

## International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2014

### Theme: Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology

Throughout human history, technology has always impacted the way people live. The Industrial Revolution ushered in a new age of technology that raised the standards of living of people around the world and their access to goods and services. Today, technology is built in to every facet of daily living. The emergence of information and communications technologies have dramatically increased connectivity between people and their access to information, and further raised living standards.

ICTs have indeed changed the way people live, work and play. However, not all people benefit from the advances of technology and the higher standards of living. This is mainly because not all people have access to new technologies and not all people can afford them.

Today, there are over 1 billion people living in the world with some form of disability. Around the world, persons with disabilities not only face physical barriers but also social, economic and attitudinal barriers. Furthermore, disability is associated with twenty per cent of global poverty, of which the majority live in developing countries. In spite of being the world's largest minority group, persons with disabilities and the issue of disability has remained largely invisible in the mainstream development frameworks and its processes.

Since 1992, the annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

The observance of this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) provides an opportunity to further raise awareness of disability as a cross-cutting development issue. The theme of this year's commemoration, "Sustainable Development: The promise of technology" is timely, as it marks the conclusion of the period of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 and the launching of the new development framework of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The 2014 commemoration of IDPD will work to harness the power of technology to promote inclusion and accessibility to help realize the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society and shape the future of sustainable development for all!

Three sub-themes chosen will focus on the promise of technology in:

- Disability-Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Responses
- Creating Enabling Work Environments

### Disability-Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) that have been recently proposed to succeed the MDGs, will work to address all three dimensions of sustainable development -- environmental, economic and social. Disability is referenced in various parts of the draft proposal on the SDGs; more specifically in goals related to education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, as well as in data collection and the monitoring of the SDGs. (<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1618>).

All SDG goals concern persons with disabilities. Technology can greatly impact the achievement and outcome of the goals for persons with disabilities, and in reality for people everywhere. The Day can be used to promote the impact and benefits of assistive technology, accessible information and communications technology, technological adaptations and other policy and programmatic measures to improve the well-being and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

[Background Note on Panel Discussion on "Disability-Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals"](#)

Resources:

- [The Sustainable Development Goals and Disability](#)
- [Introduction to the proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- Outcome document - Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>
- High-level meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development, 23 September 2013 <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1590>
- The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework [http://g3ict.org/resource\\_center/publications\\_and\\_reports/p/productCategory\\_whitepapers/id\\_297](http://g3ict.org/resource_center/publications_and_reports/p/productCategory_whitepapers/id_297)

## **Disaster risk reduction and emergency responses**

Statistics and evidence show that the mortality rate of persons with disabilities in a populations going through disaster situations is as high as 2 to 4 times, compared to the non-disabled population. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected in disaster, emergency, and conflict situations due to inaccessible evacuation, response (including shelters, camps, and food distribution), and recovery efforts.

The Day will be used to highlight available technologies to support inclusive disaster risk reduction and emergency response, as well as emphasize the importance of making such technology accessible for all. Additionally, the potential of innovative and assistive emerging ICT technologies will be explored, such as early-warning, location and navigation applications that could save the lives of persons with disabilities in disaster and emergency situations.

[Background Note on Panel Discussion on "The Promise of Technologies: Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Action"](#)

Resources:

- Disability, natural disasters and emergency situations <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1546>
- WCDRR World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan <http://www.wcdrr.org/>
- DESA Forum Roundtable Discussion on Disability–Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience [http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/COP/COP7/cosp7\\_side\\_event\\_disaster\\_risk\\_resilience.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/COP/COP7/cosp7_side_event_disaster_risk_resilience.pdf)
- UN International Day for Disaster Reduction <http://www.un.org/en/events/disasterreductionday/>

## **Creating Enabling Work Environments**

The right to work is a fundamental human right. However, persons with disabilities are often not considered in employment due to negative perceptions regarding their ability to contribute or the high cost of accommodating their disability or inaccessible workplaces. Often, employers are unaware of the valuable contribution persons with disabilities can make in a diverse workplace, through the use of adaptive and assistive technologies, and other reasonable accommodation measures. With the use of the right technologies, persons with disabilities are able to fully perform in their jobs.

When employers undertake measures to identify and eliminate barriers to the employment, advancement and retention of persons with disabilities, they promote a workplace culture based on fair practices that safeguard allow persons with disabilities to be treated with dignity and respect and to enjoy equal terms and conditions of employment.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities can be used to draw attention to the available technologies and measures that can be adopted to create work environments that are open, inclusive and accessible to allow persons with disabilities to fully participate and contribute to the workforce.

## Background Note on Panel Discussion on “Creating Enabling Work Environments”

### Resources:

- A Place for All: A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace — Canadian Human Rights Commission  
[http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/discrimination/APFA\\_UPPT/toc\\_tdm-en.asp](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/discrimination/APFA_UPPT/toc_tdm-en.asp)
- Simple Strategies for Providing an Accessible Workplace for Blind Employees <http://www.afb.org/info/accessibility/accessible-workplaces/25>
- Work Without Limits - An accessible workplace  
<http://www.workwithoutlimits.org/employers/ra/workplacece>
- Managing disability in the workplace : ILO code of practice [http://ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS\\_103324/lang--en/index.htm](http://ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_103324/lang--en/index.htm)
- G3ict: The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs  
<http://g3ict.org/>

### **How you can commemorate IDPD 2014**

**Include:** Observance of the Day provides opportunities for participation by all stakeholders – Governments, the UN system, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities – to focus on issues related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development, both as beneficiaries and agents of change.

**Organize:** Hold forums, public discussions and information campaigns in support of the themes of IDPD 2014 to find innovative and promising ways in which technology can lead to a greater inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities in the lives of their societies.

**Celebrate:** Plan and organize performances everywhere to showcase - and celebrate - the contributions made by persons with disabilities as agents of change in the communities in which they live.

**Take Action:** A major focus of the Day is practical action to highlight how technology can impact the inclusion and contribution of persons with disabilities in social life and development on the basis of equality. Highlight best practices, innovative technological solutions for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in their societies.

### **United Nations Enable Film Festival 2014**

Send us your films: If you think that your short film can help achieve the objectives of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and is suitable to be presented to a diverse international audience, please send us information and a link to the online version of the film (or a hard copy of the film) for consideration. Further details and submission guidelines are available at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1562>.