



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UN NEW YORK



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Concept Note

Sponsor Government of Malta, Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum

Side Meeting Developing and Promoting Implementation of the UNCRPD and Disability Rights across the Commonwealth

Tuesday 11th June 4.45pm Room 12

Supported by UKFCDO,

Welcome Permanent Mission Malta

Chaired Sarah Kamau Chair CDPF, Kenya

Speakers include

Sruti Mohaptara Vice Chair CDPF, India (recorded)

Abia Akram, Step, Pakistan

Richard Rieser General Secretary CDPF UK

Commonwealth Secretariat Assistant Secretary Professor Luis Franceschi

Representatives of Malta Government Minister Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli, Minister for Inclusion

Diana Dalton Head of Equalities UKFCDO

Representative Children and Young People with Disability Australia - Daniel Munter

The meeting will address the gains that have been made in developing support for and that will be made if the Action Plan is adopted and the Action Points and how they will be implemented across the 56 countries of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum (CDPF) is proposing and lobbying for Commonwealth member states to adopt a covering Articles and Action Points at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa, October 2024.

The CDPF has over 100 Disabled People led organisations in membership, in 49 Commonwealth countries, with a representative elected Executive Committee. We seek to gain Equality for all the estimated 430 million disabled citizens of the Commonwealth and help member countries to fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UNCRPD (2006).

Based on the CDPF experience of working across Commonwealth countries and

within the Commonwealth, attending CHOGM, Forums, Ministerial Meetings and Commonwealth Secretariat events, we have formed the view that disabled people are poorly served in terms of access, equality, inclusion and voice. While we recognise that CHOGM communiqués in 2018 and 2022 have mentioned the UNCRPD and its implementation and challenging stigma, we have not witnessed any serious attempts to take forward the disability rights agenda across the Commonwealth.

It is 18 years since the UNCRPD was adopted at the United Nations. All but Tonga of our 56 member countries have now ratified the UNCRPD.

The implementation of the UNCRPD requires a root and branch change in the way disability is viewed across our countries. The Convention takes to a new height the movement from the treatment of persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent, as well as being active members of society. The Convention gives universal recognition to the dignity of persons with disabilities.

Impairment has been with us as long as there have been human beings. It is society’s response that has to change to ensure full implementation and equality for all persons with disabilities.

Called a paradigm shift, the UNCRPD requires countries to view persons with disabilities, including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society, on an equal basis with others. (Article 2)

Accessibility is addressed on its own in Article 9 and is also a guiding principle of the Convention. This Convention marks the first time that the concept of accessibility is mentioned in an international human rights instrument. The extremely comprehensive way it is conceived in the Convention represents a large step forward in the evolution of thinking in development and disability.

If the Commonwealth at CHOGM 2024 adopts the Action Plan it will provide ways to collaborate across countries on taking forward the implementation of full rights for persons with disabilities, who have not been mentioned in the Commonwealth Charter and other declarations.

The theme of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa in October 2024 is “One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Commonwealth” looks at the core pillars of the Commonwealth through a resilience lens and aims at strengthening

- Resilient democratic institutions upholding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The Action Plan provides a strong commitment and realistic proposals for achieving human rights, democratic involvement and application of the rule of law for persons with disabilities, who have largely been excluded or overlooked in these areas.
- A resilient environment to combat climate change. Vital for the future of all of us, but persons with disabilities have been shown to be between 2 and 3 times more at risk in emergency situations and will find it harder to adapt to changing climate and environmental conditions.
- Resilient economies that support recovery and prosperity. Persons with disabilities, especially women, continue to be excluded at much higher rates from employment and livelihood opportunities, creating a huge loss of GDP from every country.
- Resilient societies to empower individuals for a peaceful and productive life. Continuing stigma, discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities must be tackled systematically to achieve this pillar.

The Action Plan defines terms and draws upon the UNCRPD, while the Action Points identify a series of actions that will take the implementation of the UNCRPD in each country and across the Commonwealth as a whole, forward in a step change. It will allow for the exchange of experiences, focus on gathering disaggregated statistics, provide training and coordination of expertise and raise the profile of disability rights for all Commonwealth citizens. If adopted the Disability Inclusive Action Plan will introduce across the Commonwealth of 56 states covering **two/fifths of the world population** the following initiatives:-

- A. That within 2 years of this agreement CHOGM agree to hold a meeting of Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for Disability to consider and share experiences on its implementation with a view to this becoming a regular Commonwealth event;
- B. To gather disaggregated statistics in line with the Washington Group questions and protocols in Census, Household Surveys and other statistical activities;
- C. To agree to collaborate in setting up a Commonwealth Country Dashboard on progress on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and implementation of the UNCRPD;
- D. Commonwealth Secretariat will support country members and civil society organisations in the reporting requirements to the UN CRPD Committee in Geneva;

- E. For ongoing collaboration in expertise and financial assistance between member countries, especially between those more economically developed and the rest to develop implementation of the UNCRPD and disability equality;
- F. To ensure that reasonable accommodations over access to buildings, access to information and accommodation is increasingly built into the planning of Commonwealth events;
- G. Over time, developing a pool of Disability Equality Trainers and Access Auditors, within and between Commonwealth countries to facilitate Disability Equality Training and Access Audits of buildings and infra-structure;
- H. Agree to developing the capacity to run systematic Disability Equality Training for Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Civil Servants, Advisors and Non-Governmental Organizations;
- I. To run all Development Plans through the requirements of the UNCRPD and the need for disability equality;
- J. To increase the number and seniority of persons with disabilities employed in the Governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat;
- K. To work with the private sector to develop cheap and effective assistive devices & technology and ensure its distribution to those who would benefit most;
- L. To develop inter-country training and exchange of technicians who are able to develop the necessary competency to utilize such devices;
- M. To implement the UNCRPD the Commonwealth should give priority to collaborate in developing Inclusive Education, Health Care, Work opportunities for persons with disabilities and supporting measures that will enable persons with disabilities to take part in elections and stand for office.
- N. Set up a Commonwealth Disability Advisory Committee with representation from DPOs in the Regions, CDPF, Reps of State Parties, Commonwealth UNCRPD Committee Members and others relevant.

CDPF Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Discussions are under way with donors to set up a Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Fund to support the above initiatives.

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