REGIONAL ADVOCACY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

Regional Sustainable Development Forums & Regional Integration

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SUMMARY

Advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) should take place at all levels of decision making. Where policies and laws are adopted, organisations representing persons with disabilities (DPOs) should be meaningfully engaged, in the full process, at every stage and at all levels. This practise must be systematic and in line with the CRPD general comment number 7 which outlines how DPOs should be supported and meaningfully included in decision making.

Regional monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides opportunities for DPOs to advocate for our inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **This project report aims to provide information and learning about how we can best do this, using examples of current practices from different UN regions and their Regional Integration Organisations.**

Our job is complicated.

One of the biggest challenges that DPOs face is that the UN regional bodies established to monitor the 2030 Agenda are organised differently from the more familiar Regional Integration Organisations. DPOs may be well used to working with their Regional Integration Organisation on advocacy around the CRPD but will now find they need to establish links with new mechanisms to follow up the 2030 Agenda. This project report describes these UN regional mechanisms so DPOs and our partners and supporters can choose and implement effective strategies for advocacy - both for monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, and most importantly, the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD.

Chapter 1 will cover background information about the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda, showing how the two can be linked. In Chapter 2 the project report will briefly describe how the 2030 Agenda and specifically the Sustainable Development Goals will be monitored and reported. Chapter 3 describes how civil society can engage with the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Chapters 4 to 8 will provide details on each of the five regional reporting mechanisms. In Chapter 9, the project report provides advice for DPOs on creating strong regional level stakeholder groups of persons with disabilities.

The project report is for regional DPOs, our supporters and partners, and for government agencies who would like to strengthen their support of inclusive development. It is a living document that would be need to be reviewed, deepen and updated.

Overall, we hope this project report will provide a good overview of the regional sustainable development forums and how they fit with their corresponding regional integration organisations. It will provide examples of where regional advocacy is currently proving effective and make suggestions as to how advocacy messages can be designed to target both the CRPD and SDG implementation. Moreover, it will also provide the UN and government agencies with ideas around how they can better facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities at all levels of development.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Regional Integration is a process in which neighbouring states enter into an agreement in order to upgrade cooperation through common institutions and rules. The objectives of the agreement are diverse and can range from economic to political to environmental. At the roundtable in October 2018, the six regional DPOs presented the work they are doing to influence the regional integration organisations below, and how they are working on the implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs, in line with the CRPD. The regional integrations identified were:

》》 **African Union**

》》 **Arab League**

》》 **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**

》》 **European Union**

》》 **Organisation of American States**

》》 **Pacific Islands Forum**

These six regional integration organisations are the ones explored in this project report. Importantly, the CRPD can be ratified by Regional Integration Organisations.

The only one to do so until now is the European Union. Because a ratification provides for the implementation of the CRPD in regional decision making, including the CRPDs accountability mechanism, this presents a significant advocacy opportunity for DPOs.

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Glossary

African Disability Forum (ADF): The continental membership organisation of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs). It's two primary objectives are unifying and amplifying the voice of persons with disabilities, their families and organisations in Africa at national, regional and international levels and to strengthen the capacity of organisations of persons with disabilities in Africa to promote the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families.

Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD): The regional organisation composed of DPOs operating in the different Arab Countries. Its main objectives are to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, empower persons with disabilities and represent Arab persons with disabilities in the world at large.

ASEAN Disability Forum (ASEAN-DF): A network of DPOs from Southeast Asia countries (Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Malaysia; Myanmar; Philippines; Singapore; Republic of Laos; Timor Leste and Thailand). It is a platform where DPOs coordinate actions to advocate for disability inclusive policy formulation and implementation.

Declaration: A formal statement of special significance issued by Ministers or delegates at the close of a conference, summit or other event. Some declarations are legally binding although most are advisory.

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs): Organisations comprising a majority of persons with disabilities and their families which represent the interests and defend the human rights of persons with disabilities through self-representation and advocacy.

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): At the centre of the United Nations system it advances the three elements of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.

European Disability Forum (EDF): An independent DPOs representing the rights of 80 million persons with disabilities in Europe. It is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities and is run by persons with disabilities and their families.

Focal Point: An official or agency designated by government to serve as the focus or channel of communications on a particular topic.

Major Groups and other Stakeholders: Represent a multi-stakeholder format in which stakeholders from civil society engage actively and meaningfully alongside country representatives. Civil society representatives have the right to fully engage within global-level sustainable development processes through the Major Groups and other Stakeholders format.

Mandate: An official instruction given to a person or organisation, permitting them to do something.

Member States (of the United Nations): The 193 sovereign states that are members of the United Nations and have equal representation in the UN General Assembly.

Pacific Disability Forum (PDF): The DPOs addressing disability issues in the Pacific. The PDF was established in 2002 and officially inaugurated in 2004, to work towards inclusive, barrier-free, socially just, and gender equitable societies that recognise the human rights, citizenship, contribution and potential of persons with disabilities in Pacific Island Countries and territories.

Regional Forums on Sustainable Development: The implementation and the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are supported in each world region by the five United Nations Regional Commissions, with the organisation of yearly Regional Forums on Sustainable Development. These forums provide a space for promoting peer learning and cooperation, including effective linkage among global, regional and national processes.

Regional integration: Regional Integration is a process in which neighbouring states enter into an agreement in order to upgrade cooperation through common institutions and rules.

RIADIS: The Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families. It represents 56 DPOs in 19 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities: An official group that coordinates the participation of persons with disabilities in sustainable development and other processes at the United Nations. In the different regions of the UN Commissions, the regional groups might be called "constituency" or "coalition".

States Parties to the CRPD: Countries which have signed and ratified the CRPD and have committed to making the rights of persons with disabilities a reality.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Resolution 70/1 unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. It sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals which aim to mobilise global efforts to end poverty, foster peace, safeguard the rights and dignity of all people and protect the planet.

United Nations (UN): An international organisation currently made up of 193 Member States. Its main mission is the maintenance of international peace and security.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): An international human rights treaty that reaffirms that all persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies that all persons with disabilities have the right to participate in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life of the community just as anyone else.

UN Regional Commissions of ECOSOC: Includes ESCAP: Asia Pacific region; UNECE: Europe region; ECLAC: Latin America and the Caribbean region; ESCWA: Arab Region; and ECA: Africa Region.

VNR (Voluntary National Review): Country-led and country-driven regular and inclusive reviews of progress of SDG implementation at the national and sub-national levels by Member States at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). Reviews are voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

When, how and with whom did we develop this project report?

In January 2017, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) received funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for a new three-year project: the Catalyst programme. This programme focuses on implementation of the SDGs and advocacy to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in all sustainable development processes.

The programme pays particular attention to the allocation of resources which must be in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It also focuses on persons with disabilities who are most at risk of marginalisation.

This includes, but is not limited to, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons with deafblindness, indigenous persons with disabilities, as well as women with disabilities.

The programme has various activities, including three flagship initiatives:

Education

Women and girls with disabilities

Regional SDGs monitoring
(Also called the "regional flagship")

In order to implement the Catalyst Programme and oversee other programmes, IDA established a Programme Committee. The Programme Committee, which provides strategic guidance, recommended the European Disability Forum's (EDF) leadership on the Regional Flagship during its initial meeting, in 2017.

A task team for the Regional Flagship was formed including all six regional organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs), members of IDA:

- **African Disability Forum (ADF)**
- **Arab Organisation of Persons With Disabilities (AOPD)**
- **Asian Disability Forum (ASEAN-DF)**
- **European Disability Forum (EDF)**
- **Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and Their Families (RIADIS)**
- **Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)**

A number of objectives were identified for this Regional Flagship, including exchange and peer support on regional CRPD advocacy towards regional integration organisations. EDF facilitated this part of the work, through the following activities:

An Online Consultation - January 2018

EDF organised an initial online consultation with the task team to identify their interests and priorities for peer exchange and learning with regards to regional advocacy.

A Face-To-Face Meeting - June 2018

EDF organised, in collaboration with IDA Secretariat, a meeting during the Conference of State Parties in New York. The objectives of the meeting were the following:

1. PDF and EDF to present and share their learning concerning their regional reports on the SDGs (EDF, 2018: "European human rights report: the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: A European perspective to respect, protect and fulfil the CRPD"; EDF, 2018 "European human rights report: the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: A European perspective to respect, protect and fulfil the CRPD (Easy to read version)"; PDF, 2018: "Pacific Disability Forum SDG-CRPD Monitoring Report 2018")

2. Exchange on the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development

3. Select the number and the topics of the webinars (see next point)

Webinars - Autumn 2018

A webinar series was organised to support learning and exchange. The themes explored the different cross-cutting issues identified through the online survey by the members of the regional flagship initiative.

A Half-Day Roundtable - October 2018

Regional DPOs presented the work of the regional integrations in their part of the world and the work they do to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The roundtable was in Greece and was organised during the IDA Programme Committee meeting.

The outcomes of these activities led to the production of this project report on regional advocacy for persons with disabilities, with a focus on Regional Forums for Sustainable Development and regional integrations.

Chapter 1

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This chapter provides a brief outline of these key international frameworks. Taking each in turn, it will show how they can be linked together in advocacy messaging.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights treaty which reaffirms that persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The CRPD was adopted on 13 December 2006 by consensus of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN). On 30 March 2007, the CRPD was opened for signature at UN Headquarters in New York. Today, 177 countries worldwide (92% of UN members) are States Parties to the CRPD, making it the world's most rapidly ratified international human rights treaty. **Uniquely, the European Union has been a State Party to the CRPD since 2011, making it the only example to date of a regional integration organisation that has ratified the CRPD.**

The CRPD clarifies that all persons with disabilities have an equal right to participate in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life. The CRPD provides the disability movement with a strong legal framework to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. The 33 core articles of the CRPD, which cover all areas of life, must be implemented and monitored by all 177 Members States who ratified the Convention. It is a legal obligation to comply.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in September 2015 at the United Nations in New York. One hundred and ninety-three (193) world leaders committed to this plan of action with the ambition of ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030.

The 2030 Agenda builds on the guiding principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on international law. It is informed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties such as the CRPD. In this respect, the 2030 Agenda promotes universal respect of human rights, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination. The 2030 Agenda is a 35-page document, divided into 5 sections[1] to guide the world on sustainable development until 2030.

Its motto is to "leave no one behind", with the pledge to recognise the dignity of every person. This is the most remarkable change from its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While the MDGs focused attention effectively in key areas of development, they failed to address inequality and left many behind.

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[1] The five sections are the following: 1) Preamble, 2) Declaration, 3) SDGs and targets, 4) Means of implementation and the Global Partnership, and (5) Follow-up and review.

The Sustainable Development Goals

There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda (**Figure 1**). Although they are non-binding, the SDGs symbolise an unprecedented opportunity to set the world on a sustainable course and ensure a life of dignity for all. Importantly, they recognise that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge and a significant requirement for sustainable development. The SDGs are universal, meaning that to be successful, they must be achieved by all countries. They provide a clear policy framework for regulatory actions at national, regional and international level. National governments are expected to align their political agendas, policies and budget with the SDGs, and they will have a fundamental duty to follow-up and review their progress (requiring quality, accessible and timely data collection).

Figure 1 The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The link between the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda

Inclusion is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It vows to "leave no one behind" and also, "to reach the furthest behind first". That is a commitment to reach the most vulnerable among us in society. **The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are both clearly inclusive of persons with disabilities.** Disability issues and persons with disabilities are reasonably visible with 11 specific references throughout the 2030 Agenda, and 19 references in the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda provides the political momentum needed to push for the realisation of the CRPD. The CRPD is legally binding while the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are a political vision for a better world to be achieved by 2030. They can be used as a powerful advocacy platform to support the monitoring and implementation of the CRPD and fully create disability-inclusive policies, programmes and budgets.

Chapter 2

Follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals

This chapter briefly highlights what mechanisms are in place to ensure implementation of the SDGs is being monitored and measured.

The High-Level Political Forum

To follow-up and review SDGs implementation, the 2030 Agenda encourages Member States to *'conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven'*. **The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the global structure set up to assess progress, achievements and challenges faced by all countries as they implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.**

The High-Level Political Forum is organised every July at the United Nations in New York. It meets under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and once every four years, at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the UN General Assembly (the next in 2019, then 2023, etc.).

Each High-Level Political Forum has an annual thematic review under which a sub-set of goals are chosen for a more in-depth and integrated review (**Figure 2**). The sessions also include Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of countries on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives at national level. At the end of the HLPF, a Ministerial Declaration is adopted.

	THEME OF THE HLPF	FOCUS GOALS
2016	*Ensuring that no one is left behind*	No goals reviewed
2017	*Eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and promoting shared prosperity*	1 NO POVERTY · 2 ZERO HUNGER · 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING · 5 GENDER EQUALITY · 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE · 14 LIFE BELOW WATER · 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
2018	*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION · 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY · 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES · 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION · 15 LIFE ON LAND · 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
2019	*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*	4 QUALITY EDUCATION · 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH · 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES · 13 CLIMATE ACTION · 16 PEACE AND JUSTICE STRONG INSTITUTIONS · 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Figure 2 Annual thematic review topics of the HLPF

The Regional Forums on Sustainable Development

The implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are supported in each world region by the five United Nations Regional Commissions, with the organisation of annual Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (**Figure 3**). Although they vary slightly between each region (see chapters 4-8), these Forums

provide a space for promoting peer learning and cooperation. They also help to promote more effective linkage among global, regional, sub-regional and national processes. They have a significant role to play in promoting sustainable development regionally by facilitating regional reviews – the outcomes of which are taken to the HLPF.

Each UN Commission has responsibility for convening an annual Regional Forum on Sustainable Development within its region. The Forums are open to the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including international and regional organisations, civil society, DPOs, academia and the private sector. Each forum lasts one to two days, with usually a civil society organisation (CSO) preparatory meeting held the day before (the exception currently is the Arab region where the CSO meeting has yet to take place).

The Regional Forums are strategically placed to link national discussions with those happening at the global level. They also serve as multi-stakeholder platforms to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Forums were set up following the General Assembly resolutions 67/290, 70/1 and 70/299. These resolutions acknowledged the importance of the regional dimensions of sustainable development; invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the HLPF, including through annual regional meetings; and encouraged Member States to identify the most suitable regional forum.

REGIONS	UNITED NATIONS COMMISSIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SDGS PER WORLD REGION	ORGANISATION OF THE REGIONAL FORUMS
Africa	UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)	Spring, location changes every year
Arab region	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)	Spring, location changes every year
Asia Pacific region	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	Spring, Thailand
Europe, North America, Central Asia and Western Asia	UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)	Spring, Switzerland
Latin America and the Caribbean	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)	Spring, location changes every year

Figure 3 United Nations Commissions responsible for the SDGs per world region

Chapter 3

Civil society representation

This chapter describes the main mechanisms available to civil society for engaging with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It focuses, in particular, on how persons with disabilities are represented.

Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS)

Within the UN system, there is a mechanism through which different representative groups can have a voice and participate in all UN global development discussions. In fact, it was recognised back in 1992 during the Earth Summit, that without the

participation of a broad range of different social groups, sustainable development will never be possible. Nine 'Major Groups' were therefore created, including:

WOMEN	**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**	**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS	**LOCAL AUTHORITIES**	**FARMERS**
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY**	**WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS**

In 2012, at the Rio+20 Conference the importance of engaging these groups was once again agreed. In the outcome document, '*The Future We Want'*, the role of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) was highlighted as playing an important role in the work around sustainable development. **In addition, four 'other stakeholders' were invited by governments and encouraged to actively participate in UN processes related to sustainable development.**

They include:

LOCAL COMMUNITIES	**VOLUNTEER GROUPS AND FOUNDATIONS**	**MIGRANTS AND FAMILIES**	**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**
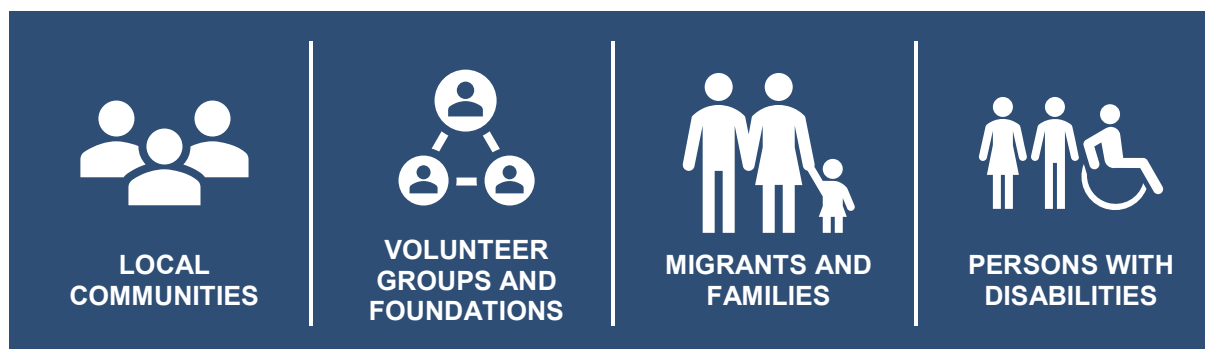
The MGoS system is working highly effectively under the coordination of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities

The group representing persons with disabilities within this system is called the **Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities.** This is currently coordinated by the International Disability Alliance with the support of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). **The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities aims to ensure that persons with disabilities, along with their representative organisations and related non-governmental organisations, can continue to advocate with a unified voice on all development issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities within UN processes.**

The Stakeholder Group as a formal representative body, provides a significant role in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities are prioritised within sustainable development discussions. The scope of the Stakeholder Group responsibility covers the Rio+20 outcome (including the 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals, High-level Political Forum, Financing for Sustainable Development, at global and regional policy processes of the United Nations). All persons with disabilities and their organisations can join the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities to advocate for the implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs.

The Stakeholder Group is governed by a Terms of Reference which sets out its purpose and how it works. Broadly, it is made up from individual and organisational participants who come together under a General Assembly (held annually online or in person). The General Assembly is managed by two elected representatives (Permanent Representative and Alternate Representative), serving for two years. They are also responsible for representing the Stakeholder Group externally and are especially important in linking the Group to the necessary UN processes.

Much of the actual work of the Stakeholder Group happens through working groups, where the participant members get the opportunity to feed into a range of different processes and thematic issues.

There are also four external working groups which are designed to enable the Stakeholder Group to participate in UN meetings and events and link with key UN agencies. These include:

WORKING GROUPS

SCIENCE, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY EVENT	DATA/ SDG INDICATORS	FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT	HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Chapter 4

Africa regional integration mechanisms

This chapter focuses on Africa with an overview of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA) and the work around persons with disabilities. **UNECA is the UN Commission that is responsible for the SDGs in Africa and organises the annual Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development.** Information is also provided on the African Union which is Africa's main regional integration organisation with suggestions for regional advocacy activities for persons with disabilities in Africa.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was established in 1958 as one of the UN's five regional commissions. It aims to promote the economic and social development of its 55 African Member States; encourage intra-regional integration; and further international cooperation for Africa's development. ECA is the only UN agency authorised to operate at the regional and sub-regional levels. It aims to harness resources wherever possible and focuses its work on collecting up-to-date and original regional statistics to ground its policy research. The ECA's goals are to promote policy consensus; provide meaningful capacity development; and provide advisory services in key thematic fields. These include: macroeconomic policy; regional integration and trade; social development; natural resources; innovation and technology; gender; governance; and statistics.

The UN ECA does not explicitly focus on persons with disabilities. Its Social Development Policy Division (SDPD) describes the work around population and youth being guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

However, in 2018, two events related to disability were organised for the first time in ECA's history (see box below).

Working with the ECA to raise awareness on disability inclusion

In November 2018, the SDPD of ECA co-organised the launch of the global campaign for the **"Good Treatment of Girls, Boys and Adolescents with Disabilities in the World".** A landmark event was held in Addis Ababa in collaboration with the Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, and the Embassy of the Republic of Chile in Ethiopia. Together, they called on African countries to promote the rights and welfare of children and adolescents with disabilities. The event was attended by more than 100 high-level government representatives, diplomatic missions based in Ethiopia, UN agencies, civil society and persons with disabilities to launch the official awareness raising campaign '10 principles for my protection, well-being and development as a girl, boy or adolescent with disabilities' in Africa (see Annex 1).

Following-up this event, the ECA celebrated the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** on the **3rd December 2018** for the very first time. The ECA Secretary General Dr Vera Songwe explained that the ECA is committed to ensuring that Africans with disabilities have the right to access all services, technologies and systems and that their rights must be fully realized.

Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) is convened by ECA in collaboration with regional organisations and the United Nations System. The ARFSD, similarly to the other UN Regional Forums, seeks to advance the implementation of the SDGs as well as the goals set out in Africa's Agenda 2063. **The Forum provides a multi-stakeholder platform focusing on follow-up and review of progress and challenges, lessons learned and effective advocacy for policy measures and actions.** Four sessions of the Forum have been held since 2015. At the end of each ARFSD, participants agree on the priorities and recommendations for Africa. These recommendations take the form of key messages and represent the region's collective inputs to the upcoming HLPF.

In 2018, the ARFSD was attended by 457 participants, comprising of high-level representatives of governments from 40 ECA Member States, intergovernmental bodies, major groups and other stakeholders, United Nations bodies and specialised agencies, and other international organisations. One representative of persons with disabilities was present.

The key messages of the ARFSD 2018 mentioned persons with disabilities 4 times, vulnerable groups 3 times and leave no one behind once (see **Table 1**).

DISABILITIES **(4 times)**	**1**	Promoting inclusive planning and strengthening the participation of vulnerable groups, including women, **persons with disabilities**, the elderly and young people *(B. Clean water and sanitation, 27, p.6)*
	2	Countries need to create safe public spaces in cities, including by ensuring access to affordable means of transportation, including for women and girls and for **persons with disabilities** in all their diversity *(D. Sustainable cities, 51, p.9)*
	3	Adjusting and reorienting national statistics development strategies to manage data related to the monitoring of the SDGs and the goals of Agenda 2063, including through the disaggregation of data on specific population groups (e.g., women, children, **persons with disabilities** and young people) so as to leave no one behind *(G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnership for sustainable development, 71c, p.13)*
	4	Promoting inclusive planning and strengthening the participation of vulnerable groups, including women, **persons with disabilities**, the elderly and young people *(G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnership for sustainable development, 72b, p.13)*
VULNERABLE GROUPS **(3 times)**	**1**	Promoting inclusive planning and strengthening the participation of **vulnerable groups**, including women, persons with disabilities, the elderly and young people *(G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnership for sustainable development, 72b, p.13)*
	2	Science and technology innovation should drive inclusive and sustainable development. Special emphasis should be placed on including women and girls, young people and **vulnerable groups** *(G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnership for sustainable development, 73, p.13)*
	3	African countries and their development partners should ensure that adequate funding is allocated to projects and programmes for **vulnerable groups** *(G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnership for sustainable development, 83, p.15)*
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND **(once)**	**1**	Adjusting and reorienting national statistics development strategies to manage data related to the monitoring of the SDGs and the goals of Agenda 2063, including through the disaggregation of data on specific population groups (e.g., women, children, persons with disabilities and young people) so as to **leave no one behind** *(G. Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the partnership for sustainable development, 71c, p.13)*

Table 1 Persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups and leave no one behind in the key messages of the ARFSD 2018

Civil society participation

The Africa Regional Forum is preceded with pre-meetings including the "preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in the Africa region". Civil society organisations have played a very strong role in linking national and regional discussions to the global HLPF. The pre-meeting workshop has been held every year since 2016, for one day, prior to the Africa Regional Forum. It brings together representatives from the nine major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) including persons with disabilities. The objective of the workshop is firstly to bring the different MGoS up to date on the discussions of the Africa Regional Forum. Secondly, it is used to align the views of the MGoS in preparation for the upcoming Forum meeting. **Whilst the pre-meeting has been very successful in being able to present a unified set of recommendations to the Africa Regional Forum, there has been advocacy from the MGoS, including persons with disabilities, to allow the group a stronger role in setting the agenda of the Forum.** At the moment, the MGoS can only contribute to items that have already been set up.

Nevertheless, the MGoS have a good relationship with the ECA to ensure that CSOs get the opportunity to present their views and share their contributions in the main plenary sessions. Progress is being made. As well as being part of the main agenda, there are interventions based on topics that have originated from the MGoS.

Representation of persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are one of the constituencies that have been recognised among the 'other' MGoS, and therefore have representation. **In fact, persons with disabilities are quite active as a constituent group and have done well to ensure persons with disabilities are represented within the Africa Regional Forum processes.** The **African Disability Forum** (ADF; see **Box 1**) has the responsibility for working with partners in the disability movement at regional level to coordinate inputs into all the MGoS discussions.

The African Disability Forum (ADF) is the continental membership organisation of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) in Africa. Formally established in 2014, ADF seeks to strengthen and unify the representative voices of Africans with disabilities, their families and organisations. ADF had 9 Continental, 4 Sub-Regional, and 42 National DPO Federation members, total of 55 Members.

For more information about the ADF, contact: africandisabilityforum@gmail.com

Click here to download information about ADF's establishment in 2015

Box 1 The African Disability Forum

As a stakeholder group, ADF ensures that disability issues can be raised directly in the main Africa Regional Forum's plenary sessions. To do this effectively, ADF works to ensure it is fully aware of what topics are due for discussion and then prepares key advocacy messages that effectively align with the debates. ADF realised quite early on in the process that it's important to try to be part of initial discussions as waiting for the Forum itself is too late. Thematic discussions benefit from having DPO inputs at the earliest possible stage. As such, ADF takes an active part in the civil society stakeholder workshop held ahead of the main Forum, in which the interests of key groups, like persons with disabilities, are aligned with the key Forum debates.

Regional integration in Africa: the African Union

The African Union has existed since 2002 but it originally dates back to 1963 and the foundation of the original Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The OAU was created by the 32 African States that had achieved independence but since then, it has gradually been expanding. By 2002, when the AU was launched, there were 53 Member States. There are now 55 Members with the more recent additions of South Sudan (2011) and Morocco (2017). The main headquarters is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

When the AU was created, it deliberately shifted focus from the OAU's emphasis on supporting liberation from colonialism and apartheid to one that works on economic and social development and integration. The AU's current vision is "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena". This vision forms an important part of the Agenda 2063 strategy. **The key aims of the AU are to help speed up integration and support Member States to access the global economy, to work together on facing tough social and political issues and to support peace, stability, democracy and good governance underpinned by human rights.**

In terms of structure, the main body for decision making is the Assembly of Heads of State and Government which consists of Member State Heads of government. The African Union Assembly meets twice a year with a session in January and another one in July. There are usually diverse agenda items discussed during these meetings, but it is also an excellent opportunity for taking part in side events, where issues can be presented and discussed with a wide audience.

There is an Executive Council which coordinates decisions and policies that relate to all Members as well as monitoring implementation of policies. There is a Permanent Representatives Committee which supports the work of the Executive Council and there are also Specialised Technical Committees (STCs) which are set up around different themes. In addition, there is the Peace and Security Council (PSC) which is where prevention and management of conflicts is dealt with (15 elected Member States) and the African Union Commission which is the Secretariat for the AU and is also based in Addis Ababa.

Working with the African Union

Representation within the AU is broken down into five regions: Central Africa; Eastern Africa; Northern Africa; Southern Africa; and, Western Africa. Each of the organs of the AU has two representatives from each region with at least one being a woman.

In addition, there are also eight Regional Economic Communities[2] (RECs) which drive the economic integration agendas of each region and represent them within the African Economic Community (AEC). These are integral to the structure and function of the AU. The AEC was established in 1991 (Abuja Treaty) and its ultimate aim is to create an African Common Market with the Regional Economic Communities being used as a mechanism to work to achieve that integration.

NGOs and non-African States can join the AU with Observer status or gain AU accreditation. This includes for example the UN which currently formalised through a 10-year framework agreement, the *Renewal UN-AU Partnership on Africa's Integration and Development Agenda* (PAIDA) 2017-27. This aligns both the Agenda 2063 and the Agenda 2030 (see www.un.org/en/africa/ossa) and the intention is for there to be a joint framework on sustainable development which will be discussed at the next High Level UN-AU meeting.

There are also African Union Champions – individual Heads of State that raise the profile of specific issues – Ending Child Marriage and UN Security Council Reform for example. **There is currently nothing for disability but there is a Champion for Gender and Development Issues in Africa (President of Ghana).**

The main point of engagement for civil society is via the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) which was originally set up in 2004 as an advisory body to the AU consisting of civil society organisations. In particular, its aim is to ensure the AU is fulfilling its obligations and to monitor progress. ECOSOCC is especially important in ensuring the AU upholds human rights, democracy and good governance, with particular emphasis on gender and child rights. It has 150 member CSOs (two per Member State; 10 regional bodies and eight African bodies).

Regional advocacy for persons with disabilities

Agenda 2063 is a key focal document for advocacy in the region since it sets out the vision for Africa's development over the next 50 years. **Unfortunately, there is nothing explicit about persons with disabilities in this strategy but there are**

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[2] Currently, there are eight RECs recognised by the AU, each established under a separate regional treaty. They are: Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); East African Community (EAC); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Southern African Development Community (SADC)

very clear intentions around human rights, participation and inclusion which can be utilised by the disability movement.

Perhaps more significantly, there are important regional strategies - for example, the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (running now for the second time from 2010 to 2019). **Already, it has been possible to use the Continental Plan of Action to promote disability inclusion within the AU.** In 2018, a disability awareness training was provided by ADF to representatives from across AU departments and regional offices.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are another potentially important entry point for advocacy in the sub-regions within the AU. Each of the RECs has already developed quite effective civil society engagement mechanisms.

What is clear is that more needs to be done to align positive policy statements with action at regional and ultimately, national level. **Across Africa, the readiness of countries to adopt disability inclusive programmes varies considerably.** Tanzania and Kenya, for example, have national disability legislation and strategies in place which can be focal points for work around implementation of disability inclusive development. When these strategies are coming up for renewal, it is a good opportunity to get involved, especially around ensuring that persons with disabilities gain a permanent place in decision-making fora. Here, linking up with AU priorities[3] can help by ensuring country-level programmes align to fulfil AU strategies.

Another successful strategy has been to work more closely with 'champion' countries. It becomes easier to demonstrate the effectiveness of inclusive development where countries take a progressive view of disability and it helps to build relationships with individuals who can then act as allies at regional level.

At the Regional Forum level, it is important for DPOs to have a visible presence in the MGoS. This presence will help to influence the SDGs at the regional African level, but it will also help to work on key intersectional issues such as those affecting women, children or other vulnerabilities.

To facilitate the engagement of DPOs in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063, ADF offer technical support, provide Skype meetings and webinars in partnership with the International Disability Alliance (IDA), as well as other partners. ADF is also advocating for data collection to be disaggregated by disability, with the provision of technical support to governments. This is facilitated by the collection of case studies and evidence-based advocacy messages. An important area for future engagement is around financing and mapping out how funding will be used to promote disability inclusion.

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[3] The African Union's priorities are: Institutional Capacity, Effective Communication, Women's and Youth Empowerment, Africa's Human Capacity, Economic Integration, Food Security and Peace and Stability.

Entry points for regional advocacy in Africa

» African Union's priorities
» Agenda 2063
» Regional Economic Communities
» UN Economic Commission for Africa

Support documents for advocacy

» Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities
» CRPD

Box 2 Entry points for regional advocacy in Africa and support documents

Chapter 5

Arab Regional Integration Mechanisms

This chapter focuses on the Arab region with an overview of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the work around persons with disabilities. **ESCWA is the UN Commission that is responsible for the SDGs in the Arab region and organises the annual Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.** Information is also provided on the Arab League which is the main regional integration organisation, with suggestions for regional advocacy activities for persons with disabilities in the Arab region.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon, is another of the five regional commissions under the administrative direction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1973 and has 18 Member States - Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. ESCWA supports its Member States in policy formulation and harmonisation, acts as a platform for knowledge exchange, and provides expertise and advice on various social and economic issues important for the region.
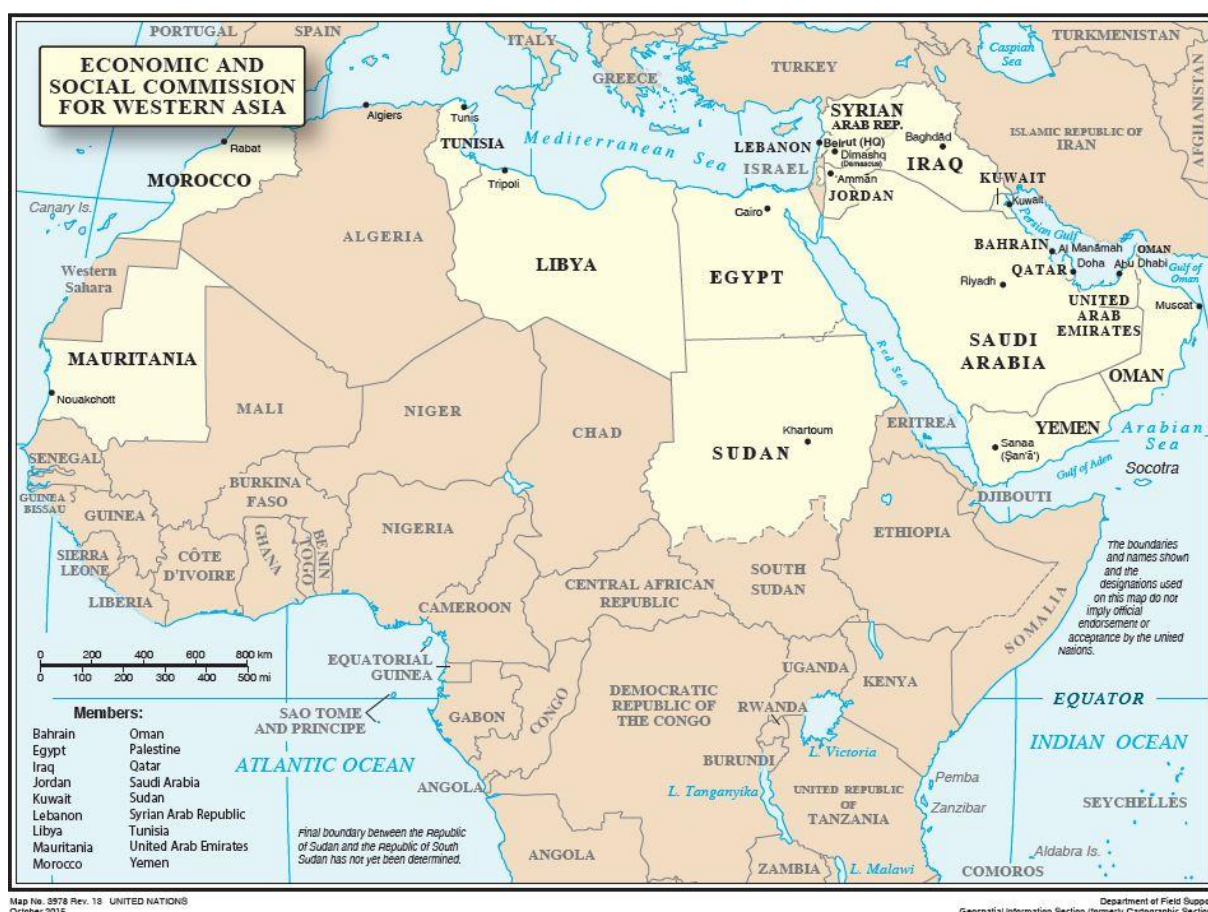
Figure 4 Map of the ESCWA region

ESCWA activities are coordinated by the divisions and main offices of the Headquarters of the United Nations, specialised agencies, and international and regional organisations. These include the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. There are eight specialised committees which assist the Commission to develop its programme of work and act as a bridge between specialists in Member countries and the Commission. The committees

report to the bi-annual session of the Commission with most of them also meeting every two years. Disability issues are discussed by the Committee on Social Development which was established in 1994.

ESCWA works closely with the regional commissions in Asia (ESCAP, see chapter 6), and Latin America (ECLAC, see chapter 8). These three UN Commissions all have disability focal points and work to promote disability mainstreaming. They are also similar in having the same social development divisions within their commissions which are a focal point for disability issues. **This is not the case with either the UN ECE in Europe or the UN ECA in Africa where no, or little work is conducted specifically related to the rights of persons with disabilities.**

During the tenth session of ESCWA, the Committee on Social Development recommended that an expert group should be established to focus on issues related to persons with disabilities between the bi-annual sessions. As a result, in 2016, the first meeting of the **Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability** was held, made up primarily of heads of disability councils or disability departments within ministries. The group itself is mandated to present a bi-annual report to the Committee on Social Development but it is expected to meet formally once a year. There are opportunities for members to meet more often than that (either in person or virtually) to ensure the programme of work is carried forward. So far, it has focused on items such as monitoring of the CRPD, translating laws into administrative practice, disability-related goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda and how they overlap with the CRPD; defining disability, and the challenges of collecting disability data. Initial discussions have also touched upon Article 19 of the CRPD and issues related to institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation of persons with disabilities in Arab countries. The group has helped strengthen South-South cooperation and has become a resource network to exchange expertise and learning.

Arab Regional Forum for Sustainable Development

The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development is convened by ESCWA in collaboration with regional organisations and the UN system. It is designed to advance progress in the region towards implementation of the SDGs and is a high-level multi-stakeholder annual event for the Arab region, whose main key messages are then presented at the upcoming HLPF. Five sessions of the Forum have been held since 2014. The Forum welcomes stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned, as well as discuss challenges and progress made on implementing the sustainable development agenda.

In 2018, the Arab Forum was attended by 300 participants comprising high-level representatives of governments from 16 ESCWA Member States, intergovernmental bodies, major groups and other stakeholders, United Nations bodies and specialised agencies, and other international organisations. The Arab Forum for the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities and the World Association of Persons with Disabilities were active participants.

The sixth session of Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2019 took place at the ESCWA premise, in Beirut, on 9th to 11th April. **While disability is fully included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this topic was remarkably absent from the Forum: governments did not properly reflect persons with disabilities in their presentations.** One technology expert only mentioned universal design protocols. The chairman of the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities in Jordan, Dr. Muhannad Al Azzeh, was given 7 minutes to speak, among the seven plenary sessions. It was not different in the six specialised sessions. In the one dedicated to discussing women and inclusion, Egyptian disability activist and Member of Parliament, Dr. Heba Haggras, showcased the pioneering work done in his country. At the time of completion of the project report, the key messages of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2019 were not yet available online. It is unknown how persons with disabilities have been included.

The key messages of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2018 mentioned persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups 5 times each. There were also 12 references to leaving no one behind (See **table 2**).

DISABILITIES

(4 times)

1 Stress the importance of applying the 'leaving no on behind' principle by mainstreaming the rights and issues of young people, women, **persons with disabilities,** older persons and other vulnerable groups, by enabling them and involving them in planning, implementation and monitoring processes, and by preparing follow-up reports. *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of 'leaving no one behind' in the Arab region, 100, p.14)*

2 The following panellists participated in the second special session: Ms. Kinda Hattar, Regional Advisor for Middle East and North Africa at Transparency International; Ms. Atidel Mejebri, Director of the Media Center at the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research; Mr. Mustafa Tlili, Executive Secretary of the Arab Trade Union Confederation; Mr. Emad Adly, General Coordinator of the Arab Network for Environment and Development; and Ms. Sylvana Lakkis, Chair of the Arab Forum for the Rights of **Persons with Disabilities** *(C. Special sessions, 2 Towards a civil society platform in the Arab region , 31, p.19)*

3 They added that the role of persons with disabilities should also be mainstreamed in all sustainable development issues *(C. Special sessions, 2 Towards a civil society platform in the Arab region, 32, p.19)*

4 Major groups and regional and international organisations and funds were represented by the Arab NGOs Network for Development, the Arab Forum for Environment and Development, the Arab Regional Network for Environment and Development, the Arab Network for Food Sovereignty, the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, Arab Organisation of **Persons with Disabilities**, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research, the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organisation, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, the Middle East Desalination Research Centre, the Council of Arab Economic Unity, the Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association, Transparency International, the Saudi Fund for Development, the Islamic Development Bank, and the World Association of **Persons with Disabilities** *(III Participants, 52, p.23)*

VULNERABLE GROUPS (4 times)	**1**	Stress that good city planning benefits everyone equally, including migrants, refugees, the displaced and other **vulnerable social groups** *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, Planning for resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities, 66, p.10)*
	2	Agree on the need to formulate and commit to an integrated human rights and policy framework in tackling all youth issues, which upholds and protects basic freedoms and human rights without overlooking **vulnerable or marginalised groups** and guarantees equal opportunities for all; and intensify efforts to reach young people in rural areas as they are key to achieving positive change, peace and stability. *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, Young people's role in moving towards sustainable Arab societies, 90, p.13)*
	3	Affirm that the principle of 'leaving no one behind' is a major challenge facing Arab countries, especially regarding **vulnerable groups** and people living in rural and remote areas; and devise solutions to raise awareness at the local level and involve governorates and local authorities and communities in identifying priorities, planning, implementing and following up to ensure that everyone benefits from development returns *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of 'leaving no one behind' in the Arab region, 97, p.15)*
	4	Stress the importance of applying the 'leaving no on behind' principle by mainstreaming the rights and issues of young people, women, **persons with disabilities**, older persons and **other vulnerable groups**, by enabling them and involving them in planning, implementation and monitoring processes, and by preparing follow-up reports *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of 'leaving no one behind' in the Arab region, 100, p.15)*
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND (12 times)	**1**	D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of '**leaving no one behind**' in the Arab region, pp13-14
	2	Stress the importance of applying the '**leaving no on behind**' principle by mainstreaming the rights and issues of young people, women, **persons with disabilities**, older persons and **other vulnerable groups**, by enabling them and involving them in planning, implementation and monitoring processes, and by preparing follow-up reports *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of '**leaving no one behind**' in the Arab region, 100, p.15)*
	3	Confirm that the principle of '**leaving no one behind**' is a key pillar of the 2030 Agenda that cannot be implemented without inclusive public policies guaranteed by international law and human rights standards *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of '**leaving no one behind**' in the Arab region, 97, p.15)*
	4	Acknowledge that implementing the '**leaving no one behind**' principle requires ending discrimination in laws and practices, disseminating a culture of tolerance and solidarity, following human rights-based approaches, and committing to the common good *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of 'leaving no one behind' in the Arab region, 99, p.15)*
	5	Stress the importance of applying the '**leaving no on behind**' principle by mainstreaming the rights and issues of young people, women, **persons with disabilities**, older persons and **other vulnerable groups**, by enabling them and involving them in planning, implementation and monitoring processes, and by preparing follow-up reports *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of '**leaving no one behind**' in the Arab region, 100, p.15)*

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND (12 times)	6	Invite capital to invest in remote rural areas, where services, employment and education are at their lowest levels; and provide financial services, markets and training tools and manage risks for small farmers, in line with the '**leaving no one behind**' principle *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, the principle of 'leaving no one behind' in the Arab region, 103, p.15)*
	7	Welcome the participation of local authority representatives at the AFSD as a step towards active interconnectedness between the local, national, regional and global levels; and raise awareness about the importance of local development in implementing the '**leaving no one behind**' principle *(D. Priority issues at the regional level, localising the Sustainable Development Goals, 104, p.15)*
	8	Representatives presented countries' experiences in preparing voluntary national reviews. Panellists also discussed national data shortages; the importance of strengthening internal capacity and building upon cumulative experiences; the role of different actors, including parliaments, in the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation process of voluntary national reviews; and the importance of disseminating the '**leaving no one behind**' principle and of reviewing policy effectiveness *(B. Plenary sessions, Plenary session 2: Voluntary national reviews and the day after: follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, 15, p.16)*
	9	Interventions focused on gender equality and women's empowerment as key elements of the '**leaving no one behind**' principle, and on the need for member States to fully and accurately reflect that dimension in their voluntary national reviews (C. Special sessions, 4 Mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in national SDG implementation plans (UN Women and ESCWA), 36, p.20)
	10	C. Special sessions, 7 "**Leaving no one behind**" in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Under the auspices of UNICEF and ESCWA), p.21
	11	The discussion focused on '**leaving no one behind**' as a key principle of the 2030 Agenda, which could only be enshrined through inclusive public policies guaranteed by international law and human rights. Its application required ending discrimination in laws and practices, disseminating a culture of tolerance and solidarity, and employing rights-based approaches that ensured the common good (C. Special sessions, 7 "**Leaving no one behind**" in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Under the auspices of UNICEF and ESCWA), 42, p.21)
	12	Discussions covered equitable urban planning in line with the 'leaving no one behind' principle; and the importance of strengthening the participation of local stakeholders in planning and sustainable development processes (C. Special sessions, 8 Localising the SDGs in the Arab region: challenges and prospects for action (Under the auspices of UN Habitat and ESCWA), 44, p.22)

Table 2 Persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups and leave no one behind in the key messages of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2018

Civil society participation

Unlike with the other four regional Forums, civil society are not organised into Major Groups and other Stakeholders. **So far, civil society has had a limited role in terms of participation and advocacy in the Forum although they are invited to participate in sessions during the event itself.**

Nevertheless, prior to the Forum, ESCWA hosted a two-day regional meeting of civil society on Sustainable Development in the Arab Region. As a result of positive DPO participation, one of the key messages to come out of this meeting was for ESCWA member countries to adopt a non-discriminatory developmental framework based on human rights principles and to take steps to put that into force.

Representation of persons with disabilities

There are no Major Groups in this region, however, persons with disabilities are represented. In 2018 for example, two organisations of persons with disabilities participated in the Forum: the Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (AODP; see **Box 3**) and the World Association of Persons with Disabilities. They took part in the panel session on leaving no one behind.

The Arab Organisation for Persons with Disabilities (AODP) was established on November 3, 1998, following the conclusion of the founding conference of the Association of Arab Disabled Persons. AODP is a regional organisation composed of DPOs operating in the different Arab Countries. AOPD's main objectives are to promote the rights of people with disabilities, to empower people with disabilities and to represent Arab people with disabilities in the world at large.

The members of AODP are associations representing persons with disabilities from Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

For more information about AODP, see their website: http://www.aodp-lb.net

Box 3 The Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities

The AOPD carried out a preliminary survey of how disability has been included in the SDGs in the Arabic region. Seven goals were chosen to get a stronger understanding: Goal 1 (no poverty); Goal 4 (quality education); Goal 5 (gender equality); Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth); Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities); Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and Goal 17 (partnerships). The survey included Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan and Tunisia.

As for poverty **(goal 1)** and social protection, responses from different DPOs in the ten Arab countries surveyed show that persons with disabilities are the poorest of the poor, with a large number of them being illiterate, unemployed and landless. Many persons with disabilities suffer exclusion and isolation. Not all Arab states have social protection programs. Noteworthy is the plan adopted by the Palestinian National Authority, which provides allowances for 150 thousand poor families. 36,000 of them are families headed by or with persons with disabilities.

Regarding **goal 4** (quality education), Arab countries are far from having any real inclusive education because of the training of teachers, curricula, school buildings and social attitudes governing individual behaviour. However, many attempts are made at individual and group levels to plan and implement basic inclusive education. Despite these initiatives, the achievement of goal 4 in the Arabic region remains complicated and challenging.

With respect to **goal 5**, gender equality is to the majority of ordinary Arabs a far-fetched concept for many reasons. Women are in most cases confined to their homes before and after marriage, as in the case of single women. A large proportion of women in the Arab countries do not join school. The basic skills a large percentage of Arab women have and practice are limited to house work and domestic service, as well as basic or primitive farming in some rural areas. In the case of women with disabilities, the situation seems much more grave than in the case of women without disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are subject to intersectional or multiple forms of discrimination. They are also generally not involved in DPO leadership, except in rare cases. Women with disabilities in the Arabic region are deprived of schooling, and rarely get support to be employed.

Concerning accessibility linked to **goal 11**, no real effort has been made by all the governments in the countries surveyed. Public and private buildings, sidewalks, transportations remain inaccessible to persons with disabilities. Universal design of new technology is providing accessibility to persons with disabilities, and though helpful in many ways, it remains quite limited.

As for **goal 16** on peace, justice and strong institutions, one may conclude that it is not achievable at present. Without the basics needed to achieve the previous goals, it is almost impossible to speak of an inclusive community or society.

Goal 17 emphasises partnerships with international organisations and agencies. Such cooperation may be helpful. The responses of the survey showed that such partnerships are sought after by Arabic DPOs.

Arab regional integration: the Arab League

The Arab League is the regional integration organisation for Arab States that are in and around North Africa, Horn of Africa and Arabia. It was established in 1945 with just six Member States which has now risen to 22 (Syria is currently suspended). Membership is entirely voluntary.

Its objectives are to maintain and strengthen the solidarity of Member States in response to external threats; to promote peace and cohesion between Member States by helping to act as an arbitrator; and to promote social, legal, financial, economic and cultural cooperation.

Working with the Arab League

The main institutions that exist within the Arab League are the Council of the League; the Joint Defence Council; the Economic and Social Council; the Committees and the Secretariat General. The Council is the supreme body and is made up from two representatives from each Member State. It meets twice a year (March and September) and sets the agenda for all of the League's activities. It also monitors the implementation of agreements and appoints the Secretary General. The Joint Defence Council's role is to coordinate mutual defence and economic cooperation and consists of representatives drawn from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Economic and Social Council aims to promote the economic and social development of the Arab world. Permanent committees play a significant role in the work of the League by studying key problems and issues. They represent issues including political matters, social questions, health, culture, economic matters, information, oil, finance and administration. The Secretariat General has the responsibility for implementing all decisions taken by the Council.

The Arab League has sometimes struggled with reconciling Member States who often have very different interests. This is made more difficult by the fact that decisions made by the Council are only binding on Members that voted for them, which severely constrains its effectiveness as a regional body.

Regional advocacy for persons with disabilities

The first significant work around disability in the region began in 2004 with the first Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities (2004-2013). During this time, regional principles and objectives were created, which helped to raise the profile of persons with disabilities and the barriers they face. This was so successful that 17 out of 18 ESCWA Member States have gone on to ratify the CRPD with only Lebanon remaining (it has signed in 2007 but not yet ratified). Most countries now have specific articles related to disability within their Constitutions and all countries have specific legislation on disability. In fact, in the last couple of years, Jordan, Sudan and Egypt have all issued new and updated disability legislation whilst Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Sudan have been working to improve their disability assessment process to move away from being impairment-based to include elements of

functionality. Morocco has gone furthest by setting up a monitoring framework for implementation of the CRPD and the SDGs. They took part in the 2016 round of VNRs. There are now disability focal points in most countries and national coordinating mechanisms in place in accordance with Article 33 (national implementation and monitoring) of the CRPD.

The Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a key organisation in the region. The disability movement has been active in the region since the 1980's, initially in response to the UN Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992. However, the situation in relation to organisations of persons with disabilities varies considerably across the region. There are some countries where it is hard for any grassroots organisation to exist because of a general lack of freedom for civil society. In others, there are existing organisations but they are subject to some level of control by the government. But in countries such as Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and more recently, Jordan, civil society organisations exist and are supported by the government. Here, DPOs are much more effective in representing persons with disabilities in forums such as national councils. In these countries, there is a higher level of awareness and visibility around disability issues and a much more positive, rights-based language. Persons with disabilities play a more significant role in civil society programmes and activities.

A key issue, however, remains a lack of awareness around a rights-based model of disability. This means there continues to be a lot of disability focused organisations that claim to advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities but in fact, are designated with responsibility for the provision of disability specific services. This is very common in areas such as health, habilitation/rehabilitation and education. Nevertheless, these organisations can be quite visible at government level and tend to encourage governments into thinking that services need to be provided for persons with disabilities through these institutions. So, whilst they might say they are advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, they are not challenging the traditional medical/charity model of disability. There is little progress in the way of engagement with civil society for the access to mainstream services.

In relation to the implementation of the SDGs, most of what has been happening so far has been at the regional rather than national level. ESCWA has been highly effective in mobilising its Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Disability who are active in monitoring the implementation of the CRPD and disability policies and laws. A key recent activity was to provide an updated situational analysis of persons with disabilities which resulted in the publication of the Disability in the Arab Region 2018 report (in collaboration with ESCWA's Social Development Division) and a Regional Guidebook to improve disability data collection and analysis in the Arab countries (in collaboration with the Statistics Division). This was the first major analysis done using the Washington Group standard data collection protocol, which makes them the most accurate account of disability in the region to date. It provides a good road map for future advocacy.

But whilst the Arab Forum is actively engaged in working with them, much of what is discussed and agreed has yet to be translated into changes in practice at national level. Some ministries do take up recommendations and become enthusiastic about disability inclusion, but this rarely translates into cross-ministry working. So, activities may take place but without an overall strategy for systematic engagement across government for disability inclusion, which means the experience of accessing services by persons with disabilities remains inconsistent. Governments may report on disability inclusive actions at the Conference of States Parties or the High-Level Political Forum which is positive but on the whole, there is little substance behind what they report on.

Chapter 6

Asia-Pacific regional integration mechanisms

This chapter focuses on Asia-Pacific with an overview of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) and the work around persons with disabilities. **UNESCAP is the UN Commission that is responsible for the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region and organises the annual Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD).** Information is also provided on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which is Asia-Pacific's main regional integration organisation with suggestions for regional advocacy activities for persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) was established in 1947 with the role of encouraging economic cooperation between Member States and is one of the UN's five regional commissions. Its 53 Member States cover a vast geographical area, from Turkey and the Russian Federation, to Kiribati and New Zealand encompassing over 4 billion people. This makes ESCAP the most comprehensive of the UN's regional commissions, and the largest UN body serving the Asia-Pacific.

The role of ESCAP is to overcome some of the region's biggest challenge by providing results-oriented projects, technical assistance and capacity building. The ESCAP Secretariat comprises the Office of the Executive Secretary, which manages the overall programme and nine substantive Divisions (along with Divisions focused on administration and programme management). The delivery of ESCAP's programmes happens through sub-regional offices and via regional institutions. Since the area covered by ESCAP is so vast the sub-regional offices are an important way to ensure the specific issues relevant to each region are adequately represented and interventions are better targeted. There are four sub-regional offices: East and North-East Asia; North and Central Asia; The Pacific; and South and South-West Asia.

Each of the substantive Divisions are represented by a Committee. Each Committee meets bi-annually and amongst other things, have the task of reviewing general trends; identifying key priorities and emerging issues; promoting dialogue; proposing resolutions, and monitoring implementation of previous resolutions. **Disability issues fall under the Committee on Social Development, with its own disability inclusive development focus.** ESCAP is one of the leading UN regional hubs to have a dedicated team ensuring disability inclusion in ESCAP activities and policies, including improving accessibility standards in all UN meetings. In fact, ESCAP is the only Regional Commission which can so far claim to have been guided by three consecutive disability-specific decade initiatives, starting in 1993. The current Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities runs from 2013 to 2022, and the Decade progress is monitored by the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, which is comprised of 15 Member States and 15 civil society organisations.

ESCAP also uniquely established the Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk (SDG Help Desk) to assist Member States in the Asia-Pacific region in developing effective strategies, methodologies, tools and institutional mechanisms for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It serves as the primary modality for providing ESCAP support to Member States in specific priority areas such as integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, stakeholder engagement, and effective follow-up and review among others.

Support is being offered through:

Knowledge Hub	thematic areas; e-learning courses; e-library (publications and articles); learning videos
Capacity Building	capacity development support through training of trainers' seminars to foster the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and the SDGs into national planning
Community of Practice	on-line forums for networking and peer-learning among a global grouping of experts on sustainable development
Technical Assistance	advisory services for national policy makers
Statistical Data Support	data portals
Partnerships	access to events, knowledge products, best practices, policy toolboxes and training tools, methodologies, pools of experts, beyond the wider UN family

Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) is convened by ESCAP and is the primary forum for following up on and reviewing progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals are key goals for ESCAP. The first Forum was held in 2014 and has continued annually since then, providing the opportunity for the region to prepare its contribution to upcoming HLPFs. Prior to each session of the APFSD, ESCAP organises preparatory meetings in each sub-region, providing opportunities for a range of different stakeholders, including from civil society, to come together to share knowledge, experience and carry out technical level discussions around the 2030 Agenda.

The 2019 Asia-Pacific Forum was attended by more than 750 participants comprising governments from 48 ESCAP member and associate Member States, intergovernmental bodies, UN bodies and specialised agencies and other international and national organisations. Persons with disabilities were also present.

The outcome document of the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development 2018 did mention persons with disabilities five times. Vulnerable groups and references to leaving no one behind were included 12 times each (See **table 3**).

DISABILITIES (5)	1	7. Representatives from major groups and other stakeholders emphasized the importance of justice, inclusive planning and rights for the most marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples; girls and women, especially rural women; farmers; workers; fisherfolk; urban poor; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons; people living with HIV/AIDS; people living in conflict; older persons; youth; migrants; **persons with disabilities**; Dalits; and those discriminated based on work and descent *(Section I Empowering people for a more inclusive and equal Asia-Pacific, p. 5)*
	2	19. To comprehensively and systematically track progress and address inequalities, high-quality and more disaggregated data, based on gender/sex, ethnicity, language, income, **disability status**, and geographical location must be available to planners, decision makers and stakeholders. *(Section III Parallel round tables for in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16, p. 7,)*
	3	32. Disaster risk reduction mechanisms needed to be inclusive, taking into account the vulnerabilities of all groups irrespective of age, sex, **disability**, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status, and to build on traditional knowledge systems and practices. *(Section III Parallel round tables for in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16, p. 10)*
	4	45. It recommended improving data collection and reporting. It recommended strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems to collaborate with diverse stakeholders on disaggregated data collection, with specific focus on vulnerable groups, including **persons with disabilities** and indigenous groups. *(Section III Parallel round tables for in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16, p. 12)*
	5	50. (…) Member States preparing for the voluntary national review noted that their preparation for and consolidation of the review reports were aligned with national and subregional strategies, giving priority to the development concerns of their most vulnerable groups such as older persons, women, **persons with disabilities** and indigenous groups. *(Section IV Voluntary National Reviews, p. 13)*
VULNERABLE GROUPS		12 times mentioned
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND		12 times mentioned

Table 3 Persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups and leave no behind in the key messages of the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development 2019

Civil society representation

To assist with the civil society engagement process, ESCAP hosts an annual Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development, now called the Peoples Forum on Sustainable Development, just prior to the main Forum. This is coordinated through the [Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism](#) (AP-RCEM) following the experiences of civil society during the lead up to the 2012 Rio+20 conference on sustainable development. AP-RCEM is comprised of around 540 organisations and is now a leading mechanism for enabling CSOs with a wide range of backgrounds to engage in 2030 Agenda discussions and debates. **The main purpose of this platform is to promote participation from the grass-roots because traditionally, these organisations have rarely gained access to intergovernmental level discussions**. In total, there are 17 constituency groups, which build on the nine existing Major Groups and Other Stakeholders defined by the UN system. For Asia-Pacific it felt necessary to include representation for migrants, people affected by HIV, LGBTQI community, urban poor, people affected by conflict and disaster, persons with disabilities, fisherfolk, and older groups. Each constituency group selects a focal point, all of whom meet together as the Regional Coordination Committee.

At the moment, there are 6 thematic working groups on: sexual reproductive health rights, trade and investment, financing for development, environment, land and energy. It is possible for any constituent group to suggest a thematic working group, it simply requires a core of five organisations to support the issue.

The Asia-Pacific People's Forum on Sustainable Development and the APFSD welcome members who are based in Asia and the Pacific and from civil society organisations working on the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development processes, and especially those who are:
» Engaged in the 2030 Agenda and SDGs-related processes;
» Members of grassroots constituencies, and/or working directly with grassroots constituencies; or
» Working in ESCAP-member Asia-Pacific countries that have signed up for Voluntary National Review for the relevant years of the HLPF

Representation of persons with disabilities

Within the AP-RCEM mechanism, persons with disabilities collectively advocate through the Disability Constituency, one of the 17 constituency groups. The Disability Constituency has a focal point which is elected by the constituency to engage in the larger AP-RCEM and to galvanise the collective priorities of persons with disabilities in the region. Persons with disabilities have actively participated in the APFSD and the Peoples Forum (CSO SD Forum) since 2015. In recent years, the disability constituency has held pre-forum disability focused meetings, building the capacity of members to collectively advocate for

regional priorities. Currently, the Disability Constituency is led by a representative from the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF), while the ASEAN Disability Forum (ASEAN-DF) is actively involved.

Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) is the Regional Response to addressing disability issues in the Pacific. The PDF was established in 2002 and officially inaugurated in 2004, to work towards inclusive, barrier-free, socially just, and gender equitable societies that recognize the human rights, citizenship, contribution and potential of persons with disabilities in Pacific Island Countries and territories.

Visit PDF's website: www.pacificdisability.org

The ASEAN Disability Forum (ASEAN-DF) is a network composed by DPOs of the ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia. It is a platform where DPOs coordinate actions to advocate for disability inclusive policy formulation and implementation.

Visit ASEAN-DF's website: aseandisabilityforum.org

Regional integration in Asia-Pacific: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN was set up in 1967 and currently has 10 Member States. Its main aims are: promoting economic growth and social progress; promoting regional peace and security; promoting active collaboration around common interests (economic, social, cultural); providing technical and research assistance and generally bringing about closer cooperation between Members States.

ASEAN works through Community Councils focused around three key pillars: Political-Security Community Council; Economic Community Council; and Socio-Cultural Community Council. Each council has a blueprint plan alongside a strategic framework and workplan to guide its discussions. **The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (AMMSWD) is the body mandated to look after social welfare and development for vulnerable groups, which include persons with disabilities, and is tasked with ensuring the implementation of the CRPD at national level.**

Working with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The main ASEAN strategy currently, Community Vision 2025, is people-oriented, people-centred and contains specific strategies aimed at reducing barriers and protecting human rights. ASEAN has some history of work around disability inclusion. Currently underway is the ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020), which is designed to promote disability inclusive development and implementation of the CRPD across Member States and is underpinned by the Incheon Strategy to 'Make the Right Real' for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

To help promote the inclusion of persons with Disabilities across ASEAN's work, there is a Taskforce on the Mainstreaming of Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Task Force includes representatives from the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), along with Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. Collectively, this Taskforce has put together the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This important strategy document was designed to complement the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 on achieving an inclusive community, but with the intention of making disability more visible. A key stakeholder in the development of this Masterplan was the ASEAN Disability Forum, which was effective in putting forward the situation faced by persons with disabilities and focusing on how to ensure they are empowered to participate in the ASEAN Community.

The overall goal of this Master Plan is to help promote effective implementation of the CRPD at the regional level and to mainstream disability across the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. It has 27 key action points related to disability inclusion for each of the ASEAN Communities, although it is not clear the extent to which these

activities are resourced. Monitoring is done summatively through mid-line and end-line evaluations with regular reporting in a results framework. It mentions that civil society, especially DPOs, should be part of the monitoring and evaluation process but does not elaborate further on this point.

Regional integration in the Pacific: The Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) was established in 1971 and currently has 18 members from across the Pacific. Its main aim is to help support a peaceful, socially inclusive and prosperous region where everyone can lead free, healthy and productive lives. To achieve this, it works by encouraging cooperation between governments and collaboration with international agencies.

PIF is guided by a 'Framework for Pacific Regionalism' (2014). This sets out the region's vision and objectives, which includes sustainable development that respects the environment; inclusive and equitable economic growth; strengthened governance and administrative systems; and security for everyone.

Working with the Pacific Islands Forum

PIF works through collective action based around: coordination; cooperation; collaboration; harmonisation; economic integration; and administrative integration. Priority focus areas are agreed on by Forum Leaders at the Forum Secretariat, but all interested stakeholder groups can propose new regional initiatives at any time. Specialist sub-committees within the Forum Official Committee (FOC) then review proposals in more detail and make recommendations to the Forum Secretariat. The FOC puts together the agenda for PIF making sure that any politically sensitive or major regional issues are given sufficient attention.

Currently, there are several regional priorities, including issues such as climate change, ICT and regional mobility. **However, included in these priorities is the Framework for Rights of Persons with Disabilities: 2016-2025.** The vision for this work is 'An inclusive, barrier-free, and rights-based society for men, women and children with disabilities, which embraces the diversity of all Pacific people.' It has 5 goals covering livelihoods (linked to SDG 8 and 10); mainstreaming (linked to SDG 10 and 16); leadership and enabling environment (linked to SDG 16 and 10); disaster risk management (linked to SDG 11 and 13); and evidence (linked to SDG 17). Monitoring of this strategy is being done through the Council of Regional Organisations (CROP) and the Health and Population Working group.

Regional advocacy for persons with disabilities

Generally, it is quite difficult for DPOs and disability activists to participate in HLPF or SDG implementation mechanisms because the CSO space is already quite full. However, the regional framework for the rights of persons with disabilities and the inclusive nature of many of the SDGs has created more opportunities for DPOs to gain attention. At the last Asia-Pacific Forum, for example, side events were held on the rights of women with disabilities and increasingly, DPOs are being invited into consultation processes.

Entry points for regional advocacy in Asia-Pacific

» Community Vision 2025
» ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
» Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of the Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010) which aims to achieve gender equality in education and the enrolment of children with disabilities
» The ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for out-of-school children and youth talks about ensuring access to education as a priority for all children and young people irrespective of disability
» The Declaration on the elimination of violence against women and elimination of violence against children in ASEAN (2013) protects women and children with disabilities from all types of violence, abuse and exploitation
» The ASEAN Declaration on strengthening social protection (2013) also mentions that persons with disabilities are entitled to equitable access to social protection and calls on Member States to ensure they have appropriate national policies and implementing mechanisms to effectively target social protection to those most in need

Support documents for advocacy

» ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020)
» Incheon Strategy to 'Make the Right Real' for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific
» CRPD

Box 4 Entry points for regional advocacy in the Asia-Pacific region and support documents

Chapter 7

European regional integration mechanisms

This chapter focuses on Europe with an overview of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) and the work around persons with disabilities. **UNECE is the UN Commission that is responsible for the SDGs in the European region and organises the annual European Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.** Information is also provided on the European Union (EU) which is Europe's main regional integration organisation with suggestions for regional advocacy activities for persons with disabilities in Europe.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe was set up in 1947 with the aim of promoting pan-European economic integration and is another one of the UN's five regional commissions. It includes 56 Member States which include those in Europe, but also some from North America and Central and Western Asia.

The role of ECE is to facilitate increased economic integration and cooperation and to promote sustainable development. It seeks to achieve this through creating opportunities for policy discussion, through the negotiation of international legal frameworks, by establishing regulations and norms, through exchanging best practice and technical expertise and providing technical cooperation for countries whose economies are in transition.

The ECE has an overall Executive Committee to which eight Committees report. These Committees are responsible for implementing the main programme of work for the ECE and cover the areas of Economic Cooperation, Environmental Policy, Transport, Statistics, Populations, Sustainable Energy, Trade, Forest and Housing and Land. Overall, the ECE does not work on disability. **Persons with disabilities are not included in the different work themes of the ECE.**

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is convened by ECE and is the primary platform for following up on and reviewing progress against the 2030 Agenda across Europe and its Members States from North America and West Asia. It also coordinates learning from SDG reviews across Members States. The Forum is open to the participation of all relevant stakeholders, including international and regional organisations, civil society, DPOs, academia and the private sector. The first Regional Forum was held in 2016.

The 2019 Regional Forum was attended by over 800 participants from 50 ECE member states, intergovernmental bodies, UN bodies and specialised agencies and other international and national organisations. At the time of completion of this report, the outcome document of the 2019 Regional Forum was not yet published online.

The [outcome document](#) of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (2018) mentioned persons with disabilities 5 times and vulnerable groups twice. There were also no references to leaving no one behind (See **table 4**).

DISABILITIES **(5 times)**	**1**	During the closing remarks made on behalf of civil society EDF's Vice-President stressed a number of key messages coming from the peer learning sessions. He affirmed that civil society was committed to supporting the ECE and Member States: '...in building an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous world, with the ultimate goal of ending poverty, protecting the planet, **including persons with disabilities** and leaving no one behind.' *(Section B Second set of round tables, VI Closing, 34, p.8)*
	2	These comments reiterated the essential need for involvement of civil society in implementation of the sustainable development goals. It was noted that: 'Civil society organisations argued that a rights perspective was necessary in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, so that all groups, including women, **persons with disabilities**, youth, older persons, migrants and others, had their rights upheld.' *(Annex Chair's summary of the discussions, 5, p.9)*
	3	This point noted the importance of data for implementation of the sustainable development goals. It noted that: 'Data should be disaggregated, including by gender, age, geographic area, **disability**, income level and others factors, to track the situation of particular groups, including migrants, **persons with disabilities** and others. *(Annex Chair's summary of the discussions, 16, p.11)*
	4	In reference to SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation it was highlighted that: 'In addition, marginalised population groups such as minorities, rural women, **persons with disabilities**, migrants and refugees require increased attention.' *(Annex Chair's summary of the discussions, 25, p.12)*
	5	Referencing SDG 11 on sustainable cities the discussion noted that: 'Public funding is very limited and therefore should be used for programmes reflecting the needs of the population, including various groups (youth, older persons, families, **persons with disabilities**).' *(Annex Chair's summary of the discussions, 61, p.17)*
VULNERABLE GROUPS **(2 times)**	**1**	With reference to the round table on sustainable energy (SDG 7) it was noted that: 'The use of energy subsidies should be rationalised while exploring alternative ways to protect **vulnerable groups**.' *(Annex Chair's summary of the discussions, 49, p.15)*
	2	In the summary from the round table on sustainable cities (SDG 11) they noted: 'Governments design and implement a variety of programmes to support **vulnerable population groups** that cannot compete in housing markets with more well- off groups." *(Annex Chair's summary of the discussions, 59, p.16)*
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND		This phrase did not appear in the report.

Table 4 Persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups and leave no behind in the outcome document of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development 2018

Civil society participation

The main mechanism through which civil society within the ECE Member State countries can engage with the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is called the Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (RCEM). This is where the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders get to report on their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The RCEM is responsible for coordinating and hosting a review process and for ensuring that the voices of all constituencies are heard in intergovernmental processes at regional and global level.

The RCEM it is entirely owned and driven by civil society. It is regarded as an open, inclusive and flexible mechanism designed to reach the broadest number of CSOs in the region. It currently works with 14 constituencies, which includes the UNs nine Major Groups with the addition of persons with disabilities, diaspora/migrants, LGBTQI, urban poor, older persons and small and medium enterprises.

The RCEM meets prior to the main Regional Forum so that civil society can coordinate all of its key messages and feedback. In 2018 and 2019, there were at least 100 representatives from civil society in attendance. This is the website of the RCEM.

Representation of persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are one of the named constituency groups to have a place within the RCEM. **The European Disability Forum (EDF) coordinates participation of this group.** In 2019, EDF collaborated with the Swiss Federation of the Deaf to strengthen the coordination. In both 2017 and 2018, EDF was the only representative of persons with disabilities to attend the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. In 2019, new organisations from the disability movement participated for the first time at the Regional Forum. The Constituency of Persons with Disabilities also organised a side-event on employment which was very well attended.

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of over 80 million Europeans with disabilities. It was created in 1996 and its secretariat is based in Brussels.

Visit EDF's website: www.edf-feph.org

Regional integration in Europe: the European Union

The European Union is a regional integration organisation comprised of 28 (soon to be 27 when, or if, the United Kingdom leaves) countries that cover much of the continent of Europe. It represents both an economic and political union which grew out of a desire after the Second World War to increase trade and economic interdependence as a way to avoid future conflict. It began in 1958 as the European Economic Community (EEC) with six member countries but expanded to a further 22.

The broad priorities of the EU are set by the European Council which brings together the 28 national leaders (heads states or government). EU citizens are represented at the European Parliament through directly elected MEPs (Members of the European Parliament). The interests of the EU as a whole are promoted by the European Commission, whose members are appointed by national governments. Governments are able to defend their own countries' national interests through the Council of the European Union ('the Council').

With regards to the development and application of laws, the European Commission proposes new laws whilst the Parliament and the Council adopts them. The Commission and member countries then implement legislation, with the Commission ensuring the laws are applied correctly.

The Economic and Social Committee of the EU represents employers' and workers' organisations and civil society in particular, and advises the EU on new law and policy. The Diversity Europe (Group III) is especially responsible for representing the issues of persons with disabilities.

Working with the European Union

The competences of the European Union to adopt laws are defined in its Articles 2 to 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The EU has only the competences conferred on it by these Treaties. This is called the principle of conferral. Under this principle, the EU may only act within the limits of the competences given to it by the EU Member States in the Treaties. The Treaty of Lisbon clarifies the current division of competences between the EU and its Member States. These competences are divided into 3 main categories:

» exclusive competences;
» shared competences; and
» supporting competences.

The EU has **exclusive competence** in certain policy areas. This means that only the EU is able to legislate and adopt binding acts. The Member States are no longer permitted to make their own laws in these areas. **Article 3 of the TFEU defines the following areas as exclusive competences:**

» customs union;
» establishing competition rules necessary for the functioning of the internal market;
» monetary policy for Euro area countries;
» conservation of marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy;
» common commercial policy;
» conclusion of international agreements under certain conditions.

Regarding other policy areas, the EU has **shared competences**. This means that both the EU and Member States can adopt laws, but EU law has primacy over any adopted national law and may override the right to make national laws in the area covered by an EU law. In other words, the Member States can act only if the EU has chosen not to. When the EU has chosen to adopt EU law, Member States have to implement this law. **The competences shared between the EU and Member States are listed in Article 4 TFEU:**

» internal market;
» social policy, but only for aspects specifically defined in the Treaty;
» economic, social and territorial cohesion (regional policy);
» agriculture and fisheries (except conservation of marine biological resources);
» environment;
» consumer protection;
» transport;
» trans-European networks;
» energy;
» area of freedom, security and justice;
» shared safety concerns in public health matters, limited to the aspects defined in the TFEU;
» research, technological development, space;
» development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Supporting competences are defined in Article 6 of the TFEU: the EU can only intervene to support, coordinate or complement the action of EU countries. Legally binding EU acts must not require the harmonisation of EU countries' laws or regulations.

Supporting competences relate to the following policy areas:

» protection and improvement of human health;
» industry;
» culture;
» tourism;
» education, vocational training, youth and sport;
» civil protection;
» administrative cooperation.

In addition to these three main competences, under Article 5 of the TFEU, the EU can take measures to ensure that EU countries coordinate their economic, social and employment policies at EU level.

Member States have given the EU the competence to address disability issues in the Amsterdam Treaty. Article 10 of the TFEU states that in "defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on … disability". Moreover, Article 19 of TFEU states that the EU has the power to act, including adopting legal instruments, to combat discrimination on the grounds of disability. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU adopted in 2000 specifically refer in its article 26 to "Integration of persons with disabilities", stating that the EU "recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community."

The EU has committed itself to implement the SDGs both in its internal and external policies. With regards to each of the Goals of the SDGs, the EU can take several actions, either legislative or non-legislative (research, funding, coordination of Member States' policy, sharing of good practices) in accordance with the competences it has received by the EU Treaties.

Regional advocacy for persons with disabilities

Much of the focus of regional level advocacy is on the EU rather than the ECE because the EU has ratified the CRPD (in December 2010, entry into force in January 2011): the only regional integration organisation so far to have achieved this. Since the EU also has its own Disability Strategy (see **Figure 5**), work is being done on ensuring its implementation and monitoring progress whilst advocating for a new strategy to replace it in 2020-2030. At the same time, since the EU also played an influential role in the negotiations of the 2030 Agenda, work is being done on advocacy for disability inclusive SDGs.

A lot of effort has so far gone into issues around equality, transportation, accessibility, technology, social policies and in international development and humanitarian actions.

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

This is the <u>main policy framework</u> at EU level to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It contains activities in 8 priority policy areas: accessibility, participation, equality, employment, education and training, social protection, health and external action.

A <u>Progress Report</u> presenting the achievements, up to 2016, on the implementation of the Strategy was published in February 2017. It lists some tangible successes and describes the implementation of the UNCRPD by the EU, including within the EU institutions.

Building on the achievements of the current European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, a follow up Strategy 2020-2030 is required, so as to ensure the continued and harmonised implementation of the UN Convention both by the EU and by Member States.

The European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 should:

» **cover all** the provisions of the UNCRPD, with a budget allocated for its implementation and a well-resourced monitoring mechanism;
» **be integrated** into the follow up to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the European Pillar of Social Rights;
» **be in line** with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals;
» **be based** on the 2015 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the EU, and include in its actions the preparations of the second report of the EU to the CRPD Committee;
» **involve all** EU institutions, bodies and agencies, and civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.

Figure 5 EU Disability Strategy

In terms of the SDGs, a key area of focus is on helping the EU to develop an overarching vision and strategy for implementing them. Initially, the EU produced a series of fragmented initiatives with very little guidance for the European Commission or other EU institutions. **In 2017, the Council adopted a new <u>European Consensus on Development</u> (see Figure 6) setting out a new framework for international development cooperation for the EU and its Member States.** This came in direct response to the 2030 Agenda.

EU Consensus on Development

The explicit reference to the rights of persons with disabilities within the EU Consensus on Development symbolises an outstanding improvement for accelerating the implementation of a rights-based approach to development cooperation. Indeed, the previous EU Consensus on development did not provide any real commitments to foster the rights of persons with disabilities within the EU's external actions. By contrast, **the new EU Consensus embraces a rights-based approach that strengthens links between SDGs and the rights of persons with disabilities.**

The seven references to disability in the new EU Consensus for Development are:

» Paragraph 16 on human rights (page 6): "The EU and its Member States will continue to play a key role in ensuring that no one is left behind wherever people live and regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, **disability**, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender identity, migration status or other factors."

» Paragraph 30 on leaving no one behind (page 11): "In line with the principle of leaving no one behind, the EU and its Member States will give special attention to those who are in disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised situations including children, older persons, **persons with disabilities**, LGBTI persons and indigenous peoples."

» Paragraph 31 on disability (page 11): "An estimated one billion people across the globe have a **disability**, of whom 80% live in developing countries. **People with disabilities** are often the poorest in their communities, facing significantly higher levels of stigma and discrimination. The EU and its Member States will take into account the specific needs of **persons with disabilities** in their development cooperation. In line with the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, they will vigorously promote the rights of **persons with disabilities** and take stronger measures to ensure their full inclusion in society and their equal participation in the labour market."

Figure 6 EU Consensus on Development

This has been broadly welcomed by organisations such as EDF. It reinforces the commitment made in the 2030 Agenda, and in the Progress Report on the implementation of the current European Disability Strategy, to engage actively in disability-inclusive development to reach the furthest at risk of marginalisation while promoting, protecting and fulfilling human rights for all. The Consensus is a clear and positive response to the Concluding observations to the EU adopted by the CRPD Committee in 2015, which recommended a "systematic approach to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in all EU international cooperation policies and programmes" and for the EU to "take the lead in the implementation of disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals" (Concluding Observations, page 10).

Entry points for regional advocacy in Europe

» CRPD (the EU and all EU Member States are states parties)
» EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, 2000 (articles 21 on disability based discrimination and 26 on inclusion of persons with disabilities) – all EU legislation and policy should comply with these provisions
» EU Human Rights Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action, 2019
» European Consensus on Development, 2017
» EU SDG Indicator set, 2019
» Spotlight Initiative – to eliminate violence against women and girls, 2018
» Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, 2012 (Article 19 gives the EU the mandate to combat disability-based discrimination)

Support documents for advocacy

» Concluding Observations to the EU (by the CRPD Committee), 2015
» European Disability Strategy, 2010-2020

Box 5 Entry points for regional advocacy in the European region and support documents

Chapter 8

Latin America and the Caribbean

This chapter focuses on the Latin America and Caribbean region with an overview of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the work around persons with disabilities. **ECLAC is the UN Commission that is responsible for the SDGs in the region and organises the annual Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.** Information is also provided on the Organisation of American States which is the main regional integration organisation, with suggestions for regional advocacy activities for persons with disabilities in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC)

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC or CEPAL in Spanish and Portuguese) is a long-standing regional body, set up in 1948 with the aim of helping monitor how Latin American and Caribbean countries are cooperating and engaging with global frameworks. It is one of the five UN regional commissions. ECLAC is comprised of 46 Member States. This includes the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, together with several Asian, European and North American nations that have historical, economic and cultural ties with the region. Also included are 14 associate members which are various non-independent territories, associated island countries and a commonwealth in the Caribbean.

The role of ECLAC is to reinforce economic ties among member countries and with other nations of the world and to promote the region's social development. The ECLAC Secretariat comprises twelve Divisions and a Public Information Unit. The focal point for disability issues is the Social Development Division which has responsibility for following up on everything linked to the CRPD and disability related initiatives and activities. **However, engagement around disability is still minimal since there is no representative committee, policy or plans.**

Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development

Latin America and the Caribbean as a region was generally very proactive during the SDG negotiation phase and many of the 17 SDGs relate directly to key issues in the region. The region has a number of emerging economies which means that whilst they are doing well in economic terms, there are still considerable barriers around social inclusion and equality.

The regional mechanism set up for implementation of the SDGs is the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development. Hosted by ECLAC it is an annual meeting open to a full range of stakeholders from government to civil society, private sector and academia. Its aim is to provide a forum through which share learning, especially through examination of the Voluntary National Reviews and to promote best practice on implementation across the region. The secretariat of ECLAC produces an annual progress report ahead of the Forum which forms a central part of the region's contribution to the HLPF. The first Forum was held in Mexico in 2017. Prior to the Forums, ECLAC hosts a civil society consultation meeting which provides the opportunity for CSOs to provide inputs into discussions around regional progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

The 2018 Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was attended by participants comprising governments from 29 ECLAC

Member States, intergovernmental bodies, UN bodies and specialised agencies and other international and national organisations.

The outcome document of the 2018 Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development mentioned persons with disabilities twice and vulnerable groups three times. There were also six references to leaving no one behind (See **table 5**).

Civil society representation

Since the first Forum on Sustainable Development only took place in 2017 the whole mechanism is relatively new. CSOs were invited to the first Forum but only as participants - there was no engagement with the sector in advance and therefore no opportunity to influence the agenda. During that first Forum, CSOs came together to make it known to ECLAC that in the future, they needed a real voice. ECLAC generally welcomed this feedback and between 2017 and 2018 CSOs worked hard to get organised and mobilised with DPOs in pushing forward on a CSO monitoring mechanism. However, this was not an easy process because the CSO space is extremely crowded. There are a lot of very significant issues and stakeholders who hold quite different agendas and interests. But, by 2018, a mechanism was agreed by consensus.

In the future, CSOs will be active in the agenda setting and holding of Member States to account for progress on the SDGs. **A key part of this will be to ensure persons with disabilities have a genuine opportunity to hold governments to account for inclusive implementation of the SDGs.** It will help to provide for more dialogue with UN agencies that are active in the region, as well as national governments.

Representation of persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are one of 13 named groups which will have representation in the new civil society mechanism.

DISABILITIES (2 times)	**1**	There is just one reference to persons with disabilities in the main report which comes in relation to a discussion on social protection. It notes that: 'Unemployment rates for women, indigenous and Afro descendent peoples and **persons with disabilities** in the region were very high and inclusive social policies were necessary to promote formal work and adequate income levels for all.' *(Section C. Agenda item 5 on the Regional Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda...62, p.18)*
	2	A summary of the peer learning session on participatory approaches noted that discussions took place on how to open spaces for dialogue. It mentioned that creation of the civil society engagement mechanism had: '.... helped ensure the visibility of women, children, **persons with disabilities**, indigenous peoples and Afrodescendents.' *(Annex 2. Presentation of the Second annual report on regional progress and challenges in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Peer learning session, p.36)*
VULNERABLE GROUPS (3 times)	**1**	In the same section describing discussions related to social protection, the report notes: 'Affirmative action policies were needed to achieve change and to support specific **vulnerable groups**.' *(Section C. Agenda item 5 on the Regional Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda...62, p.18)*
	2	In a contribution started by a representative of the Latin American Blind Union in relation to the proposed mechanism for civil society participation in the Forum, it was noted that: '...progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region had been limited and (she) denounced the constant attacks on democracy and human rights defenders, public-private partnerships that exploited natural resources, and violations of the rights of the **most vulnerable groups**. *(Section C. Agenda item 6 on multi-stakeholder contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. 68, p.19)*
	3	The Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico noted: '...the lack of opportunities for young people, women and the **most vulnerable groups**, inequality and public policy inertias', in their closing remarks. *(Closing Ceremony. 99, p.27)*

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND **(6 times)**	**1**	The Director General for Global Affairs of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico remarked that: 'The second meeting of the Forum provided an opportunity to discuss common targets, share good practices and benefit from peer-to-peer learning. Words must be translated into concrete actions and strategies in order to **leave no one behind**, by strengthening institutions, linking economic growth and trade to sustainable development, using technology and innovation to improve living conditions and mobilising public and private resources.' *(Section C. Summary of Proceedings. 14, p.5)*
	2	During this panel discussion participants discussed the need for high quality, reliable and comparable data. It was emphasised this data should be: '...disaggregated, in order to **leave no one behind** and have broad statistics to identify the sectors that were lagging furthest behind.' *(Section C. Panel 3 Platforms for follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals. 41, p.12)*
	3	The Director of International Cooperation and Development Policy of the European Commission described the working of the multi-stakeholder platform to help coordinate work by different EU agencies. They noted that: 'The new European Consensus on Development, adopted in 2017, was based on five fundamental principles in order to **leave no one behind**: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.' *(Section C. Agenda item 4 on LAC and European interregional dialogue on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. 51, p.15)*
	4	In the final communication agreed by the Forum is was stressed that there is: '...need to take all measures necessary in order to **leave no one behind**, while respecting and promoting all human rights for all, including social protection and equal access to quality essential public services for all,' *(Annex 1. Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. 9, p30)*
	5	It also acknowledged the contribution of ECLAC and the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in the region to the indicators of the region in the second report: '… welcome the results of the 9th Statistical Conference of the Americas and its important contribution to advance in the generation of disaggregated, accessible, timely and reliable data, in order to identify inequalities and needs of the most vulnerable, ensuring that **no one is left behind**,' *(Annex 1. Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. 14, p31)*
	6	And it committed to ensuring that ECLAC plays its role in the regional dimension of implementing the 2030 Agenda and urged the Commission: '...to fully engage in the Secretary General's initiative to revamp the regional assets in benefit of country-led processes and increase, within its mandates, regional initiatives to **leave no one behind**,' *(Annex 1. Intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. 15, p31)*

Table 5 Persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups and leave no behind in the key messages of Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development 2018

Regional integration in the Americas: The Organisation of American States

The Organisation of American States (OAS) is the oldest regional organisation in the world. It began in the 1890s as a way to promote regional cooperation but was officially recognised by Charter in 1948. The OAS is comprised of 35 Member States across the Americas and has permanent observer status to the EU. It has 4 main pillars: democracy, human rights, security and development. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights takes responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights across the region.

Working with the Organisation of American States

The work of the General Secretariat of the OAS is carried out through seven Secretariats linked to issues such as social development, human rights, democracy, security and finance. **There is a department for social inclusion at the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity which has responsibility for following up on issues related to disability.** Specifically, this happens at the department of social development and employment and disability (DSDE). This department has responsibility for promoting two key normative instruments within the OAS on disability: The inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, 2006-2016 (PAD).

The Inter-American convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities (1999) was adopted at the 29th Session of the General Assembly of the OAS and calls for the full integration of persons with disabilities in society via legislation, activities and educational programmes. It came into force in 2001 and since it predates the CRPD, it is not fully compliant. For example, the definition of disability is not aligned to the CRPD, although it does recognise discrimination based on exclusion and restrictions that result from disabilities. However, there is nothing specific around women or children or other issues. It tends to treat persons with disabilities as a homogenous group.

The Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (2006-2016) came about as a political commitment to operationalise the Inter-American Convention around six years after it came into force. OAS Member States at the time felt it was important to create PAD as a way to reiterate their original commitments and provide more opportunities for putting the sentiments into action. There is very little up to date information about PAD or any other disability related issues, accessible from the OAS website.

Regional advocacy for persons with disabilities

Since SDGs come into force, progress has not been as good as it might have been anticipated given the region's presence during negotiations. A considerable challenge faced by the region and by The Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS) is the high degree of diversity that exists between countries. In Brazil for example, there are a lot of issues with inequality and income poverty and the inclusion of minority groups. In Central America, countries have more issues around indigenous populations and internal migration, whilst Mexico has a lot of issues linked to drug trafficking.

The Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS) is a network formed by organizations of persons with disabilities from 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Formed in 2002, RIADIS represents national DPOs as well as several NGOs acting as technical collaborators.

Visit RIADIS's website: www.riadis.org

At the National level, governments are less clear on how to implement the SDGs effectively. The lack of guidance from the UN has made it challenging for some governments to understand what they need to be doing. There is also the tendency within the region to sign up to international treaties and tools quite readily but without that translating into the necessary internal legal reforms for implementation. Many Latin American countries were quick to ratify the CRPD, but this has not been followed through with the necessary financial or technical capacity for implementation. The same issue is apparent with the SDGs. So, key issues to follow up are around domestication of the CRPD into national legal frameworks and considerably more work to raise awareness around disability rights.

So far 16 out of 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries have submitted VNRs to the HLPF, which is a relatively high number (Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua are yet to submit). Mexico, Uruguay and Colombia have reported twice with others to follow. Despite a willingness to engage in this reporting mechanism, the reports tend to ignore key social issues. Whilst they do cover social and economic dimensions, and some vulnerable groups like women and young people are considered, persons with

disabilities tend not to be well represented. So far, only Paraguay has reflected a human rights dimension within its national development plan, committing to equality of opportunities and engaging with all vulnerable groups. There is an online platform for reporting progress against treaty recommendations which people can access and in the near future, it will provide the same opportunity for reporting on SDG implementation.

Overall, there is very little understanding on the SDGs amongst CSOs, not just those within the disability sector, so considerably more efforts have to go into raising awareness.

A key issue raised by the disability sector currently, is the lack of accessible material relating to national development plans. Most national plans are not produced in accessible formats such as braille, large print or sign language and key websites are often not accessible. Only Ecuador, Colombia and Mexico provide easy read versions of their national plans. All of these are a significant barrier to engagement and participation of persons with disabilities in the region.

Chapter 9

Step-by-step guide to create a strong regional Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities

In this chapter, we outline a suggested guide for engagement in SDGs processes at the regional level.

This guide is mainly addressed to disability focal points, within each Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. **Its objective is to ensure the meaningful and active** participation of DPOs at the UN Regional Sustainable Development Forums. It should help to forge action-oriented partnerships, since DPOs can use regional forums for networking and advocacy, sharing national-level experiences, and conducting bilateral meetings with governments. Often DPOs at the regional level can contribute to the regional SDGs and disability plans and raise awareness on issues related to persons with disabilities. This, in turn, can create change at the national level.

1. **Identify and build a database of DPOs and disability advocates from the region**
   a. Reach out and connect with your regional DPO networks and national umbrella DPOs in the region.
   b. Ensure inclusion and accessibility for all persons with disabilities
   c. Make sure to keep this network open and transparent to allow for more people to connect and to be added.
   d. Create a list, where you send information and where you exchange messages, create joint advocacy messages.

2. **Set up a platform for the constituency of persons with disabilities**
   a. Build a Terms of Reference with term limits for focal points.
   b. Share information on participation and ways to engage.
   c. Provide rules and guidelines for engagement.

3. **Set up a platform for information sharing and exchange**
   a. Have periodic calls and/or webinars.
   b. Disseminate information on registration of events and webinars.
   c. Build partnerships and learn from one another.

4. **Identify the UN Sustainable Development focal point for stakeholders in the regional commission.**
   a. Remember that the UN is mandated to support SDG implementation.
   b. Meet with the focal point to:
      i. Introduce yourselves as the representative of the regional disability constituency
      ii. Learn about relevant events,
      iii. Inquire about engagement opportunities, such as contributing to the regional sustainable development forum's outcome report, and
      iv. Share joint advocacy messages
      v. Make sure to share everything relevant with your constituency.

5. **Identify and connect with the civil society mechanism that engages with the regional sustainable development forum (may or not exist)**
   a. Attend the civil society mechanism meetings to create a broader coalition and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

b. Co-organise events with other civil society organisations for broad dissemination of key messages.

c. Contribute to the civil society position papers to ensure persons with disabilities are meaningfully included and represented.

6. **Identify opportunities for engagement and share with your constituency**

   a. Coordinate the contribution to regional reports and submissions.

   b. Coordinate the composition of shadow or parallel reports.

   c. Share applications for UN funding opportunities.

   d. Share application to have a side event and information booths at relevant events.

   e. Share opportunities about how to attend regional forums and pre-meetings called civil society forums.

7. **Define and develop regional position papers on SDG implementation**

   a. Work together with other regional DPOs on SDG implementation.

   b. Set up a meeting with other DPOs to establish collaboration towards developing an SDG implementation paper incorporating the different countries of the region.

   c. Include disability rights NGOs and development NGOs working on disability rights and disability-inclusive development into these discussions.

   d. Develop a joint regional position paper regarding key priorities for persons with disabilities.

   e. Use social networks, listservs and media to promote the position paper and joint advocacy messages.

8. **Participate in the regional sustainable development forums**

   a. Locate your regional UN Headquarters.

   b. Follow the information posted on the regional UN websites, in particular, announcements of future Sustainable Development Forum meetings.

   c. Keep updated on listservs and websites for announcements regarding UN funding to participate in the forums, and then apply.

   d. Register for the sustainable development forum and the civil society forum (when applicable).

   e. Organise a disability-focused preparatory meeting before the sustainable development forum and civil society forum.

   f. Inquire how to contribute to the forum's outcome report.

   g. Engage in preparatory processes and aim to secure a speaking role.

9. **Follow up on outcomes following the forum**

   a. Prepare a position paper highlighting issues addressed and left out of the forum's outcome report and share with key actors.

   b. Find out if an HLPF follow-up dialogue is planned in the region.

   c. Reconnect with civil society in the regional and propose to establish a follow-up mechanism.

   d. Advocate to establish synergy with other existing regional follow-up or review mechanisms.

Conclusion

This project report explored regional level advocacy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the regional implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the CRPD. **The content showcased the important work undertaken in each region of the world by the disability movement and the regional DPOs, in particular, to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities.** The chapters highlighted the different mechanisms and the complexity of our influencing work.

Overall, it is necessary for the regional DPOs and the disability movement to ensure a continued dialogue to strengthen our national, regional and global advocacy action. By working together, we will be able to create a stronger action, which will in turn influence the implementation and monitoring of both the CRPD and the SDGs.

This project report is a living document. It was a first attempt to bring together the multitude of ongoing work at the regional level, provide an overview as well as a better understanding of the regional forums and regional integrations. This project report would benefit from being reviewed and deepen. **For instance, an updated version could include the following:**

» An analysis of all the 2019 outcome documents for each regional forum. At the time of the completion of this report, the only one available was for Asia-Pacific.
» An analysis of the 2019 outcome document's recommendations for each regional forum, to understand their relevance within the disability movement.
» The key asks for common regional mechanism and stronger advocacy to feed into the review of A/RES/67/290 (Format and organisational aspects of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development)
» A suggested template for the creation of regional disability constituency's terms of references. Each region has a Constituency of Persons with Disabilities but their terms of reference have not been formulated yet. It should be based on the terms of reference of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities.
» An update of chapter 9 (Step-by-step guide to create a strong regional Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities), with links, suggestions, listserv and funding streams adapted to each region covered in this project report.

Annex 1 – Campaign on the "Good treatment of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities"

THE 10 PRINCIPLES

10 PRINCIPLES

for my protection, well-being and development as a girl, boy or adolescent with disabilities

I EXIST AS I AM AND I AM A PERSON JUST LIKE YOU.

I LIKE THAT YOU ARE KIND, YOU LOVE ME AND PLAY WITH ME.

I LIKE THAT YOU TAKE CARE OF ME, PROTECT ME AND TEACH ME HOW TO PROTECT MYSELF.

I WANT YOU TO ACCEPT ME AS I AM, HELP ME DEVELOP MY ABILITIES AND TALENTS AND GIVE ME A GOOD QUALITY EDUCATION.

I LIKE THAT YOU LISTEN TO ME, EXPLAIN TO ME WHAT IS HAPPENING AND CONSIDER MY OPINION.

I LIKE THAT YOU BELIEVE IN ME AND HELP ME GROW.

I LIKE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND ME, SUPPORT ME AND REASSURE ME WHEN I AM UPSET, ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED.

I LIKE IT WHEN YOU INCLUDE ME.

I WANT YOU TO RESPECT ME AND PROTECT ME FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE EVERYWHERE AND UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT MATTERS TO ME THAT YOU BELIEVE ME.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHELLE KORYZMA   DESIGN BY ROMINA SANDROCK

United Nations

Disability Accessibility
Special Envoy
UN-SG