



American Model United Nations

**Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific**

**Report to the Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific on Towards
disability-inclusive sustainable development:
implementation of the Beijing Declaration**

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1 Executive Summary

2 It is clear to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific that development and infrastruc-
3 ture supporting the disability community in the Asia-Pacific region must be improved. Sovereign States would be
4 the main enactors of these suggestions, seeing as sovereignty must be maintained. To accomplish this goal of better
5 including persons with disabilities (PWD), the member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the
6 Pacific (ESCAP) have worked together creating committees that focus on improving everyday life and enrichment
7 for PWD; these committees are research, funding, education, employment, social systems and infrastructure .

8 Research addresses concerns with prior information collected for PWDs. The research committee has pro-
9 posed that research be conducted in a personable manner, in order to directly address PWDs, and make sure they
10 are comfortable with how they are being interviewed.

11 Funding for advancements in disability inclusion for the future creates an increase in financial strain on
12 top of pre-existing developmental changes. The funding for a majority of these projects would likely come from the
13 Asian Development Bank, the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and
14 Development, and the Pacific Islands Development Bank. Economic support could also come from Non-Governmental
15 Organizations (NGOs), as well as donations from sovereign nations. Funding would be delivered to the sovereign
16 nations, who will administer it.

17 Within the education committee, the focus has been making education accessible to PWD through special
18 training for teachers and administrators, accessible physical amenities for students including transportation, as well
19 as educating the public about PWD to destigmatize the topic.

20 The employment committee focused on ensuring accessibility to adequate jobs with fair treatment in the
21 workforce. It plans to achieve this by asking companies to maintain a diverse labor pool, as well as increase awareness
22 of PWD in the workforce and increase the availability of more accessible careers, such as working from home or other
23 modifications. Additionally, the employment committee would like to see more PWD in local government positions.

24 The committee on social systems prioritized the redefinition of the term ‘disability’ by the World Health
25 Organization, followed by a clarification of what disability-inclusivity entails and how to measure that. The suggestion
26 of an identification system for PWD using voluntary information of people who have qualified and fit the new
27 definition.

28 The infrastructure committee addressed possible barriers to transportation for PWD, as well as advocated
29 for stronger research on the disability community in individual nations represented in ESCAP. PWD would be
30 encouraged to work with their governments in order to represent the disabled community in the legislative process
31 of infrastructure. Similarly, public spaces should be equally accessible for people of all abilities. In addition to
32 transportation infrastructure, the body recommends new digital infrastructure to make the internet and information
33 more accessible. This committee also advocated for making healthcare more accessible for PWD, especially in rural
34 areas.

35 **Matters calling for action**

36 **ESCAP I/1**

37 *Reminding* the committee of the current definition of the term “disability” as defined by the World Health
38 Organization (WHO) as “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or
39 sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in
40 society on an equal basis with others”,

41 *Acknowledging* the work of the WHO in establishing The International Classification of Functioning, Dis-
42 ability and Health (ICF) of 2001,

43 *Noting* the shortcomings of the current definition of “disability” by the United Nations,

44 *Recognizing* that the current definition of ‘disability’ does not adequately include mental health,

45 *Acknowledging* that the current definition of “disability” was written without substantial input from people
46 with disabilities,

47 *Concerned* that United Nations Member States have not made considerable progress for disability-inclusion
48 while working towards the Sustainable Development Goals,

49 *Acknowledging* the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),

50 *Affirming* that disability is an evolving concept,

51 *Observing* the cultural and religious diversity of Asia and the Pacific,

52 *Recognizing* the social and political changes that have occurred since ‘disability’ was last defined,,

53 *Emphasizing* the need to alter the definition of disability,

54 1. *Invites* the World Health Organization (WHO) to review its definition and classification of disability and
55 health;

56 2. *Requests* that WHO considers meeting with and listening to disabled people in order to understand
57 their experiences and how they would like the United Nations to properly address their needs, as well as gain a full
58 understanding of worldwide disability;

59 3. *Recommends* that WHO reexamine this definition at a repeated, designated time interval in the future
60 in order to properly support people with disabilities and ensure that the definition of “disability” reflects current
61 events and needs of disabled persons;

62 4. *Encourages* that such definition should reflect regional attitudes to maintain cultural and religious
63 sovereignty in regards to these issues;

64 5. *Maintains* that no Member State may coerce another to alter religion, culture or moral values in order
65 to uphold the definition of “disability”;

66 6. *Asks that*, should a new definition of the term “disability” be created:

67 (a) A definition or description of “disability-inclusive” also be created;

68 (b) A framework to measure disability-inclusivity in the region is established;

69 (c) These frameworks and definitions are adopted by members of the Economic and Social Council
70 (ECOSOC);

71 7. *Endorses* the discussion for and the development of a voluntary, globally-recognized Persons With Dis-
72 abilities (PWD) identification card system that reflects the newly developed definition of “disability”;

73 8. *Notes* that such as system should standardize the recognition and accommodations for disabilities both
74 for domestic and international purposes;

75 9. *Recommends* that creators of this program be non-partisan and made up of internal government officials
76 with guidance from United Nations officials;

77 10. *Suggests* that those who develop the program also be involved with the education of government officials,
78 licensed physicians and other relevant parties on the assessment of disabilities and the standard of accommodations;
79 11. *Encourages* that PWD ID cards be used both for domestic purposes such as education and emergency
80 services as well as international purposes, such as tourism, employment, foreign affairs and similar situations.

81 **ESCAP I/2**

82 *Reaffirming* the methods of equal accessibility for the physical environment as listed in the Convention Of
83 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 9,

84 *Recalling* the definition of “reasonable accommodation” according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons
85 with Disabilities Article 2 as, “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportional
86 or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or
87 exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”,

88 *Recognizing* the need for “reasonable accommodations” for people with disabilities within modern societies,

89 *Understanding* the uneven distribution of resources and wealth among developed and developing countries,

90 *Acknowledging* that regional standards are important to provide goals for infrastructure development, but
91 ultimately recognizing that Member States can and should tailor their development to their population’s specific
92 needs,

93 *Noting with deep concern* the disproportionate amount of progress and growth between the infrastructure
94 sectors of developed and developing countries,

95 *Emphasizing* that Member States have a moral obligation to invest in projects to make infrastructure accessible
96 to all people, and the United Nations must work to end discrimination against all people on the basis of
97 disability,

98 *Acknowledging* the obstacles that have previously prevented ESCAP from progressing on this issued and
99 using their combined knowledge and creativity to devise solutions, while also recognizing that there is still long way
100 to go towards achieving disability-inclusive sustainable development,

101 1. *Calls upon* Member States to address physical and structural barriers to transportation use by people
102 with disabilities in their State;

103 2. *Emphasizes* the need for greater research and outreach specific to Member States in order to allow States
104 to better address the infrastructure concerns of their disabled population;

105 3. *Encourages* Member States and the United Nations to closely consult with and actively involve persons
106 with disabilities in decision-making processes to ensure infrastructure legislation and implementation will actually
107 resolve transportation barriers;

108 4. *Advises* Member States to develop and maintain investment in transportation infrastructure to ensure
109 that those systems are safe, reliable, accessible and affordable for all people;

110 5. *Suggests* the following implementation of revision for digital infrastructure:

111 (a) Access to digital infrastructure for all peoples in all regions despite geographical distance from
112 urban centers;

113 (b) Implement collection of data to determine a sustainable accessible network throughout countries;

114 (c) All people should have equal access to public internet communicators in public as well as private
115 residences;

116 6. *Advocates* for the expansion of existing programs to outfit private homes with adequate infrastructure for
117 people with disabilities:

118 (a) Encouraging the consideration of the plan from the Disabled Persons Federation of the People’s
119 Republic of China to improve the homes of people with disabilities as an example;

120 7. *Advises* states to increase investment in rural infrastructure to improve access to healthcare for people in
121 rural areas:

- 122 (a) Allowing for an increased access to healthcare for people with disabilities;
- 123 (b) Ensure that all peoples, despite large distances from urban centers, should all have equal access
124 and quality of healthcare access, especially in rural areas;
- 125 (c) Constructing new paths and roadways through rural areas, in order to ensure that healthcare
126 workers can reach patients;
- 127 (d) Increase medical centers in rural areas to ensure that people with disabilities in these areas
128 receive adequate treatment and support;
- 129 8. *Invites* Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) members to assess public spaces and their accessibility
130 for people with disabilities:
- 131 (a) Create an increased number of public facilities that allow for easy access for people with disabil-
132 ities;
- 133 (b) Increase the availability of green spaces for people with disabilities;
- 134 (c) Eliminate physical barriers that limit access in public spaces to people with disabilities;
- 135 (d) Develop a set of general guidelines that allow for increased accessibility in public spaces.

136 **ESCAP I/3**

137 *Keeping in mind* the impact of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabili-
138 ties (hereafter CRPD) definitions for "reasonable accommodation", "discrimination on the basis of disability" and
139 "universal design",

140 *Recognizing* that persons with disabilities are disproportionately underrepresented in labor markets world-
141 wide,

142 *Alarmed by* statistics showing that persons with disabilities are less likely to pursue higher education,

143 *Deeply concerned* about employers' existing prejudices against hiring persons with disabilities for open po-
144 sitions and for promotions,

145 *Desiring* a substantial increase in worldwide economic production and growth that could be accomplished
146 by better including persons with disabilities in the workforce,

147 *Believing* that Persons With Disabilities (hereafter 'PWD') should have equal opportunities for employment,
148 ,

149 1. *Advocates* that countries pass legislation that encourages private companies to be transparent about the
150 number of PWD that they hire:

151 (a) Emphasizes that States provide subsidies to companies that are accessible to persons with dis-
152 abilities;

153 2. *Emphasizes* that countries adopt vocational training programs for PWD to find employment in various
154 fields;

155 3. *Recommends* States create public relations campaigns that displays real stories of people with disabilities
156 working successfully, helping influence both the general populace and powerful organizations;

157 4. *Further recommends* States create a training program specifically for employers to inform them of PWD
158 and to ensure they are able to effectively include these individuals in the labor market;

159 5. *Requests* States to ensure all persons, regardless of ability, deserve a fair and equitable wage and treatment:

160 (a) *Further requests* States to eliminate wage disparities based on disability that all persons, regard-
161 less of ability, deserve a fair and equitable wage, salary;

162 6. *Supports* the creation of accessible jobs for people with disabilities that are completely virtual:

163 (a) These career opportunities would include working from home in disciplines such as cryptocur-
164 rency, stocks, working through videoconference software, writing, editing, management, software engineering, web-
165 designing, marketing, accounting, legal assistance, content creation and other important positions;

166 (b) Provide accessible training to people with disabilities through government programs as well as
167 public-private partnerships with corporations and businesses in order to help them prepare for these jobs, as well as
168 making sure this training is specially curated to benefit people with disabilities in the best way possible;

169 7. *Recognizes* that the best actors to carry out the recommendations above are the governing States since
170 they have a better understanding of people with disabilities in their countries.

171 **ESCAP I/4**

172 *Deeply concerned* by the lack of accessibility and accommodations in education for peoples with disabilities,
173 *Fully aware* of the diversity in economic stances among different Member States within the United Nations,
174 *Recognizing* the geographical challenges that create difficulties for accessible transportation,

175 *Deeply disturbed* by the stigmatization of people with disabilities in education,

176 *Emphasizing* the universal access to adequate education for all ages 3-12, regardless of disability,

177 1. *Recognizes* that ensuring youth with disabilities are able to receive adequate and equitable education is
178 an urgent issue;

179 2. *Recommends* an update to current curricula in order to be inclusive of people with disabilities;

180 3. *Encourages* the formulation of a campaign aimed towards ages 3-12 surrounding the idea of de-stigmatizing
181 the attitude towards mental and physical disabilities in society;

182 4. *Further encourages* the development of education of teachers in the form of training sessions to improve
183 the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms;

184 5. *Endorses* the creation of disability accessible transportation to school no matter the geographical location,
185 therefore providing a mode of transport for all students.

186 Consideration of the status

187 Research Deliberations

188 The Economic and Social Commission on Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) meeting, during its 73rd session
189 (27 November- 1 December 2017), heard from a panel of statisticians and other experts to “generate reliable and
190 comparable data.” Despite information gleaned from this panel, the Midpoint Review of the Incheon Strategy had
191 only 35 ESCAP Member States (60%) respond to the survey conducted by the Commission. The survey addressed
192 responses by governments, civil society organizations, international organizations and development agencies. The
193 data collected by ESCAP for the Midpoint Review is not substantial enough to fully understand the scope of issues
194 people with disabilities face, nor does it allow for this body, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or the
195 United Nations to make proper recommendations based on the needs of people with disabilities.

196 Within this sub-committee, developing states such as Mongolia emphasized that they struggle to collect
197 adequate, up-to-date data on their vulnerable, disabled populations. Member states also emphasized the lack of
198 research available internationally on moving peoples, inter alia, refugees, regular migrants and nomadic travelers.
199 The lack of data leaves these populations disproportionately vulnerable to exclusionary policies or practices. It was
200 also acknowledged during deliberations that there is still a lack of knowledge on the types of disabilities that exist
201 and their severity. Member States deemed it essential to reiterate that one of the best mechanisms for collecting
202 adequate data on disabled populations is by facilitating discussions on their particular concerns and taking note of
203 their struggles when developing accommodating domestic policy. Within this sub-committee, it is well-established
204 that adopting a personable approach to learning about the experiences of disabled persons, and especially those who
205 are survivors of disability-related crimes and violations, is one of the most effective ways of learning about the lives
206 of people with disabilities and in turn developing future supportive programs.

207 Funding Deliberations

208 Representatives from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Hong Kong, France and Japan gathered to
209 discuss potential funding mechanisms for the proposals discussed in this report. For the sake of clarity, these
210 representatives will hereafter be referred to as “the Funding Group.”

211 The Funding Group noted the dire need for increased funding for improving the condition of disabled persons
212 within countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This is a necessary step in achieving the goals of the 2030 Sustainable
213 Development Agenda. In order to achieve disability-inclusive sustainable development, substantially more funding
214 must be allocated towards solving the many difficulties the disabled community faces.

215 Many developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region expressed their concerns regarding possible funding
216 avenues and the implementation of the inclusion of the disabled community through their respective governmental
217 systems. If they were funded solely by said countries, many technological accommodations and their implementations
218 would result in increased economic strains to families, communities and governments. In order to continue the world’s
219 development, while bearing in mind more avenues for disability inclusion, it is imperative that the financial stress on
220 these systems be reduced.

221 Therefore, the Funding Group proposed several options to combat the aforementioned issues. These included
222 contributions from wealthier countries toward the betterment of their developing counterparts, as well as the use
223 of region-specific funding programmes such as the Asian Development Bank, the Asia Infrastructure Investment
224 Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, as well as the Pacific Islands Development
225 Bank. Additionally, where appropriate, the Funding Group discussed the merit of Non-Governmental Organizations
226 (NGOs) working with individual countries to meet specific needs.

227 These deliberations should be considered with the understanding that the countries gathered have extensively
228 noted the importance of state sovereignty. In order to secure funding for a specific project, transactions must be
229 transparent. It is with this concern in mind that the group noted that funding sources are most effective when
230 administered by state governments. The Funding Group observed that this is particularly important given the
231 diverse and disparate states of this body and numerous tense border situations region-wide. The Funding Group
232 also noted the investor status of numerous countries in the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure
233 Investment Bank. The group recommends that all of the deliberations be read and received with the frame of
234 sovereignty, autonomy and state oversight in mind.

235 **Education Deliberations**

236 Member States of this body recognize that the current issues involving inclusivity of disabled students within
237 education systems is a pressing matter. While it is an important issue, we have to recognize that we, as a united
238 body, are diverse both economically and geographically. That being said, we want to emphasize universal access to
239 adequate education for students 3-12 that have a mental and/or physical disability.

240 The education sub-committee, comprising Indonesia, China, Thailand, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Turkmenistan,
241 Macao and Malaysia, also emphasized the importance of providing adequate pathways for educating the public on
242 disabilities in order to reduce the stigma behind them. One such example discussed was the encouragement of
243 establishing Pre-K-3rd grade de-stigmatization campaigns. Another example that could ameliorate efforts to better
244 disability education are training programs for school officials, so that they may adequately cater to students with
245 disabilities. There should also be an implementation of monitoring and reporting to keep up to date records of
246 progress within classrooms. This body encourages the establishment of online databases in countries where this is
247 possible. It should also be noted that we want to update previously existing education infrastructure to better cater
248 towards students with disabilities. This could be enacted in several different ways, including the building of ramps,
249 better walkways, and updating inaccessible classroom structures. Finally, this sub-committee also discussed how
250 encouraging the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the classroom could be the one step towards addressing
251 inclusive education for students with disabilities.

252 In order to ensure students with disabilities can receive education, this body believes the provision of ad-
253 equate transportation should be implemented. This will be accomplished through providing and covering costs for
254 transportation to schools, hiring bus drivers and purchasing disability accessible buses.

255 **Employment Deliberations**

256 Social integration is a very important process for all individuals no matter their ability. Inclusion is integral
257 to society to ensure societal cohesion. This is important because of the continuous efforts of the United Nations
258 towards fully integrating all individuals, per Sustainable Development Goal 11.

259 In particular, social integration in the employment field is important to ensure the needs of people with
260 disabilities (PWD) are met to provide opportunity for both employers and those employees with disabilities. The
261 working group of ESCAP discussed multiple facets of the inclusion of PWD in the workforce and how the topic
262 of employment can be expanded to better achieve inclusion of all individuals. Inclusion can be achieved through
263 vocational training, job programs and various areas in higher education to ensure that PWD are included in the
264 labor market.

265 As discussed in the working group on employment, the relationship between employers and PWD must be a
266 reciprocal relationship. The employer needs to benefit from hiring PWD, just as well as the PWD needs to benefit
267 from employment. This can be shown through training, wages, or benefits from that company that actively improves
268 the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The delegation of Mongolia discussed the possibility of opening
269 required governmental issued training programs to better ensure the inclusion of PWD in the workforce.

270 This working group of ESCAP, specifically the Philippines, wants to push for PWD being represented in
271 elected and representative office. By encouraging more PWD to enter office, there will be increased representation
272 and more attention given to the needs of that community. Increased representation will lead to more diversity, more
273 solutions and better results for all involved. In order to ensure the encouragement of PWD into office, there are a
274 couple of suggestions States can enact. One suggestion suggested by the subgroup is that States can implement both
275 elevators and ramps in their government buildings. This would make public office more accessible for PWD.

276 **Social Systems Deliberations**

277 Iran, Myanmar, the Philippines and Afghanistan worked intensively on Resolution ESCAP/I/1. These
278 delegations believe the current definition set by the United Nations as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of
279 Disabled Persons is ineffective.. Reasons such as the increased awareness of mental health, major current events (e.g.
280 COVID-19 Pandemic) and the unsatisfactory progress made towards disability inclusion in regards to the Sustainable
281 Development Goals have contributed to this matter

282 Afghanistan and Iran heavily discussed maintaining the sovereignty of religious, cultural and moral beliefs
283 within each state. The delegations of Iran, Myanmar, the Philippines and Afghanistan seek to ensure this sovereignty
284 in all nations and thus added a clause concerning this issue.

285 This group also requested a discussion on implementing a globally recognized identification system for Persons
286 with Disabilities (PWD) that would reflect the newly evaluated definition of 'disability'. The Philippines has already
287 adopted a similar policy and has seen great strides in the standardization and recognition of the need to accomodate
288 to those with disabilities. Identification of the PWD is substantial and the most urgent matter since no measures
289 will be effective unless government officials and healthcare providers know who to provide assistance to.

290 **Infrastructure Deliberations**

291 Representatives from Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia met together
292 to discuss various issues affecting infrastructure for disabled people. We believe there are different categories of
293 infrastructure that must be considered including: transportation, digital infrastructure, private buildings and housing,
294 healthcare, and public spaces, to specifically address the very urgent and substantial challenges.

295 The Member States of Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan would prefer more funding for such infrastructure
296 development from other Asian and Pacific countries to respect the national sovereignty of all countries.

297 The Member States of Turkmenistan, Singapore, and Pakistan would like to emphasize their position that
298 Member States should have full discretion to direct funding and oversee infrastructure development within their
299 own borders, given that each country knows how best to address its own concerns of the infrastructure for disabled
300 populations.

301 The Member States of Australia and Malaysia would like to empathize with their position of implementing
302 digital infrastructure to improve available internet access for people with disabilities. This includes developing a safe
303 and equal wireless network for all in order to ensure access to resources.

304 The Member States of Singapore and Pakistan would like other Member States to recall their commitments
305 made in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

306 The Chinese delegation would like to reiterate their belief that states' sovereignty cannot and should not be
307 infringed in the implementation of these recommendations, as each country is the best actor to improve the lives of
308 their own citizens while following the suggestions that we as a body have put forward.

309 **Adoption of the Report**

310 At its meeting on 22 November 2021, the draft report of the commission was made available for consider-
311 ation. The commission considered the report, and with no amendments, adopted the report by consensus with no
312 abstentions.

313 Passed by consensus with no abstentions.

Passed by consensus, with 0 abstentions