It is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water and sanitation is a human right, not a privilege. Yet, for persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities, this right is violated daily by physical and social barriers.

Persons with disabilities continue to experience barriers in accessing adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in their residences and in outdoor settings. Many water points, sanitation facilities and hygiene services are physically inaccessible or not designed for independent use. In both urban and rural contexts, this exclusion increases health risks, dependency and loss of dignity. Access to clean water and sanitation remains a major challenge in the context of conflict.

Water access is not just a supply problem but rather a system design failure. If systems are not built for the most marginalized (especially persons with disabilities), they fail everyone, especially in droughts, urban crises, or conflict zones.

The accessibility of WASH facilities is required to ensure privacy, dignity, safety, independent living, and inclusion in the community for persons with disabilities. Financial resources are needed to promote disability-inclusive WASH services, informed by existing gaps and accounting for additional disability-related costs.

Recommendations:

- Take steps to safeguard and promote the realization of the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living, including by ensuring equal access to clean water services, in line with Article 28 of the CRPD.
- Ensure participation of persons with disabilities in WASH planning, monitoring, and accountability, actively involving organizations of persons with disabilities in decision-making, in line with Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.
- Ensure disability-inclusive design in WASH infrastructure, adopting universal design standards and mandating the application of accessibility standards in all new water and sanitation projects.
- Allocate financial resources and budgets to ensure access to disability-inclusive WASH services.
- Integrate inclusive hygiene practices into community health policies to mitigate disproportionate health risks faced by persons with disabilities.

- Ensure that WASH infrastructure is designed to prevent gender-based violence and abuse, particularly for women and girls with disabilities, in line with Article 16 of the CRPD.
- Promote the design of WASH facilities that account for the specific needs of children with disabilities, in line with Article 7 of the CRPD.
- Strengthen policies and standards for inclusive WASH infrastructure for internally displaced persons with disabilities, in line with Article 11 of the CRPD.
- Improve the availability of high-quality and reliable data on WASH for persons with disabilities, in line with Article 31 of the CRPD.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Access to affordable and clean energy is an engine of autonomy. This access is essential for those using assistive technologies, mobility devices, communication aids, and digital learning tools. However, persons with disabilities are less likely to have access to electricity than persons without disabilities, are at a heightened risk of fuel poverty, and frequently lack access to renewable and alternative green sources of energy.

The high cost of energy, combined with a lack of accessible information regarding energy efficiency programs, creates an insurmountable equity gap. With rising costs of fuel and electricity, households with persons with disabilities face a double burden of poverty.

Lack of reliable energy affects health, safety, mobility, information access, assistive technology use and livelihoods. Policy measures are therefore needed to address barriers and additional disability-related energy costs,

including direct support and broad eligibility criteria for social protection schemes.

Recommendations:

- Treat persons with disabilities as producers, innovators, and system actors, not just beneficiaries, integrating organizations of persons with disabilities into energy planning processes, in line with Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.
- Move from inclusion as welfare to inclusion as economic infrastructure.
- Design clean energy initiatives with accessibility and affordability in mind, accounting for the extra energy costs that persons with disabilities face, in line with Article 28 of the CRPD.
- Provide targeted subsidies for affordable and clean energy.
- Expand renewable energy solutions for households of persons with disabilities, ensuring access for households requiring electricity for medical devices, assistive technology, home-based therapeutic equipment etc., in line with Articles 20 and 26 of the CRPD.
- Close gaps in energy access between persons with and without disabilities.
- Improve the availability of high-quality data on energy access for persons with disabilities, in line with Article 31 of the CRPD.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Industry, innovation, and infrastructure should be foundations for inclusive economic growth. However, for persons with disabilities, it often remains a

point of exclusion, with barriers limiting access to employment, education, entrepreneurship, and public services.

Inaccessible digital technology continues to be a barrier to the realization of rights. Inclusive infrastructure and innovation are critical for enabling equal participation of persons with disabilities in education, employment, entrepreneurship and social life. Disability inclusion must be a core feature of digital investments from the start. Equitable access to ICTs and affordability must be prioritized. Persons with disabilities remain behind in ICT skills training, requiring the removal of barriers and ensuring digital literacy for all.

Without access to adaptive digital tools, the talent and economic contributions of people with disabilities remain untapped. Persons with disabilities must be meaningfully included in economic participation in the context of industry, innovation, and infrastructure, including within self-employment and micro-enterprise sectors.

It is critical to focus on local solutions, specifically tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities, through the creation of accessible infrastructure and the implementation of simple, user-friendly innovations. Innovation should reduce inequality, not reinforce it. Public institutions, private sector actors and development partners all have a role to play in making infrastructure and innovation inclusive from the outset.

Recommendations:

- Integrate persons with disabilities into the design phase of industrial and technological projects from the very outset, in line with Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.

- Strengthen the implementation of ICT accessibility policy and regulations, including by ensuring that websites, applications, and systems follow accessibility standards, in line with Article 9 of the CRPD.
- Invest in inclusive digital ecosystems to bridge digital divides and ensure digital connectivity for all, in line with Article 21 of the CRPD.
- Improve internet access for persons with disabilities, including persons with disabilities living in rural areas.
- Support research and development and promote access to affordable assistive technologies.
- Promote digital skills training of persons with disabilities.
- Create inclusive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, in line with Article 27 of the CRPD.
- Remove barriers that restrict the legal capacity of persons with disabilities to participate in economic life on an equal basis with others, in line with Article 12 of the CRPD.
- Promote entrepreneurship and startup ecosystems for and with persons with disabilities.
- Integrate disability-owned businesses into regional and global value chains.
- Improve the availability of high-quality data on digital access, usage, and growth for persons with disabilities, in line with Article 31 of the CRPD.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Cities and communities can only become truly sustainable when they are accessible, safe, resilient and inclusive for all citizens, including persons with

disabilities. This requires accessible transport systems, housing, public spaces and disaster response mechanisms.

However, persons with disabilities continue to be at a higher risk of living in inadequate housing, frequently encounter inaccessible transport, are often not consulted on inclusive and safe urbanization, and face significant barriers in public spaces.

Inadequate transportation, inaccessible buildings, and emergency alert systems that exclude persons with disabilities further limit access to employment, healthcare and social life. In contexts of rapid urban growth and climate stress, this exclusion becomes even more severe.

Key courses of action needed to ensure disability-inclusive cities and human settlements include the adoption of commitments to universal design and accessibility for all and the meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in all stages of urban policy.

Recommendations:

- Meaningfully engage persons with disabilities in budgeting, planning, design, implementation and monitoring for sustainable cities and communities in line with Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.
- Treat accessibility and usability as foundational characteristics of sustainable and resilient cities, enforcing accessibility standards in all infrastructure development, adopting explicit commitments, in line with Articles 9 and 20 of the CRPD.

- Mainstream disability inclusion in urban planning and housing, implementing universal design standards and building capacity among decision-makers and building professionals.
- Ensure accessible and affordable public transport systems, funding multimodal transport systems that meet both physical and digital accessibility standards.
- Fund community-based support networks to ensure inclusive cities and communities, in line with Article 19 of the CRPD.
- Ensure that persons with disabilities can make autonomous and legally recognized decisions about their housing and are enabled to live independently in the community, in line with Article 19 of the CRPD.
- Include persons with disabilities in climate resilience and disaster preparedness strategies.
- Ensure that disaster management plans and preparedness are inclusive of persons with disabilities in all their diversity and explicitly protect against exploitation and abuse, in line with Article 16 of the CRPD.
- Regularly generate disaggregated data on the extent to which cities and communities are disability-inclusive, to guide policymaking, in line with Article 31 of the CRPD.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), are prerequisites for implementing the 2030 Agenda. None of the Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved without partnerships that include the 1.3 billion persons with disabilities

worldwide. Key barriers include the lack of data on the experiences of persons with disabilities that reflect reality, which includes intersectional and citizen data efforts led by OPDs. The lack of disability data obscures actual needs, and chronic underfunding of organizations of persons with disabilities, which limits their capacity for strategic influence.

Meaningful participation requires institutionalized power for persons with disabilities, rather than tokenistic consultations on an ad-hoc basis. Achieving the SDGs also requires the means of implementation and financing for disability-inclusive development. Monitoring mechanisms, such as the OECD DAC disability marker, are critical to ensure that financing is disability inclusive. Importantly, the private sector and philanthropic actors must also align with rights-based frameworks.

Disability data is often scarce, fragmented, inaccurate, unreliable, and not prioritized, thus remaining insufficient for evidence-based planning. The absence of data disaggregated by disability, gender, age, locality, and household or livelihood status undermines effective resource allocation and evidence-based planning. Without robust and inclusive national data systems, the needs of persons with disabilities risk being overlooked in country and national development agendas. More reliable, timely and accurate data, including OPD-led citizen data, is needed to measure disability inclusion across the SDGs.

For persons with disabilities, partnerships are meaningful only when finance, technology, trade, data, and infrastructure investments are tied to enforceable accessibility, disability-disaggregated evidence, and direct participation of persons with disabilities from design to monitoring.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can bridge gaps and compensate for structural limitations, including through international cooperation, community-based outreach, private sector engagement, involving persons with disabilities and their families as contributors, decision-makers and co-creators of solutions.

Recommendations:

- Ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity in all decision-making processes at all levels.
- Involve representative organizations of persons with disabilities in the implementation of international cooperation activities, in line with Article 32 of the CRPD.
- Encourage bilateral and multilateral donors to integrate disability-inclusive development across their activities, including by tracking and measuring with tools such as the OECD DAC Disability Marker.
- Strengthen coordination and collaboration between OPDs, NGOs, governments, academia, and the private sector with clear roles and accountability and the leadership of persons with disabilities for meaningful inclusion.
- Provide adequate funding and capacity-building support to organizations of persons with disabilities, particularly those led by women, recognizing local organizations as key actors, in line with Articles 4(3) and 33(3) of the CRPD.
- Promote long-term, structured partnerships between governments and civil society through results-based agreements.
- Expand sustainable financing models that reduce financial barriers for persons with disabilities.

- Monitor and promote the incorporation of disability-inclusive development provisions in trade agreements, ensuring that trade agreements do not perpetuate or exacerbate inequalities.
- Enhance access to and expand trade finance facilities to remove barriers for access to trade, including for disability-owned businesses.
- Invest in disability-disaggregated data systems to better track progress and impact and improve planning and resource allocation, encouraging the use of internationally comparable methods.
- Invest in collecting and disseminating data on persons with disabilities in all their diversity through an intersectional lens, in line with Article 31 of the CRPD.
- Involve persons with disabilities in all stages of the data value chain, ensuring that all data is accessible for persons with disabilities, protected, and reflects reality.