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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Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ESCAP I/1

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

Acknowledging the work of the WHO in establishing The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of 2001,

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

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

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

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

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

Affirming that disability is an evolving concept,

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

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

Emphasizing the need to alter the definition of disability,

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

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

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

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

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

6. Asks that, should a new definition of the term “disability” be created:
   
   (a) A definition or description of “disability-inclusive” also be created;
   
   (b) A framework to measure disability-inclusivity in the region is established;
   
   (c) These frameworks and definitions are adopted by members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC);

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

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

9. Recommends that creators of this program be non-partisan and made up of internal government officials with guidance from United Nations officials;
10. Suggests that those who develop the program also be involved with the education of government officials, licensed physicians and other relevant parties on the assessment of disabilities and the standard of accommodations;

11. Encourages that PWD ID cards be used both for domestic purposes such as education and emergency services as well as international purposes, such as tourism, employment, foreign affairs and similar situations.

ESCAP I/2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Advises states to increase investment in rural infrastructure to improve access to healthcare for people in rural areas:
(a) Allowing for an increased access to healthcare for people with disabilities;
(b) Ensure that all peoples, despite large distances from urban centers, should all have equal access
and quality of healthcare access, especially in rural areas;
(c) Constructing new paths and roadways through rural areas, in order to ensure that healthcare
workers can reach patients;
(d) Increase medical centers in rural areas to ensure that people with disabilities in these areas
receive adequate treatment and support;

8. Invites Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) members to assess public spaces and their accessibility
for people with disabilities:

(a) Create an increased number of public facilities that allow for easy access for people with disabil-
ities;
(b) Increase the availability of green spaces for people with disabilities;
(c) Eliminate physical barriers that limit access in public spaces to people with disabilities;
(d) Develop a set of general guidelines that allow for increased accessibility in public spaces.

ESCAP I/3

Keeping in mind the impact of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabili-
ties (hereafter CRPD) definitions for “reasonable accommodation”, “discrimination on the basis of disability” and
“universal design”,

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

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

Deeply concerned about employers’ existing prejudices against hiring persons with disabilities for open po-
sitions and for promotions,

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

Believing that Persons With Disabilities (hereafter ‘PWD’) should have equal opportunities for employment,

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

(a) Emphasizes that States provide subsidies to companies that are accessible to persons with disabil-
ities;

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

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

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

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

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

6. Supports the creation of accessible jobs for people with disabilities that are completely virtual:
(a) These career opportunities would include working from home in disciplines such as cryptocurrency, stocks, working through videoconference software, writing, editing, management, software engineering, web-designing, marketing, accounting, legal assistance, content creation and other important positions;

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

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

**ESCAP I/4**

Deeply concerned by the lack of accessibility and accommodations in education for peoples with disabilities,

Fully aware of the diversity in economic stances among different Member States within the United Nations,

Recognizing the geographical challenges that create difficulties for accessible transportation,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Research Deliberations

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

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

Funding Deliberations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Employment Deliberations

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

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

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

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

Social Systems Deliberations

Iran, Myanmar, the Philippines and Afghanistan worked intensively on Resolution ESCAP/I/1. These delegations believe the current definition set by the United Nations as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons is ineffective. Reasons such as the increased awareness of mental health, major current events (e.g. COVID-19 Pandemic) and the unsatisfactory progress made towards disability inclusion in regards to the Sustainable Development Goals have contributed to this matter.
Afghanistan and Iran heavily discussed maintaining the sovereignty of religious, cultural and moral beliefs within each state. The delegations of Iran, Myanmar, the Philippines and Afghanistan seek to ensure this sovereignty in all nations and thus added a clause concerning this issue.

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

**Infrastructure Deliberations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Passed by consensus with no abstentions.

Passed by consensus, with 0 abstentions