UNPRPD FUND
Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

EVENT REPORT

SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE:
THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

A high-level event hosted by the Global Disability Fund (formerly UNPRPD Fund), the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium to mark the 2024 Summit of the Future and identify opportunities ahead of the Global Disability Summit in 2025

GLOBAL DISABILITY SUMMIT

Summit of the Future
Our Common Agenda

IDA International Disability Alliance

UNPRPD FUND
Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

IDDC International Disability and Development Consortium

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BMZ

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

European Commission

Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations

MEXICO

Norway

GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA

Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations, New York

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I present the report for the event *Shaping an inclusive future: the rights of persons with disabilities*, which, I hope, reflects the inspiring and collaborative spirit that was experienced during the session.

Hosted by the Global Disability Fund (formerly known as the UN Partnership for Rights of Persons with Disabilities: UNPRPD Fund) and held under the joint auspices of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), the event brought together over 300 participants, both in person and online, all united in our shared goal of advancing disability inclusion on a global scale.

The unveiling of our new name —Global Disability Fund— signifies not just a change in title but the start of a new period. We look forward to launching our new strategy in early 2025, which will further elevate our ambition and commitment to support countries in their journey toward full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

We know the world is changing, hopefully for the better. As we continue to strive for a world where no one is left behind, inclusive development, humanitarian response and climate action remain at the heart of our mission. The event's discussions focused on how we can create lasting, meaningful impact on the ground. We explored the importance of inclusive financing and the necessary steps to build truly inclusive communities. These discussions, and the level of engagement shown by everyone involved, give me great hope that together we can drive tangible change for millions of persons with disabilities.

Looking ahead, the momentum generated at this event will carry us through to the Global Disability Summit (GDS) in Germany, the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Spain and the Second World Summit for Social Development in Qatar. These moments will be crucial in shaping the future of global disability inclusion. Our program is ambitious, but I am confident that our continued collaboration will lead to the greatest achievements.

Thank you for your continuous commitment to this important cause.

Dr. Ola Abualghaib
Director of the Global Disability Fund Secretariat

HOST ORGANIZATIONS

International Disability Alliance (IDA)

The International Disability Alliance (IDA) is a global coalition representing over 1,100 organizations of persons with disabilities and their families across eight global and six regional networks. IDA works to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and promote their inclusion in global human rights and sustainable development efforts.

With member organizations around the world, IDA represents the estimated one billion people worldwide living with disabilities. Among them are some of the world's largest – and most frequently overlooked – marginalized group. With its unique composition, including the foremost international disability rights organizations, IDA is considered by the United Nations System as the most authoritative representation of persons with disabilities on the global level.

More information about IDA at: www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org

International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) is a grouping of civil society organizations coming together around a common objective: promoting inclusive international development and humanitarian action with a special focus on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by all people with disabilities.

Operational through member-driven thematic task groups, IDDC fosters collaboration among its diverse membership. The Consortium has established strong partnerships with disability organizations, donors, and experts, building a trusted reputation for advancing disability inclusion across development efforts worldwide.

More information about IDDC at: www.iddcconsortium.net

Global Disability Fund (GDF)

The Global Disability Fund is a unique partnership that brings together UN entities, governments, organizations of persons with disabilities, and broader civil society to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), advance the rights of persons with disabilities and support the achievement of inclusive Sustainable Development Goals worldwide. Operational since 2012, the Fund has implemented over 100 joint programmes across 57 countries.

The Fund was created to foster collaboration between its members and complement their work around disability inclusion through UN Joint programming. The Fund operates through a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) established to channel resources for participating UN organizations (PUNOs).

More information about the Global Disability Fund at: www. unprpd.org

ABOUT THE EVENT

DATE
Saturday 21st September, 2024

TIME
02:00 pm to 05:30 pm

VENUE
Apella at Alexandria, 450 E 29th street
New York, NY. 10016

EVENT FORMAT
Panel discussion followed by cocktail reception

INVITATION ONLY EVENT
In person and online

More information about the event and the speakers

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

• **Financial Commitments:** There is a pressing need for increased and sustained financial commitments to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities across sectors, particularly in health, education, employment, and climate financing. A strong focus on accountability regarding the effective allocation and utilization of resources intended for persons with disabilities is essential.

• **Collaboration:** Past approaches to accelerating disability inclusion that have operated in isolation have not worked; a holistic, collaborative approach is needed moving forward. Stakeholders from governments, the private sector, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities must engage in collective action to create inclusive systems and frameworks that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

• **Partnerships:** A broad range of partnerships, encompassing the public and private sectors, UN system, philanthropic organizations, and organizations of persons with disabilities, must be established to drive disability inclusion forward.

• **Leadership of persons with disabilities:** Strengthening the representation and participation of persons with disabilities in all relevant discussions and decision-making processes, ensuring that the voices and priorities of persons with disabilities are incorporated is crucial to achieving meaningful inclusion.

• **Utilization of Data:** Systematically undertaking analysis and utilizing the gathered data is crucial to inform policies and practices to ensure that the rights and priorities of persons with disabilities are considered in decision-making processes.

• **Inclusive Development:** Disability inclusion must be integrated into all aspects of global development agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate financing discussions and humanitarian response and recovery to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are included in the decision-making processes.

• **Innovation and Knowledge Sharing:** Showcasing evidence of innovative approaches and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders will promote and enhance disability-inclusive practices and policies.

• **Upcoming Events as Catalysts:** Upcoming events such as the Global Disability Summit, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025 represent valuable opportunities to advance the agenda for disability inclusion.

• **Innovation in Assistive Technologies:** There is a big opportunity to leverage the current advances in technology, such as artificial intelligence, to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. However, it also poses challenges as the underlying data used to train these models could reflect societal biases. Accessibility must be designed into AI systems from the outset and the disability community must be involved in regulatory discussions.

OPENING SESSION

The opening session included welcoming remarks from Dr. Ola Abualghaib, Director of the Global Disability Fund Secretariat, and keynote contributions from a diverse range of high-level speakers.

Ville Tavio
Member of Parliament of Finland and
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

"The UNPRPD has a key role in supporting developing countries to implement the CRPD."

Mr. Tavio was the first speaker of the opening session. He reaffirmed Finland's longstanding commit-ment to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. The Minister underscored the crucial role of the Global Disability Fund in assisting developing nations with the implementation of the Conven-tion on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *"The UNPRPD has a key role in supporting developing countries to implement the CRPD,"* he stated, adding that Finland is proud to be the largest donor to the Fund since its creation. He praised the progress made under the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy over the past five years but cautioned that *"several targets are not met."* To ensure the Global Disability Fund's continued impact, he called for *"adequate sustainable funding for the team to continue their work"*.

In his speech, Mr. Tavio stressed the need to take an intersectional approach to disability inclusion, particularly focusing on women with disabilities, whose needs are often overlooked. *"When we talk about disability inclusion, we should remember that this is a diverse group of people, with each individual having their own needs and talents"*. He encouraged greater international collaboration, expressing hope that more partners would join Finland in supporting the Global Disability Fund. And finalized by advocating for involving persons with disabilities in decision-making processes: *"The best way to make the voice of persons with disabilities be heard is to bring them to the decision-making tables"*.

Irene Isambo
Minister of Persons with Disabilities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

"The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the establishment of the Global Disability Fund, which in the last years, through the UNPRPD, has supported the efforts of the DRC, especially through my Ministry."

Ms. Irene Isambo emphasized her country's commitment to the social inclusion of people with disabilities by establishing a Ministry dedicated to this issue and significantly increasing the national budget for the sector.

However, she also stressed that insufficient budget allocations and weak support from international partners have further exacerbated the ongoing challenges the DRC faces. Ms. Isambo called for a revision of the global financing approach for the disability sector, stating that *"it is necessary to strengthen cooperation and collaboration to promote the exchange of knowledge, opportunities, and strategies in response to the challenges that undermine the future of people with disabilities worldwide."*

She welcomed the establishment of the Global Disability Fund, which in the last years, through the UNPRPD, has been instrumental in supporting their advocacy efforts, particularly in adop-ting the Organic Law on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities. Ms. Isambo urged international partners to simplify funding procedures and emphasized that *"it is in the countries of the Global South that poverty and the harmful effects of disability are most pronounced among the populations, especially among women and children with disabilities"*. She concluded by calling for enhanced collaboration and a more significant involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities in discussions on disability financing.

HRH Prince Mired Raad
President of the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of Jordan

"It is essential for all countries, especially developing countries, to continue to elevate disability issues to the forefront of their national agenda."

His Royal Highness Prince Mired of Jordan delivered a video message emphasizing the critical importance of the upcoming Global Disability Summit, scheduled for April 2025 in Berlin. *"This Summit presents a transformative opportunity to refocus disability issues, and discussions, toward the improvement of the lives of persons with disabilities."*

Prince Mired stressed the importance of urging countries, particularly developing ones, to elevate disability issues to the forefront of their national agendas. He called for the integration of disability rights into national legislation, backed by strategic plans, sufficient human resources, and appropriate financial allocations. *"All countries must adopt a serious approach and attitude and be bent upon achieving results,"*.

Prince Mired also focused on the role of disability-inclusive funding. He criticized the failure of donor countries to consistently incorporate disability into their funding criteria, calling it a *"missed opportunity to create meaningful impact"*. He urged donors to make disability inclusion as mandatory as gender in development funding, remarking that such a shift would induce government decision-makers to treat disability as a critical issue.

H.E. Archie Young

UK Ambassador to UN General Assembly

"These summits are not an end in themselves, they are an opportunity to raise the issues, to get those hooks and to really advance the tangible, practical action on the ground"

In his speech, H.E. Archie Young highlighted the critical need to center disability rights on the global political agenda, with a focus on the upcoming Global Disability Summit in Berlin. He praised the legacy of previous summits in advancing disability-inclusive development, calling them opportunities to drive *"tangible, practical action on the ground."*

H.E. emphasized the importance of the inclusion of disability rights in the Global Digital Compact, stressing the importance of accessible user interfaces and data on persons with disabilities. These elements, he noted, are essential for ensuring that technology can bridge gaps in inclusion and access. He further underscored the need to enhance the participation of young people with disabilities and ensure their voices are heard in meaningful ways, highlighting that accessibility within the UN itself, remains a vital issue that requires continuous improvement.

A key theme of his address was the UK's ongoing commitment to the Fund's work accelerating CRPD implementation: *"We are committed to defending human rights, and freedom, to accelerate the implementation of UNCRPD and continue to uphold obligations set out within it."*

Looking ahead, the Ambassador highlighted the need for long-term impacts and the translation of commitments into actionable policies. *"With one in six people across the world having a disability and*

a fifth of the world's poorest people being affected, we really need to take a disability-inclusive approach if we are to serve both our own population and the most vulnerable people across the world".

H.E. Andreas von Uexküll
Deputy Permanent Representative of
Sweden to the United Nations

"This unique Fund is aimed at galvanizing the collective efforts of UN system entities and since 2012, these efforts have benefited over 350 million people across 93 countries, including, in humanitarian contexts, such as in Ukraine"

H.E. Andreas von Uexküll reaffirmed Sweden's commitment to disability-inclusive development, aligning with the core goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to "*leave no one behind.*" He emphasized that "*persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, are often those furthest left behind, those most discriminated, and those most excluded everywhere in the world.*" H.E. Mr Von Uexküll cited WHO data showing that 1.3 billion people live with long-term impairments, limiting their societal participation.

H.E. Mr. Von Uexküll praised Sweden's strong support for the Global Disability Fund, noting that *"the essence of our policies is to promote the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms, this is why we stand with the UN Disability Fund."* He highlighted the fund's impact since 2012, which has galvanized *"the collective efforts of 11 U.N. system entities", benefiting "over 350 million people across 93 countries."* He stressed that "funding for *disability inclusion is crucial"*, adding that Sweden is committed to integrating disability considerations across key sectors such as health, education, employment, and digitalization.

"We need to ensure that the commitments of the Pact for the Future are disability-inclusive," he said, emphasizing that Sweden's co-facilitation of the Global Digital Compact ensures the protection of human rights and promotes accessibility for persons with disabilities.

He concluded with a call to action: *"With intent, partnerships, and coordinated efforts, we can accele-rate towards our vision of a truly inclusive society, where everyone, regardless of disability status, can achieve their full potential".*

Sergio Colina Martín
Director-General for Sustainable Development Policies, Spain

"Today we have an opportunity to take a big step ahead, to discuss and identify specific actions that can guarantee increased and sustained financial commitments for the inclusion of persons with disabilities"

Mr. Sergio Colina Martín emphasized Spain's commitment to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. He underscored that *"persons with disabilities are still among the groups too often put in the most vulnerable situations in our societies, and this is unacceptable,"* making it critical to place their rights at the forefront of global progress and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He called for collective action: *"Today we have an opportunity to take a big step ahead, to discuss and identify specific actions that can guarantee increased and sustained financial commitments for the inclusion of persons with disabilities."* Mr. Colina pointed to the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be hosted in Spain in 2025, as a critical moment to *"seize the chance to integrate disability inclusion into all aspects of financial strategies."*

He stressed the need for partnerships with a broad range of actors: *"The private sector, philanthropic organizations, foundations, IFIs, also have to play a vital role in accelerating financing for disability inclusion."* Additionally, Mr. Colina Martín highlighted the importance of disability inclusion in climate financing and planning, emphasizing that *"we must ensure that the voices and priorities of persons with disabilities are heard and incorporated into the decision-making processes."*

In closing, he stated that *"together, we can shape the future of inclusive development"* by ensuring that financial, political, and humanitarian commitments align with the rights of persons with disabilities.

Erica Gerretsen
Director Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace, European Commission

"Our partnership with the UNPRPD is at the center of the EU efforts to implement the external dimension of the Union of Equality strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities"

In her speech Ms. Erica Gerretsen reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities, both within and beyond the EU and stressed the EU's strong support for the Global Disability Fund, explaining that the Fund is central to the EU's efforts to implement the external dimension of its Union of Equality strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities. She also praised the multistakeholder approach of the UNPRPD: *"We value the UNPRPD's multistakeholder approach, working through UN agencies, partner country bodies, and civil society organizations to advance the CRPD implementation."*

Ms. Gerretsen underscored the importance of mainstreaming disability throughout EU policies, noting that this is being implemented in a similar manner to the EU's gender policy. She explained that the EU is using the OECD disability marker to track and assess the inclusivity of their programs.

She also stressed that *"more investment is needed in the care economy, from both the public and the private sector,"* particularly in areas such as training personal assistants, developing assistive techno-logies, and providing accessible housing to support independent living for persons with disabilities. She noted that *"artificial intelligence can help the lives of persons with disabilities when well-planned and well-regulated."*

She closed by expressing the EU's eagerness to continue collaborating with partners and organizations of persons with disabilities worldwide, particularly in light of upcoming events like the Global Disability Summit 2025.

Danielle Sever
Director, Global Development Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia

"Support to UNPRPD has played a key role in supporting partner governments to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities".

Ms. Danielle Sever emphasized that *"everyone benefits from equity and inclusion,"* pointing out that it is estimated that the exclusion of people with disabilities costs as much as 7% of potential GDP, underscoring the broader societal and economic impacts of inclusion.

Ms. Sever noted that Australia was the first donor to develop a standalone strategy for disability-inclusive development in 2015, and a new international disability equity and rights strategy is now being developed, informed by consultations across the Asia-Pacific and globally, with the input of disability rights experts.

She outlined several priorities raised during consultations, including the need to strengthen the disability rights movement, address discrimination and exclusion, increase access to assistive technology, ensure equity in humanitarian assistance and climate action, and invest in data and evidence. Ms. Sever highlighted that *"support to the Global Disability Fund has played a key role in supporting partner governments to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"*.

In recent years, Australia has *"deepened its partnership with the UNPRPD to respond to conflict supporting comprehensive disability-inclusive programs in Ukraine"* which she noted is a *"critical need and sadly, a critical gap in donor assistance."*

H.E. Ambassador Lucy Kiruthu
Deputy-Director-General for Political and Diplomatic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Kenya

"Through sustained international cooperation, we can unlock the potential of every individual and ensure that no one is left behind"

H.E. Ambassador Lucy Kiruthu reaffirmed Kenya's commitment to ensuring inclusivity and the full participation of persons with disabilities in achieving sustainable development. She emphasized that Kenya is *"determined to ensure that inclusivity becomes not just a goal, but a reality for all."*

H.E. Ms. Kiruthu highlighted several key initiatives aimed at addressing systemic inequalities and empowering persons with disabilities: *"Some of the initiatives being implemented in Kenya include the Fund and the national government affirmative action fund, which open access to financial resources for persons with disabilities."*

Employment remains a critical focus of Kenya's efforts. The Government is working on providing conditions for decent work and economic growth for all, particularly through training programs designed to empower persons with disabilities. Ambassador Kiruthu also highlighted the AI-powered career portal, an innovative platform launched in 2024, which matched over 300 persons with disabilities with employment opportunities. Kenya has also implemented the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), which includes affirmative action in job placements and incentives for employers to adapt workplaces to accommodate employees with disabilities.

Ambassador Kiruthu called for global action and collaboration: *"As we look to the future, we call upon the international community to strengthen collaboration and partnerships."*. To tackle the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, H.E. Ms. Kiruthu also emphasized that *"through sustained international cooperation, we can unlock the potential of every individual and ensure that no one is left behind."*

Dr. Natalia Kanem
Executive Director, UNFPA (Chair of UNPRPD Fund)

"The renaming of the now Global Disability Fund really reflects the unique approach that this Fund is developing. It's uniting the UN, governments and civil society for a global impact that penetrates every village, every city and every community"

Dr. Natalia Kanem highlighted the need for a comprehensive global approach to disability inclusion. She highlighted the renaming of the Global Disability Fund, noting that it reflects *"the unique approach that this fund is developing, uniting the UN, governments, and civil society for global impact in every village, every city, and every community."*

Dr. Kanem emphasized the importance of recognizing sexual and reproductive health and rights as entitlements for persons with disabilities. She highlighted several UNFPA initiatives: An app in Morocco to help young people with autism understand their biology and anatomy. In Vanuatu, UNFPA supports preplanning for menstrual health interventions to ensure readiness before disasters like floods or droughts. In El Salvador, UNFPA trains young women with disabilities on bodily autonomy and rights, empowering them with self-protection and confidence.

Dr. Kanem stressed the urgent need for increased funding and political will to advance disability rights globally: *"In some developing countries, women and girls with disabilities, still, are twice as likely, to be subjective to sexual violence. 22% of married women with disabilities have an unmet need for family-planning. These are things that we can do something about. Today, what I'm asking is your unwavering political and financial support for full disability inclusion"*.

Haoliang Xu
Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of the UNDP (host of UNPRPD Fund)

"94 joint programs have supported 100,000 organizations of people with disabilities, governments and government agencies, the improvement of 87 laws, strategies, policies and other regulatory actions. It also resulted in 213 systems-level changes. This is what the Global Disability Fund can achieve with your support"

Mr. Haoliang Xu emphasized UNDP's strong commitment to disability rights, noting that $370 million of their 2023 programs have directly benefited people with disabilities. He highlighted the transformative impact of the Global Disability Fund, which has been hosted by UNDP since its establishment. "*The partnership was established in 2011-2012 and since then 11 UN agencies have supported 350 million people with disabilities.*" He elaborated on its achievements, stating, *"94 joint programs have supported 100,000 organizations of people with disabilities, governments and government agencies, the improvement of 87 laws, strategies, policies and other regulatory actions. It also resulted in 213 systems-level changes, which include practices, and service provisions. This is what these partnership can achieve with your support"*.

Mr. Xu also acknowledged the vital contributions from donor countries such as Finland, Sweden, Australia, the United Kingdom, Norway, the European Union, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, and Spain; calling for continued partnerships to further advance disability rights worldwide.

HIGH LEVEL PANEL 1

FINANCING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The first high-level panel discussion focused on financing inclusive development and discussed specific actions that can be taken to increase and sustain financial commitments for disability inclusion. The session also reflected on opportunities ahead of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development and Global Disability Summit in 2025.

The first panel featured a diverse group of experts, including Alexander Görsdorf, Deputy Commissioner of the Global Disability Summit; Nathalie Akon Gabala, Global Director of Gender & Economic Inclusion at the International Finance Corporation; Stephanie Speck, Head of Communications at the Green Climate Fund; Martín Abregú, Vice President of International Programs at the Ford Foundation; and Dr. Felipe Paullier, Assistant Secretary General for Youth Affairs.

Tala Al Ramahi

Chief Strategy Officer, Reaching the Last Mile

"A World Bank study found that exclusion of people with disabilities from the workforce can cost economies up to 7% of GDP. The challenge is how to best translate this knowledge into more and sustained funding"

Ms. Tala Al Ramahi, Chief Strategy Officer of Reaching the Last Mile, initiated the panel discussion underscoring the urgent need for increased investments in disability-inclusive development. *"When people with disabilities are included in education, and employment, they contribute to the economy".* Al Ramahi noted that, despite one in seven people worldwide having a disability, only 2% of human rights funding targets this group.

Ms. Al Ramahi highlighted that despite the clear social and economic benefits of inclusion, funding remains insufficient. *"A World Bank study found that exclusion of people with disabilities from the workforce can cost economies up to 7% of GDP. The challenge is how to best translate this knowledge into more and sustained funding"* she stated.

Alexander Görsdorf
Deputy Commissioner of the Global Disability Summit

"We're trying to mobilize fresh funding, for cross-cutting and important issues. And do it in a smart way, not as another initiative besides all the other, but trying to leverage the investments that are already out there for disability inclusion"

The first panelist, Dr. Alexander Görsdorf, noted that the primary goal of the upcoming summit, co-hosted by Germany, is to foster political commitment rather than focus solely on financing. He emphasized the importance of establishing the GDS as a long-term mechanism to raise awareness and commitment to disability inclusion.

Mr. Görsdorf highlighted various initiatives, including a *"Global Disability Inclusion Report"* featuring a chapter on financing, scheduled for release in 2025. He also mentioned the *"15% for the 15%"* initiative, which aims to dedicate 15% of development cooperation activities to disability inclusion. Additionally, he discussed Germany's plan to support inclusive cities, where 50% of persons with disabilities reside, and to attract new funding from diverse sources to address cross-cutting issues in disability inclusion.

Nathalie Akon Gabala
Global Director of Gender & Economic Inclusion at the International Finance Corporation (IFC)

"Disability inclusion - it's not only about human rights, it is a business imperative as well"

Ms. Nathalie Akon Gabala, shared her thoughts on the commitments made during the previous Global Disability Summit, the actions IFC has taken to date, and the lessons learned for increasing financing for inclusive development and climate action in future IFC operations.

Ms. Akon shared that IFC's new framework includes a three-step investment guide, launched during the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which encourages investors to commit capital to foster disability inclusion.

Examples from Sri Lanka and Mexico showcased how peer-learning platforms are helping companies adopt disability-inclusive practices and how private-sector efforts can drive meaningful inclusion for people with disabilities. Ms. Akon emphasized that significant progress has been made, but much more work is needed. In her view, continued public-private cooperation will be essential to sustain progress.

Stephanie Speck
Head of Communications at the Green Climate Fund (GCF)

"We know that people living with disability are two to four times more likely to be injured in climate emergencies, and that's unacceptable"

Ms. Stephanie Speck discussed the GCF's perspective on delivering projects worldwide, the opportunities for systematically embedding disability inclusion into climate projects, and how to better prioritize the rights of people with disabilities. She emphasized that climate action must be centered on equity, accessibility, and human rights. She highlighted the urgent need to integrate disability inclusion into climate finance.

Ms. Speck noted GCF's commitment to managing $50 billion in climate investments by 2030, with a strong focus on vulnerable communities. Currently, GCF has $15 billion committed to 270 projects across 130 countries. However, she admitted the GCF lacks specific data on how much of its invest-ment directly benefits people with disabilities. She expressed shock at this oversight and pledged to improve data monitoring, promising that GCF will soon be able to track its contributions to disability inclusion.

Mr. Speck called on organizations and governments to engage with GCF's $500 million readiness funding program, urging them to use this resource to ensure that climate investments are inclusive. She concluded by encouraging stakeholders to hold GCF accountable for making these investments truly inclusive for the most vulnerable people.

Martín Abregú
Vice President – International Programs, Ford Foundation

"We need to engage other donors not through the traditional narratives that put disabilities as something that needs to be addressed but definitely as an

opportunity for us to change everything that we're working on"

Mr. Martín Abregú shared insightful reflections on how to make development finance more accessible for people with disabilities. He emphasized that donor structures often reflect the discrimination and stigma present in broader society. To address this, the Ford Foundation has been working over the last decade to make its operations more inclusive and accessible, both technically and substantively. On the technical side, this includes making their website more accessible, with features like captions, downloadable transcripts, and audio descriptions for videos.

Beyond technical accessibility, Mr. Abregu highlighted the importance of substantive inclusion. Ford Foundation works with disability grantees and incorporates disability perspectives into its other areas of focus, such as climate change and gender-based violence. To ensure meaningful engagement, the Foundation creates ad hoc advisory committees composed of disability organizations to help guide their strategies and communications.

Mr. Abregu noted that to engage more donors in disability inclusion, the narrative should not focus on marginalization but instead highlight the power and agency of disability rights. He stressed that working on disability issues positively impacts broader goals, such as improving democracy and economic livelihoods.

Dr. Felipe Paullier
Assistant Secretary General for Youth Affairs

"We already have many structures and funds […] the challenge lies in unlocking and redirecting those funds to be more accountable to young people, ensuring disability inclusion is mainstreamed across all initiatives"

To close the first part of the panel discussion, Dr. Felipe Paullier discussed the intersection of youth and disability inclusion, emphasizing how these two areas are deeply connected. He began by acknowledging the efforts made by his office, alongside other UN agencies, to address gaps in data on young people with disabilities, noting that although progress is being made, there is still a long way to go.

One key point he raised is that while resources for youth-focused initiatives already exist, the challenge lies in unlocking and redirecting those funds to be more accountable to young people, who make up 50% of the world's population. Dr. Paullier stressed that this includes ensuring disability inclusion is mainstreamed across all youth initiatives, a focus that is at the core of the UN Youth Office's strategy.

In closing, Dr. Paullier reaffirmed the UN Youth Office's dedication to amplifying the voices of young people with disabilities, he emphasized the need for collective action and collaboration to create a more inclusive future for all young people.

HIGH LEVEL PANEL 2

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

The second high-level panel discussion: Inclusive communities – achieving equity and meaningful participation through locally led development, focused on how to build more inclusive communities and achieve equity and meaningful participation through locally led development. The session identified actions that facilitate inclusive locally led development and accelerate SDG implementation and reflected on opportunities ahead of the 2nd World Summit for Social Development and Global Disability Summit in 2025.

The second panel was introduced by José Viera and brought together expert voices, including Sylvain Obedi, Executive Director of Enable the Disable Action and youth advocate from the African Youth Movement; Rylin Rodgers from Microsoft; and Beck Bailey from Accenture.

José Viera
Executive Director of the International Disability Alliance

"If we really want to push for a more inclusive world, we need to do it in partnership"

Mr. José Viera introduced the panel discussion highlighting the importance of collaboration in achieving inclusive development. *"If we really want to push for a more inclusive world, we need to do it in partnership,"* he stated. By broadening the scope of who is involved in these discussions, Mr. Viera emphasized that meaningful progress could be made toward creating inclusive environments for all individuals, both with and without disabilities, across global communities.

Sylvain Obedi
Executive Director, Enable the Disable Action

"We need to promote awareness campaigns to combat stigma and misconceptions around disability, cultivate

a culture of inclusion, and recognize everyone's talent and abilities"

Mr. Sylvain Obedi emphasized the need for concrete steps to ensure young people with disabilities are included in the SDGs and decision-making processes at local, national and global levels. He stressed the importance of inclusive policies that integrate their voices on critical issues like education, employment, and healthcare.

Mr Obedi called for strategic partnerships with organizations representing young people with disabilities, robust training programs to remove participation barriers, and the adoption of universal design principles for accessibility. He urged leaders at the upcoming Global Disability Summit to adopt a global framework mandating their inclusion and set funding targets. He also called for awareness campaigns to combat stigma and foster a culture of inclusion, stating that young people deserve a seat at the decision-making table.

Rylin Rodgers
Disability Policy Advisor, Microsoft

"People with disabilities, are often early adopters. We are using the technology because it is critical for accessibility in our daily lives"

The next panelist, Ms. Rylin Rodgers shared her thoughts on the role of artificial intelligence (AI in advancing accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities, framed through a human rights lens.

She noted that many persons with disabilities are early adopters of these technologies, using them for daily tasks and enhancing their independence. Positive applications of AI include improved visual descriptions for navigation and advancements in voice-to-text technology that increase access in public spaces, such as airports. Rodgers also praised AI's ability to create accessible formats for individuals with intellectual disabilities, enabling them to access information more equitably.

However, she cautioned that AI also poses challenges, as the underlying data reflects societal biases. To address this, she called for increased representation of disability in data used to train AI systems. Ms. Rodgers emphasized that accessibility must be designed into AI systems from the outset, advoca-ting for the involvement of the disability community in regulatory discussions. She concluded by encouraging collaborative efforts to ensure that *"technology benefits everyone, particularly those with disabilities, in this new digital age."*

Mr. Beck Bailey
Managing Director Global Chief Diversity Officer, Accenture

"Companies that prioritized disability inclusion reported twice the economic profit than those who did not"

To close this panel discussion, Mr. Beck Bailey emphasized Accenture's commitment to leveraging technology and human ingenuity to create opportunities for individuals with disabilities. He presented findings from Accenture's research, noting that companies prioritizing disability inclusion reported *"1.6 times more revenue, 2.6 times more net income and twice the economic profit"* than those that did not.

Mr. Bailey outlined three key areas for accelerating inclusion: fostering a culture of belonging, removing barriers in the workplace, and investing in employees with disabilities.

Mr. Bailey underscored the necessity of leadership commitment and the importance of listening to the perspectives of persons with disabilities. He highlighted that Accenture created Accessibility Centers in 48 locations worldwide, where employees can explore assistive technologies and learn about their use. He concluded by stressing the need for tailored learning and career development programs for employees with disabilities to ensure they are recognized for their unique contributions.

HIGH LEVEL PANEL 3

CALLS TO ACTION

The third session highlighted the crucial role of calls to action from civil society and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in advancing inclusive progress. Moderated by Ms. Mary Keogh, Chair of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC, the panel featured a distinguished group of experts, including Dr. Mohammad Loutfy, Director for Capacity-Building and Advocacy at the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs; Gopal Mitra, Global Lead for Disability and Development at UNICEF; and Dr. Monjurul Kabir, Global Adviser and Team Leader for Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion at UN Women.

Ms. Mary Keogh
Chair of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)

"Disability inclusion cannot happen in silos; it demands collaboration across governments, private sectors, and civil society to transform systems and ensure that every voice is heard"

Ms. Mary Keogh moderated this panel and highlighted the call to action initiated by the IDDC and the International Disability Alliance. Ms. Keogh underscored the urgency of accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs within the limited time frame remaining. Ms. Keogh outlined several key action points from the call to action. The need for adequate financial allocation to support disability inclusion, a sentiment echoed by representatives from the Spanish government and the European Union. Strengthening the representation and participation of persons with disabilities was noted as essential, reinforcing the principle of *"nothing about us without us."* She further discussed the importance of utilizing data to inform policies and practices effectively.

Ms. Keogh called for collaboration across governments, private sectors, and civil society to create inclusive systems and address humanitarian standards, particularly concerning climate change and natural disasters. Keogh concluded by stressing the significance of promoting innovation and knowledge-sharing, as well as the necessity for concrete commitments at upcoming forums leading up to the Global Disability Summit in 2025.

Dr. Mohammad Loutfy
Director for Capacity-Building and Advocacy
at the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs

"Disability-inclusive development demands bridging the digital divide through accessible technology, forging partnerships, and prioritizing data-driven policies for sustainable change"

Dr. Loutfy emphasized the need to strengthen the representation and participation of persons with disabilities. He outlined several strategic steps to achieve this goal: *"To strengthen representation, we must build on the inclusive structure of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities."* Dr. Loutfy highlighted the importance of involving persons with disabilities and their organizations in decision-making processes to ensure actions reflect their realities. He argued that this involvement would accelerate progress in eliminating discrimination and enhance outcomes in climate change and disaster risk reduction.

He also stressed the necessity of establishing systematic preconditions for inclusion in both disability-centered and mainstream policies, while addressing the digital divide that affects many persons with disabilities individuals. *"Investing in disability-inclusive development and collecting relevant data are critical for sustainable change,"* he stated. Furthermore, Dr. Loutfy called for fostering partnerships among various stakeholders to enhance awareness and capacity. In closing, he asserted that organizations representing persons with disabilities must be the driving force behind effective and sustainable change.

Gopal Mitra
Global Lead Disability and Development,
UNICEF

"We cannot transform something that we don't count and that we don't measure"

Mr Gopal Mitra highlighted the ongoing efforts to improve the collection and use of disability data within mainstream systems. He acknowledged the significant advances made in the past decade, notably through the integration of the Washington Group-UNICEF Child Functioning Model into key household survey mechanisms. This initiative has resulted in the establishment of the largest repository of child disability data globally, providing better insights into the well-being of children with disabilities.

Mr. Mitra emphasized the importance of strengthening administrative data systems to track how individuals with disabilities access essential services. He advocated for the expansion of disability management information systems and for better data harmonization across various ministries, including education and health. He stated, *"We cannot transform something that we don't count and that we don't measure,"* underscoring the necessity of disaggregating data to ensure that the specific needs of persons with disabilities are addressed effectively. Furthermore, he noted that UNICEF is actively disaggregating data in its strategic plans to enhance accessibility to education, assistive technologies, and humanitarian support for children with disabilities.

Dr. Monjurul Kabir
Global Adviser and Team Leader for Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion. UN Women

"The future of the disability movement must be feminist and inclusive, integrating resources and commitments to ensure meaningful impact for women and girls with disabilities"

Dr. Monjurul Kabir discussed UN Women's initiatives to translate global commitments into actionable strategies for women and girls, particularly women and girls with disabilities. He began by noting the recent launch of the anniversary celebration for the Beijing Declaration, which aims to address critical areas impacting women and girls over the next decade. *"The national review process has completed, and the regional review of the declaration is happening now."*

Highlighting the twelve critical areas identified in the 1995 Beijing Declaration, Dr. Kabir acknowledged the persistent disparities faced by women, especially those with disabilities. He outlined six key drivers essential for enhancing disability inclusion, which include addressing peace and security, ending violence against women, recognizing unpaid care work, bridging the digital divide, and linking economic empowerment to climate action. He pointed out that *"there hasn't been dedicated resource allocation,"* underscoring the need for committed funding to support these initiatives.

Dr. Kabir also introduced the concept of the Disability Marker, designed to enhance gender-responsive budgeting within the UN system. He expressed hope that this would lead to more inclusive practices, stating, *"We would like to see the feminist movement become more disability inclusive."*

CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Ola Abualghaib expressed gratitude to participants, emphasizing the need for a collective approach to address disability issues. She highlighted the importance of not starting from scratch, stating that *"there are a lot of key moments taking place next year"* that must include disability discussions and commitments. She underscored that *"siloed approaches to disability have never worked,"* advocating for collaborative efforts moving forward.

Mr. José Viera reinforced the notion of focusing on the future of disability inclusion. He stressed the importance of partnerships, emphasizing the need to place organizations of persons with disabilities at the center of decision-making. He noted the significance of not only increasing investment but ensuring that funds are directed effectively to those who need them most.

Mr. Viera also urged for a stronger focus on accountability, stating, *"We can only think about accountability based on how much resources OPDs get to implement programs."* He concluded by inviting new stakeholders to join the discussion at upcoming events, including the Global Disability Summit, reiterating the principle of *"nothing about us without us"*, as essential for progress in disability inclusion.

Dr. Abualghaib encouraged informal networking among attendees, closing the session on a hopeful note for future collaborations.

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