

Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Message from Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

3 December 2020

Greetings. I'm grateful to the Bureau of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention for its invitation, on this day when we celebrate persons with disabilities as a vital part of human diversity.

These are challenging times.

We need to redouble our efforts and collectively mobilize to make sure that, in the COVID19 recovery phase, we make sure that persons with disabilities are at the front.

We have lost many lives among persons with disabilities because of the health emergency. We must not lose more to the socio-economic impact.

Persons with disabilities are important agents of change and development – and by excluding them, we all suffer.

Friends,

The UN Human Rights Office has been active in the design of a disability-inclusive development agenda. In 2015, we foresaw the need to bridge gaps to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals would deliver for persons with disabilities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

To this end, and with the support of the European Union, I am happy to inform you that my Office has developed an SDG-CRPD resource package. It includes policy guidelines, training materials and human rights indicators to support SDG implementation and monitoring, guided by the Convention.

I hope these tools will enable every policy-maker to contribute to an inclusive world one that values persons with disabilities and their experiences, and one which works to respond to their needs and uphold rights in the practical everyday.

Persons with disabilities, Governments and the UN system have the power to change the lives of our communities. I encourage you to use this resource package to guide your work: Let's make disability-inclusive societies!

My Office stands ready to support you in this challenging task of designing better and inclusive societies that give every person a place to contribute.

Excellencies,

Recent news about vaccine developments are a deeply welcome example of human ingenuity and progress, and we cannot allow persons with disabilities to be left behind – yet again when it comes to vaccine distribution. In the here and now, we need to take a hard look at ways this pandemic has impacted this group.

Persons with disabilities in institutional settings have suffered disproportionately severe COVID outcomes, including deaths – well beyond their expected impact from any underlying health conditions.

We need to prioritize those with disabilities – in these settings, and beyond. Only then we will be able to deliver fairly on our promise to leave no one behind

I call on States Parties to examine the underlying social determinants of the health of persons with disabilities, who may, for example, be overexposed to human contact due to support requirements.

I ask our sister UN entities and development institutions to monitor the situation in countries, making sure that every dollar that is spent also addresses the situation of persons with disabilities.

Regarding disability inclusion, my Office is keen to work with the UN family in order to improve our performance— and I am happy to inform you that the Office will be adopting a new disability rights strategy.

There is so much more to do to promote the human rights of people with disabilities – beginning with raising public awareness, so that mindsets can change. I'm very glad that we will be working with the International Paralympic Committee, all over the world, to ensure stronger disability awareness.

Finally, Excellencies, let's celebrate our colleagues, friends and leaders with disabilities, and their contributions to a better world.

I thank you.