



Side event in the margins of the 19th Conference of State Parties to the CRPD (COSP19)

Sustainable Peace is Inclusive: Persons with Disabilities as Contributors to Peace Processes

Wednesday 10 June 2026, 1:15–2:30 PM, Conference Room 11, UNHQ, New York

Live stream on UN Web TV [via this link](#)

Closed captioning and sign language interpretation

Achieving sustainable peace requires an inclusive approach. Persons with disabilities may represent as much as 30 per cent of the population in conflict-affected settings and continue to be disproportionately impacted by violence, displacement and exclusion. At the same time, their active contributions to peacebuilding remain widely overlooked.

This event, organized by the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN, the Abilis Foundation, and the Permanent Mission of Türkiye to the UN, will discuss the challenges and the opportunities of strengthened participation of persons with disabilities in peace processes. With insights from the UN system, civil society organizations and the UN Member States, the event seeks to provide best practices and recommendations for more inclusive—and therefore more sustainable—peace processes. The landmark UN Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) affirmed the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict recognizing their critical role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In addition, the resolution called for the meaningful participation and representation of persons with disabilities in peace processes.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities doesn't only guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including in armed conflict (art. 11), but it also obliges States to closely consult and actively involve persons with disabilities in decision-making processes affecting them (art. 4), guarantees persons with disabilities their participation in political and public life (art. 29) and strengthens international cooperation to support these obligations (art. 32)—principles that together provide a normative foundation for including persons with disabilities as active participants in peace and decision-making processes.

The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) supports the normative framework by requiring all UN actors to mainstream disability inclusion across all work of the UN and the entire peace continuum, i.e. from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Despite this normative framework, participation of persons with disabilities in peace efforts remains limited, and implementation gaps persist. Advancing disability inclusion requires mediators and peacebuilding actors to move from awareness to practice. It is essential to share best practices and lessons learned to create mechanisms of meaningful inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities into peace mediation and peacebuilding. Local organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) are essential partners in this work.

By operationalizing the commitments of the UN Security Council Resolution 2475, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UNDIS framework, and by recognizing persons with disabilities not only as right-holders but as full and effective participants and essential contributors to peace, the international community can build more just, resilient, and inclusive societies, and more sustainable peace.

Programme



Opening remarks: H.E. Ms. Outi Holopainen, Vice-Minister, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Security Policy, Finland



Opening remarks: Representative of Türkiye



Key note: H.E. Ms. Hind Kabawat, Minister for Social Affairs and Labor, Syrian Arab Republic



Key note: Ms. Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities

Panel discussion



Panelist: Mr. Abdus Sattar Dulal, President of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI)



Panelist: Mr. Brian James Williams, Chief, Peacebuilding Fund, Peacebuilding and Peace Support Office, the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO)



Panelist: Professor Janet E. Lord, Executive Director at the Center for International and Comparative Law in University of Baltimore; Senior Fellow at the Harvard Project on Disability



Panelist: Mr. Idriss Maiga Alzouma, President of the African Disability Forum



Moderator: Ms. Amu Urhonen, Chairperson of the Abilis Foundation

Questions and comments from the audience

Speakers

H.E. Ms. Outi Holopainen, Vice-Minister, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Security Policy of Finland is the Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Security Policy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland since September 2023. Before taking up her current position, Holopainen served as the Ambassador of Finland to Ethiopia, also accredited to Djibouti, South Sudan, African Union, IGAD and UNECA (2020-2023). Prior to that Holopainen has served as the Inspector General for the Finnish Foreign Service (2016-2020) and as the Ambassador of Finland to Portugal, also accredited to Cabo Verde (2013-2016).

H.E. Hind Aboud Kabawat, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor in the Syrian Arab Republic, as of March 29, 2025. As Minister, she has led reforms in social protection, labor laws, care institutions, and programs supporting vulnerable groups, rural women, and small-scale entrepreneurs. She previously served as Deputy Head of the Syrian Negotiation Commission in Geneva (2015–2017), taught at George Mason University, and founded Tastakel, a Syrian peacebuilding and education organization. She also served as a Visiting Fellow at Harvard Law School's Negotiation Program. Recognized for her commitment to social justice, peacebuilding, and institutional reform, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Damascus, a Certificate in Conflict Resolution and Arbitration from the University of Toronto, and a Master's degree in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Ms. Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2023. A sociologist by training, she is an advocate, an international disability consultant, and a researcher on the rights of persons with disabilities with an extensive experience in Egypt, the Arab Region, and worldwide. She was notably a representative of women with disabilities that participated in the drafting of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In Egypt, Hagrass promoted the rights of persons with disabilities in legislative reforms as Member of Parliament between 2015 and 2020 and served as the Secretary General of the National Council for Disability Affairs.

Janet E. Lord, Executive Director at the Center of International and Comparative Law in University of Baltimore and Senior Fellow at the Harvard Project on Disability, has spent her career as an international human rights lawyer working globally to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. As lead drafter of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and former senior legal counsel for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she has shaped law reform in dozens of countries to advance disability rights, has taught and engaged in research on human rights and disability, and has provided counsel on inclusive development for the World Bank, the United Nations, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State of the United States and numerous other bilateral and multilateral donors. She holds degrees from Kenyon College, the University of Edinburgh (Scotland), and the George Washington University Law School. In 2022, she was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws by Kenyon College for her work in advancing international disability rights and disability inclusive development.

Mr. Brian James Williams, Chief, Peacebuilding Fund, Peacebuilding and Peace Support Office, the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) served in 2021 in the United Nations Development Coordination Office as the ad interim Chief of Policy and Programming. From 2015 to mid-2020 he served as UN Resident Coordinator in Albania. From 2010-2015 he was the Chief of the Peacebuilding Fund in the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and from 2001 to 2008 he worked on the global HIV crisis, as UNAIDS Coordinator in Myanmar and in Geneva headquarters. Williams has lived in and worked on humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. He has worked with the UN, USAID, CARE International, and the International Rescue Committee.

Mr. Abdus Sattar Dulal, President of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), is one of the pioneers of the disability movement in Bangladesh and internationally. In 1985, he founded Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity (BPKS), promoting the importance of Disabled People's Organization (DPOs) as the safeguard for the human rights, participation in the mainstream and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Dulal pioneered the concept of "Persons with Disabilities Self-initiative to Development" (PSID), an innovative process of raising the confidence of persons with disabilities and providing them with startup support.

Mr. Idriss Maïga Alzouma, President of the African Disability Forum, is also the representative of Africa at the board of International Disability Alliance and committed to the voluntary movement of people with disabilities since the 2000s. As a young jobseeker, he fought to have the State of Niger recruiting graduates with disabilities, after Niger ratified the CRPD. Mr. Idriss Maïga Alzouma became the President of the West African Federation of Disabled (WAFOD) in December 2011 and is currently in his second term.

Ms. Amu Urhonen, Chairperson of the Abilis Foundation has worked as a disability rights advisor for several Finnish NGOs, academic research projects and public sector and internationally in IFRC. She has been and is active in OSCE, and human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Finnish Human Rights League. She has published a pamphlet about disability politics and written articles about e.g. employment and political participation of persons with disability. Currently, she is working on recommendations about inclusion of persons with disabilities in peace work and consults other organisations about disability rights.

