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Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/186, provides an overview of progress made since the previous report in 2011 (A/66/121) on the implementation of policies and programmes related to persons with disabilities within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. During the reporting period, the Assembly decided to hold a high-level meeting on disability and development in 2013, to take concerted action towards a disability-inclusive post-2015 development framework. The report also provides recommendations on priority areas for inclusion in the outcome of the high-level meeting, as well as in ongoing efforts to mainstream disability in the development agenda towards 2015 and beyond.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 65/186, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, during its sixty-seventh session, information on progress made towards the implementation of programmes and policies related to persons with disabilities within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

2. During the reporting period, the General Assembly decided to hold a high-level meeting on disability and development in 2013, to take decisive action towards a disability-inclusive post-2015 development framework. The present report provides recommendations on priority areas for inclusion in the outcome of the high-level meeting, as well as in the ongoing efforts for mainstreaming disability in a post-2015 development framework.

II. Context of the high-level meeting on disability and development

3. The commitment of the international community to the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society and development is deeply rooted in the goals of the United Nations: realization of the call of the Charter of the United Nations for fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, and the promotion of better standards of life in larger freedom. From its earliest years and with an approach that has evolved over decades, the United Nations has addressed the status of persons with disabilities. Initially, the focus was on addressing disability from the perspectives of social and medical welfare, until the 1970s, when the international community began to focus on integrating the rights of persons with disabilities into all facets of development.

4. In 1982, the General Assembly, with a view to advancing the goal of inclusive society and development, adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (resolution 38/28). The World Programme challenged the view that it was persons with disabilities who should adapt to existing societal standards, and instead placed the burden on society itself to remove barriers to their full participation. The international framework on disability was further strengthened through the adoption by the Assembly in 1993 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (resolution 48/96), which strengthened the human rights perspective on disability issues and established “equalization of opportunities” as a central goal of international efforts. In 2001, the international community initiated the process for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,¹ which was adopted unanimously by the Assembly in 2006.² The Convention was, from the very beginning of the process, envisaged as both a human rights and a development instrument.³

5. The Convention constitutes a commitment of the international community to inclusion of the disability perspective and persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. However, that commitment has yet to be translated into

¹ Available from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>.

² As at 18 July 2012, there are 117 ratifications and 49 signatories to the Convention and 65 ratifications and 38 signatories to the Optional Protocol.

³ Statement by Mexican President Vicente Fox to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

inclusion of disability in internationally agreed development goals.⁴ Although there are more than 1 billion disabled persons, or 15 per cent of the world's population, the vast majority of whom live in developing countries, disability is not included in the Millennium Development Goals nor in their operationalizing targets and indicators. As a result, disability has largely been invisible in their implementation, rarely included in national policies or programmes related to the Millennium Development Goals, or in monitoring and evaluation efforts.

6. In the years since the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see resolution 55/2), years which saw the drafting and adoption of the Convention, the need to include persons with disabilities in the international development agenda has gained increased international recognition. The international community has therefore sought to address the omission of disability from the Millennium Development Goals in a number of ways.⁵ During its first five-year review of progress in implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/1, recognized the need for persons with disabilities to be guaranteed full enjoyment of their rights without discrimination. In 2010, at its second five-year review of progress in implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Assembly adopted resolution 65/1, in which it included disability in the context of promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all; providing more equitable access to economic opportunities and social services; and making special efforts to meet the nutritional needs of those living in vulnerable situations.

7. In recent years, the General Assembly has also emphasized, in a series of resolutions,⁶ that it is impossible to genuinely achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, without the inclusion and integration of the rights, well-being and perspective of persons with disabilities in development efforts at the national, regional and international levels.⁷

8. Since the Millennium Summit, the inclusion of disability in various aspects of development has also been discussed at a number of international conferences on economic and social development, such as the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid from 8 to 12 April 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, as well as on the information society, with the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. Notably, the interlinkages between disability

⁴ In instances where disability has been addressed in the outcome documents of previous United Nations global development conferences, the manner in which it is treated has varied. In some cases, persons with disabilities have been treated solely as members of "vulnerable groups". In other cases, persons with disabilities have been recognized as both agents and beneficiaries of development processes. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and Habitat Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, are examples of outcome documents that take the latter approach.

⁵ For example, in 2009, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, organized an expert group meeting on mainstreaming disability in the policies, processes and mechanisms of the Millennium Development Goals. The meeting sought to make knowledge and experiences concerning the implementation processes of the Goals, including monitoring and evaluation, more accessible to all stakeholders.

⁶ General Assembly resolutions 64/131, 65/186 and 66/124.

⁷ General Assembly resolutions 63/150, 64/131 and 65/186.

and sustainable development were addressed at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The outcome document of the Conference, adopted as resolution 66/288 and entitled “The future we want”, includes a number of specific references, including in paragraphs 43, 135, 229 and 58, to disability, highlighting, inter alia, the fact that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of persons with disabilities; the need for development policies that support inclusive housing and social services, as well as a safe and healthy living environment for all, particularly persons with disabilities; and ensuring equal access to education for persons with disabilities and enhancing the welfare of persons with disabilities. Paragraph 9 of the document also addresses the responsibilities of States to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedom for all.

9. With the 2015 deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals drawing near, the international community has begun to address the issue of a future framework. As discussions regarding the post-2015 agenda gain momentum, the international community has before it a critical opportunity to ensure the inclusion of disability in the emerging global development agenda. To that end, the General Assembly, in 2011, decided to convene a high-level meeting, at the level of Heads of States and Governments, on 23 September 2013, to consider the overarching theme “The way forward: a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond” (see resolution 66/124).

10. The high-level meeting would provide a historic opportunity to bring global attention to the situation of persons with disabilities, and to decide on the way forward to achieve the goal of the United Nations in that regard: inclusive development and a society in which persons with disabilities are both agents and beneficiaries. The meeting is expected to result in a concise, action-oriented outcome document (see resolution 66/124), which would enable the international community to advance a disability-inclusive development agenda, in alignment with existing international commitments, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the World Programme of Action concerning Persons with Disabilities, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and other relevant human rights and development instruments.

III. Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities: progress and initiatives

11. In preparation for the present report, Member States were requested to provide information concerning: (a) progress made since 2010 in implementing programmes and policies relating to persons with disabilities to realize the Millennium Development Goals; (b) obstacles encountered and challenges faced in relation to implementing policies and programmes for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities; and (c) views on the most important elements to be included in ongoing work towards a disability-inclusive post-2015 development agenda. The Secretariat received 17 submissions from Member States and other areas,⁸ 18 from the Secretariat and bodies and

⁸ Submissions were received from the following Member States: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Mozambique, Paraguay, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Togo and Uruguay. A submission was also received from the Cook Islands, which is a non-Member State of the United Nations, although it is a member State of a number of United Nations specialized agencies.

organizations of the United Nations system⁹ and 4 from civil society organizations.¹⁰ The present section may also be read in conjunction with the information contained in the previous report of the Secretary-General on realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities (A/66/128), for which submissions were received from 41 countries during the reporting period.

A. Member States

1. Legislative measures, action plans and programmes

12. Many States reported on progress in legislative and policy development concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, including the enactment or amendment of national legislation and the adoption and implementation of national plans relevant to the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

13. Several States, including Japan, Mexico and Uruguay, reported that they had adopted new legislation concerning the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities. Canada emphasized its equality and non-discrimination protection for persons with disabilities. Other States drew attention to their continuing efforts to develop policy measures for implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For example, Latvia reported that it was drafting strategic policy guidelines on “Basic principles of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2013-2019”. Indonesia reported that it was currently implementing its national plan of action on persons with disabilities for 2004-2013.

14. A number of States, including Mexico, Mozambique, Qatar, Spain and Uruguay, indicated that they had included disability in their national development strategies or had developed specific plans to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including through accessibility measures. Italy and Switzerland reported on undertaking initiatives to include disability in international cooperation and development assistance programmes, including through the funding of projects intended to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Qatar also reported on its endeavours to coordinate and monitor the efforts of Government ministries with regard to programmes and plans for persons with disabilities.

⁹ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Mine Action Service, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities/United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children’s Fund, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Civil Aviation Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization, World Bank and World Tourism Organization.

¹⁰ Disabled People’s International, International Disability Alliance, International Disability and Development Consortium, and Leonard Cheshire Disability.

2. Poverty eradication

15. Several States provided concrete examples of initiatives to reduce poverty experienced by persons with disabilities. Paraguay indicated that it was providing direct support for health care, education and social inclusion of families in poverty, with special support for families with members with disabilities. The Republic of Korea reported on programmes aimed at providing support and social security for persons with disabilities in economic hardship. Togo highlighted the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in the formulation of strategic approaches to poverty reduction.

16. Recognizing that access to employment was essential to the eradication of poverty, several States reported on efforts to support and advance employment of persons with disabilities. For example, Paraguay offered vocational training to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Other States, including Burkina Faso, had introduced employment quotas for persons with disabilities.

3. Access to education

17. Many States reported on efforts to advance inclusive educational programmes to further the education of children with disabilities. The Cook Islands reported that it had endorsed a national inclusive education policy and had strengthened the capacity of its schools to deliver inclusive education through the employment of an inclusive education adviser, teacher aides and training for teachers. Brazil provided examples of its efforts to ensure accessibility of educational institutions for children with disabilities, including through provision of accessible school transportation services and architectural adjustments to schools.

4. Gender equality

18. Several States provided information on their ongoing efforts to advance the status of women with disabilities. The Cook Islands specifically addressed the issues faced by women and girls with disabilities in its National Gender Policy 2011. The Republic of Korea reported that it had implemented measures designed specifically for women with disabilities, and included them in integrated programmes related to women or disability, such as the Five-year Policy Development Plan for Persons with Disabilities and its Basic Plan for Women's Policies.

5. Health and rehabilitation

19. Several States reported on their efforts to promote the sexual and reproductive health of persons with disabilities. Burkina Faso indicated that it was carrying out training on disability for health-care practitioners in the field of reproductive health and in awareness-raising activities, as well as in providing support to persons with disabilities with HIV and AIDS. Brazil also reported on an expansion of its efforts to provide health care to persons with disabilities.

B. United Nations system

20. During the reporting period, the United Nations system intensified its efforts to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and mainstream disability in the development agenda, with a focus on the promotion of accessibility, capacity development, and the strengthening of disability data and statistics.

1. Mainstreaming disability in development policies and practices

21. As the United Nations focal point on disability, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has continued to support United Nations intergovernmental processes and to collaborate with all stakeholders, including Governments, United Nations system entities, and civil society organizations — especially organizations of persons with disabilities — in advancing the mainstreaming of disability in development. The Department has regularly brought together such stakeholders for consultative meetings and discussions in conjunction with sessions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, among others, and on the occasion of the 2011 International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Priority issues addressed by the Department during the reporting period have included accessibility; data and statistics; the situation of particular groups with disabilities, including women, children and indigenous persons; mental health; emergency and disaster response; and international development cooperation.

22. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has continued to work closely with the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development in promoting the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities through action towards the common goals and objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The Special Rapporteur presented his annual report to the Commission during its fiftieth session, highlighting his efforts with regard to the mainstreaming of disability in development processes, with a focus on Africa, and priority issues, such as mental health and women with disabilities.

23. The Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, co-chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has developed a roll-out strategy for the United Nations Development Group guidance note on including the rights of persons with disabilities in United Nations programming at the country level. In accordance with the strategy, the Inter-Agency

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