

“Disability # inability”
**Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Enhancing
Coordinated Response**

**Side Event at the ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to
the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Organised by the Council of Europe and
the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations
Secretariat**

Tuesday 14 June 2016, 1:15pm – 2:30pm
Venue: Conference Room 4 (CR.4), UN Headquarters, New York

**Statement of Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division of Social Policy and
Development, DESA**

Excellencies,

Colleagues and Friends,

Let me start by thanking the Council of Europe for your commitment to supporting the full participation and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Globally, one billion individuals live with one or more disabilities. In Europe alone, there are an estimated 80 million persons with disabilities. These numbers alone are a clear indication of the scale of the task at hand. The Division for Social Policy and Development in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is proud of our collaboration with the Council in this work as we share the same belief that Disability is by no means Inability.

The commitment of the United Nations to the advancement of persons with disabilities in society and development is deeply rooted in the UN Charter. The premise of

our work in this area is to remove barriers that society has placed in front of persons with disabilities and to equalize opportunities for full participation.

The overarching goal of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development is to completely eradicate extreme poverty. While comprehensive data-sets on persons with disabilities do not exist in most countries, available regional and country level studies have provided a glimpse into a stark reality that there is a strong link between poverty, inequality and disability.

The percentage of persons with disabilities who can afford health care when in need is about 20 percentage points lower than for persons without disabilities. The percentage of persons with disabilities who completed primary education and who are employed is about ten percentage points lower than that of persons without disabilities. Inequalities also exist in wages, with persons with disabilities typically earning lower wages than persons without disabilities.

In order to break the link between poverty and disability, people with disabilities need access to all aspects of life from education to health, from leisure to decent jobs, to ensure a dignified and productive life. Employment provides both income and opportunities for social inclusion and participation. Employment is also an important strategy for eradicating poverty for achieving sustainable development, which is also the theme of the Commission for Social Development over the next two years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are many organisations and mechanisms working on addressing challenges facing persons with disabilities. Within the United Nations system, the specialised agencies, funds and programmes, inter-governmental processes such as the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the on-going Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; special mandate holders such as the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility; and my own Division for Social Policy and Development; all work on issues of disabilities. A coordinated response is essential.

The last session of the Commission for Social Development in February this year also recognised the need for coordination and discussed how to bring about a coherent and cohesive approach to the rights of persons with disabilities within the United Nations System. The Commission also supported the idea of establishing an annual multi-stakeholder panel under the Commission to discuss, share experiences and review progress in the implementation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities to improve coordination. Seven SDG targets (4.5; 4a; 8.5; 10.2; 11.2; 11.7 and 17.18) specifically address issues of disabilities.

Now the international community will be working with Member States to elaborate strategies for mainstreaming issues of disabilities into national development plans and strategies. At the international level, the High-level Political Forum is in charge of monitoring and reviewing implementation of the SDGs. It is important to get feedback from national and regional levels to support these reviews. Here again, the Commission for Social Development can be that channel as its recommendations are submitted to the HLPF.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SDGs have two clear objectives: The first is leaving no one behind. The second is reaching the most vulnerable first. Persons with disabilities are often at risk of double or triple discrimination, like girls and women with disabilities, indigenous persons with disabilities and persons with mental and intellectual disabilities. A true measure of success for the international community is addressing these specific vulnerabilities and also addressing the structural factors undermining the participation of persons with disabilities. This means fighting discrimination, stigma and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities, as well as removing barriers and providing accessibility for all physical and virtual environments for persons with disabilities.

The next 15 years provide us with the opportunity to bring positive change for persons with disabilities, on the basis of the 2030 Agenda and in line with the Convention. We, at DSPD/DESA, will spare no efforts to work with our partners to further promote disability-inclusive development. Let us enhance our concerted actions, cooperation and partnerships to ensure full protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of achieving internationally agreed development goals, such as the SDGs!

Thank you for your kind attention.