

Side Event to the 13th Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



Inclusive education – a key driver for empowering persons with disabilities

Background

Persons with disabilities represent more than one billion people or approximately 15 per cent of the world's population. While a significant progress has been achieved in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities before COVID 19, many still faced a wide range of barriers to access quality and inclusive education. In the context of the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) which calls upon education systems 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', now when a quarter of billion children are out of school, including almost 50% of children with disabilities, it is crucial to uphold this commitment and take urgent action.

This is even more relevant that now the world has experienced a historic disruption of education due to COVID 19, with 1.6 billion children out of school during the peak of the pandemic. In this context, learners with disabilities were disproportionately affected and are at risk of being left behind. This is especially the case for girls with disabilities who are among the most marginalized due to social and gender norms and bias around both disability and gender.

The UNESCO 2020 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report *All means all* addresses the theme of inclusion and education. The Report reminds us that, no matter what argument may be built to the contrary, we have a moral imperative to ensure *every* child has a right to an appropriate education of high quality. The report builds on SDG 4, CRPD article 24, and General Comment 4, and spells out what inclusive education looks like and the steps to achieve it. It calls for education to be built for all, not a few, and provides policy makers with 10 recommendations for the 10 years left in the Decade of Action before the deadline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Co-hosted by the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations, Inclusion International and the GEM Report, the side-event will examine the findings and recommendations of the 2020 GEM Report and the growing momentum across the disability movement to adopt a comprehensive definition of inclusive education to achieve SDG 4. The event will provide a platform to share insights into how the Report is driving advocacy efforts

of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and what future actions need to happen to bring about lasting policy change.

Objectives

The objectives of this side-event will be to provide a platform to discuss the following themes:

- Share perspectives from governments and civil society organizations on efforts to foster inclusion and education and ensure these are central to COVID-19 education responses;
- Highlight the catalytic effect that the 2020 GEM Report has had on advocacy efforts of persons with disabilities towards achieving inclusive education at national and community level;
- Provide an overview on the GEM Report 2020 and its two complementary regional reports produced in collaboration with regional partners. The reports on inclusion and education in Latin America and the Caribbean (published in November 2020) and a forthcoming one on Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (February 2021). Focusing on how the reports can inform organizations advocacy strategies at the national and regional level.

Format

The side-event will be held online, and it will take the form of a panel discussion. Subject to decision of the COSP Bureau, the side-event is intended to be held on **Tuesday 1 December at 11.30am.**

The event of a duration of 1.15 hour will include panelist presentations and interactive debate with the audience. Live captioning and sign language interpretation will be provided.

Speakers

Opening Remarks: - Ambassador Duarte Lopes, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations – 3/4 minutes (and Permanent Mission of Ghana, TBC – 3/4 minutes)

Moderator: - Sue Swenson, President, Inclusion International – 5 minutes

Panelists:

- **Gerard Quinn** (TBC), UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities – 7 minutes
- **Manos Antoninis**, Director, Global Education Monitoring Report – 7
- **Laura Ximena González Varela**, Self-Advocate, ASDOWN Colombia, Inclusion International – 5 minutes + 5 minutes for interpretation
- **Diane Richler**, Chair, Catalyst for Inclusive Education – 5 minutes
- **Julia McGeown**, IDDC/Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD) Member – 5 minutes
- **IDA Inclusive Education Task Team Representative** – 5 minutes

Closing Remarks: Moderator, Sue Swenson, President, Inclusion International – 4/5 minutes