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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*

**Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific:
social development****Report on the seventh session of the Working Group on
the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities,
2013–2022****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, held its seventh session online on 8 and 9 December 2021.

The Working Group was established in 2013 to provide technical advice and support for the full and effective implementation of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

During its seventh session, the Working Group reviewed progress made since its sixth session on the implementation of the Incheon Strategy, with a particular focus on goal 2 on inclusive political participation of persons with disabilities, goal 5 on early intervention and inclusive education and goal 9 on harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also facilitated discussions on present actions and potential initiatives to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and on the preparatory process for the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022. It adopted a set of recommendations to support the implementation of the Incheon Strategy towards the conclusion of the Decade.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific may wish to consider the report of the Working Group with a view to providing guidance on the implementation of the Incheon Strategy.

* ESCAP/78/L.1/Rev.1.

I. Recommendations

1. During discussions at its seventh session, the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, made the following recommendations.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and persons with disabilities

2. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members¹ to strengthen the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities, including through collaboration with development partners, to address the diverse needs of persons with disabilities during the pandemic and beyond.

3. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to incorporate a gender perspective in understanding the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on persons with disabilities and make particular efforts to address the barriers faced by women with diverse disabilities in the context of the pandemic.

4. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to enhance the accessibility of facilities, services and information with a view to mainstreaming disability inclusion into COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

5. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to ensure continued access of persons with disabilities to goods and services, employment opportunities and social protection schemes, including through digital and remote service delivery modalities.

Inclusive political participation of persons with disabilities

6. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to adopt appropriate legislation and policies, including affirmative action such as quota systems, to promote the participation of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, in parliament.

7. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to facilitate their participation in political and public affairs, including voting processes.

8. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to promote reserved seats in parliament for politicians with disabilities to ensure equal participation of persons with and without disabilities.

Early identification, intervention and inclusive education

9. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to strengthen multisectoral collaboration to increase access of children with disabilities to early identification and intervention and inclusive education.

10. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, families of children with disabilities, schools and other stakeholders, in an

¹ The term “members and associate members” in the present document refers to all members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which are listed in full at www.unescap.org/about/member-states.

effective manner, in matters related to early identification and intervention and inclusive education.

11. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to develop inclusive and accessible curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and learning materials and to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all while improving the accessibility of school facilities.

12. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to enhance pre-service and in-service training on inclusive education to equip teachers and school management bodies with skills and knowledge in educating children with diverse disabilities.

Harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

13. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to develop and amend national legislation after a thorough review of laws in all areas covered by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

14. The Working Group further recommended that the secretariat provide technical guidance and support to member States in their implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Resource mobilization

15. The Working Group encouraged members and associated members as well as other donors to mobilize more resources for the Asia-Pacific Multi-donor Trust Fund and to support the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

Preparatory process for the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

16. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to consider the following in their deliberations on the direction of disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific beyond the conclusion of the Decade in 2022:

(a) To recognize that the Incheon Strategy and the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy, are important regional frameworks that continue to provide overall guidance on disability-inclusive development and contribute to leaving no one behind with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030;

(b) To strengthen the implementation modality of the Incheon Strategy beyond the conclusion of the Decade, including by enhancing synergy with the Sustainable Development Goals and improving data collection, and through collaboration with United Nations country teams, participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations, and private sector contribution;

(c) To ensure the active participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in the development of forward-looking strategies on disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific and in the data collection and final review on the implementation of the Incheon Strategy;

(d) To promote adequate and sustainable funding allocations to ensure continued improvement with regard to disability inclusion at the grass-roots and policy levels, including funding support for organizations of persons with disabilities;

(e) To emphasize the importance of accessibility in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic and public life;

(f) To review gaps and priorities for disability-inclusive development throughout the preparatory process for the conclusion of the Decade.

Sign language

17. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to provide feedback and input on the structure, design and content of the draft ESCAP publication entitled “Sign language: what is it? A guide towards legal recognition of sign languages in Asia and the Pacific”, by 21 January 2022.

II. Proceedings

A. Review of the implementation of decisions and recommendations emanating from the sixth session of the Working Group

(Agenda item 4)

18. The Working Group had before it the report on its sixth session (ESCAP/77/14).

19. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; China; India; Malaysia; Pakistan; and Republic of Korea.

20. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) Consortium; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; and Shuchona Foundation.

21. The secretariat provided a status update on the implementation of decisions and recommendations recorded in the report on the sixth session of the Working Group. The Working Group was also informed of the actions taken by its members and the secretariat in line with the decisions and recommendations.

22. Working Group members shared information about disability-inclusive initiatives and projects, mainly covering the areas of disability-inclusive employment and social protection, disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, digital accessibility, and awareness-raising on disability rights and inclusion.

23. The representative of the China Disabled Persons Federation invited Working Group members to attend two major events in 2022, namely the Beijing Paralympic Winter Games and the centennial celebration of Rehabilitation International to be held in Beijing.

B. Discussion on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and persons with disabilities, including initiatives to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic
(Agenda item 5)

24. The Working Group had before it the following information documents: policy brief on ensuring disability rights and inclusion in the response to COVID-19 (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/6); report on the webinar on protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/7); and briefing note on new ESCAP project on protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/8). It also had before it the web page on COVID-19 and disability inclusion in Asia and the Pacific hosted on the ESCAP “Make the Right Real” portal.²

25. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; India; Japan; Malaysia; Pakistan; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

26. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

27. The secretariat gave a presentation on the situation of persons with disabilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic and provided an update on its project on protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic. The secretariat reported that ESCAP members and associate members had taken various measures to support persons with disabilities in response to the pandemic. With funding support from Rehabilitation International, the secretariat had developed a dedicated web page on COVID-19 and disability inclusion hosted on the ESCAP “Make the Right Real” portal. The secretariat also provided seed funding for five pilot initiatives to advance disability-inclusive development during the pandemic and beyond.

28. Working Group members stressed the challenges encountered by persons with disabilities during the pandemic, including the following: inaccessible built environment and communication channels; discrimination against persons with disabilities in gaining access to health care; disruptions to essential services and support networks due to social distancing, lockdown and quarantine measures; deteriorating financial situations due to employment losses; limited social protection coverage; and lack of support for the organizations of persons with disabilities in responding to COVID-19.

29. Working Group members shared measures taken by governments and civil society organizations to support persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic, including the following: developing laws, policies and guidelines to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities; raising awareness on disability inclusion and gender-related issues; building capacities of organizations of persons with disabilities to manage the crisis; prioritizing persons with disabilities in gaining access to COVID-19 vaccination and treatment; exploring new service delivery mechanisms and ensuring continued access of persons with disabilities to goods, services, training and education; delivering public information in accessible formats; safeguarding the income

² www.maketherightreal.net/covid-19.

security and livelihoods of persons with disabilities through enhanced social protection and employment support; and strengthening disability assessment systems and streamlining administrative procedures for obtaining disability-related benefits.

30. Working Group members noted the importance of providing support to improve the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities in implementing disability-inclusive responses to COVID-19 and other emergencies.

31. The Working Group took note of several resources regarding disability inclusion in the context of the pandemic, including the following: “HAPI-IE guidebook on promoting physical activities of persons with autism, intellectual disabilities and psychosocial disabilities in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries to cope during COVID-19”, developed by the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; a web page dedicated to COVID-19 and disability inclusion on the website of the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; the guidelines on COVID-19 and persons with psychosocial disabilities issued by the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry and other networks of persons with psychosocial disabilities; and the book entitled *Reimagining Crisis Support: Matrix, Roadmap and Policy*.

C. Review of recent progress in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

(Agenda item 6)

32. The Working Group had before it information documents on the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/9), inclusive political participation of person with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/10), early intervention and quality education of children with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/11) and harmonization of national laws with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the ESCAP region (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/12).

1. Goal 2 on promoting participation in political processes and in decision-making

33. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; Japan; Malaysia; Pakistan; and Russian Federation.

34. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

35. The secretariat gave a presentation on inclusive political participation of persons with disabilities. The secretariat provided the status of political participation of persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting the following challenges of equal participation in political processes: economic and social exclusion; attitudinal barriers; discriminatory laws and policies; and lack of accessibility standards. The secretariat also presented measures to promote the political participation of persons with disabilities and overcome the challenges. Working Group members were invited to discuss how to ensure inclusive political processes and institutions for persons with disabilities.

36. Working Group members highlighted actions taken by governments to promote the political rights of persons with disabilities. Good practices included enhancing the physical accessibility of polling stations; adopting alternative voting methods; training election officers; establishing quota systems to ensure access to public service positions; developing national strategies and action plans; and amending laws to support the political participation of persons with disabilities.

37. Working Group members discussed challenges in ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in political processes, including the lack of awareness of the political rights of persons with disabilities, the lack of institutional capacity, and negative perceptions about the capacity of persons with disabilities.

2. Goal 5 on early intervention and inclusive education

38. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; Malaysia; and Russian Federation.

39. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; DAISY Consortium; and Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region.

40. The secretariat gave a presentation on the state of early identification and intervention and inclusive education of children with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, focusing on the following aspects: supportive policies; early identification and intervention; educational access for children with disabilities; inclusive and accessible curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and learning materials; supported teachers and service providers; accessible learning environments; partnerships; and data and monitoring.

41. Working Group members discussed challenges faced by children with disabilities in gaining access to inclusive education, such as: lack of accessible and gender-sensitive learning environments; shortage of teachers and school management personnel equipped with inclusive education knowledge and skills; inadequate social protection to cover disability-related costs, including transport costs; and low awareness of parents of children with disabilities on the right to inclusive education.

42. Working Group members shared information about their progress on goal 5 of the Incheon Strategy, including the following: formulating laws, policies and action plans; implementing initiatives and programmes on early identification and intervention and inclusive education; strengthening partnerships with schools, parents of students with disabilities, organizations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders; establishing integrated service centres for early identification and intervention; creating resource centres to support the education of children with diverse disabilities; developing inclusive and accessible learning materials; providing free or subsidized assistive devices; building accessible school facilities and infrastructure; awarding scholarships to students with disabilities; and conducting training on inclusive education for policymakers, teachers and parents of children with disabilities.

43. The Working Group took note of general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education; an ESCAP policy paper on early intervention and quality education of children with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific; and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) publications on inclusive education, including the following: *Formative and Summative Evaluation of*

UNICEF's Rights, Education and Protection (REAP) II; Education for Every Ability: A Review and Roadmap of Disability-Inclusive Education in East Asia and Pacific Region; and Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia.

3. Goal 9 on harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

44. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; Japan; and Malaysia.

45. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

46. The secretariat gave a presentation to the Working Group on the harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including in the following areas: ratification status of member States; overall progress on the harmonization of national legislation in the region; identified challenges in advancing legal harmonization; and recommendations to ensure the harmonization of national legislation with the Convention.

47. Working Group members highlighted the importance of harmonizing the Convention and all domestic legislation, including legislation that is not disability specific. They noted that the presence of high-level politicians with disabilities could further improve the harmonization process. Working Group members shared concerns regarding the following areas related to Convention implementation: legal guardianship; disqualification of persons with psychosocial disabilities from licensed professions; and emerging issues faced by persons with disabilities owing to climate change and disasters. Working Group members further shared measures taken by Governments, persons with disabilities and experts, including national legal reviews and amendments of disability rights laws in light of the Convention, and the formulation of new laws reflecting the spirit and context of the Convention.

48. Working Group members noted the great importance of reasonable accommodation and accessibility, as they underpinned the effective implementation of the Convention, which required adequate allocation of financial resources. Working Group members identified good practices demonstrated by Governments in integrating those aspects into comprehensive disability rights laws.

D. Review of resource mobilization for progress in the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

(Agenda item 7)

49. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia-Pacific Disabled People's Organizations United; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; Pacific Disability Forum; and Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region. A representative of the National Association for the Blind, Delhi, made a statement as an observer.

50. The secretariat gave a presentation on the status of resource mobilization for the Decade. The Working Group noted the financial contributions from the Governments of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and from Rehabilitation International, and the in-kind support from the ESCAP Accessibility Centre. The Working Group was informed of the status of the

Asia-Pacific Multi-donor Trust Fund. The contributions to the Fund from the Governments of Australia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea supported the secretariat in the following areas: providing technical advice to member States; conducting research and dissemination of information; providing capacity-building to member States and other key stakeholders; providing reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities; and conducting advocacy and outreach, including the “Make the Right Real” campaign.

51. Working Group members acknowledged the significant role of organizations of persons with disabilities that had contributed to the implementation of the Incheon Strategy and discussed measures to strengthen partnerships with and mobilize resources for organizations of persons with disabilities.

E. Preparatory process for the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022
(Agenda item 8)

52. The Working Group had before it information documents on the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/9) and the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(6)/INF/8).

53. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Bangladesh; China; and India.

54. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: ASEAN Autism Network; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Disabled People’s Organizations United; Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United; DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; Pacific Disability Forum; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; Shuchona Foundation; and South Asian Disability Forum. A representative of the National Association for the Blind, Delhi, made a statement as an observer.

55. The secretariat gave a presentation on the proposed preparatory process for the conclusion of the third Decade (2013–2022) in which it introduced the objectives and key elements of expected outcomes of the final review of the Decade. The secretariat also briefed the Working Group on the voluntary national survey, planned stakeholder consultations and intergovernmental meetings in 2022, and suggested ways to strengthen the implementation modality of the Incheon Strategy going forward.

56. The Working Group members acknowledged the positive disability-inclusive development progress at the grass-roots, national and regional levels. Working Group members suggested the following key areas of focus for the conclusion of the Decade and preparing the way forward:

- (a) Ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in determining the way forward, including in preparing documents and developing new strategies;
- (b) Collecting and analysing robust data to guide decisions going forward;
- (c) Ensuring linkages with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Allocating sufficient and sustainable budgetary resources for disability-inclusive development, including for organizations of persons with disabilities;

(e) Addressing the new priorities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for the needs of persons with disabilities in future pandemics;

(f) Focusing on accessibility as a precondition to inclusive development, including universal design and the accessibility of information and communications technology;

(g) Exploring the enforcement of laws passed in line with the Incheon Strategy, in particular with regard to non-discrimination;

(h) Continuing to address the specific needs of women with disabilities;

(i) Encouraging inclusive education and employment for persons with diverse disabilities.

F. Any other matters (Agenda item 9)

1. Briefing on the sign language awareness guide

57. The Working Group had before it the information document entitled “Sign language: what is it? A guide towards legal recognition of sign languages in Asia and the Pacific” (SDD/APDPD(3)/WG(7)/INF/14).

58. The representative of India made a statement.

59. The representative of Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region, made a statement.

60. Mr. Yutaka Osugi (Professor, Tsukuba University of Technology, Japan) gave a presentation on the draft of the information paper and requested feedback from Working Group members on its proposed concept, structure and design by 21 January 2022.

61. Working Group members highlighted the importance of legal recognition and promotion of sign language in all areas of the lives of deaf people, in particular in education and health services. Working Group members shared their experience with regard to developing a nationally unified sign language and the completion of a sign language dictionary, as well as ongoing efforts to convert all textbooks into sign language.

2. Briefing on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the ESCAP Disability Inclusion Policy and the ESCAP disability implementation plan

62. The secretariat briefed the Working Group on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the ESCAP Disability Inclusion Policy and the ESCAP disability implementation plan.

III. Organization

63. The Working Group held its seventh session on 8 and 9 December 2021. Owing to the COVID-19 situation and ensuing travel restrictions, the meeting was held online.

64. The secretariat provided sign language interpretation services and real-time captioning developed by ESCAP using Microsoft Azure artificial intelligence for participants with hearing disabilities.

A. Attendance

65. Representatives of the following Government members of the Working Group attended the seventh session: Bangladesh; Bhutan; China; India; Japan; Malaysia; Pakistan; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand.

66. Representatives of the following civil society organization members also attended: ASEAN Autism Network; Asia and Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Disabled People's Organizations United; Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United; DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; Pacific Disability Forum; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; Shuchona Foundation; South Asian Disability Forum; World Blind Union – Asia-Pacific; and World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.

67. Representatives of the Centre for Accessibility in Built Environment Foundation; Cook Islands National Disability Council; Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi; National Association for the Blind, Delhi; Nippon Foundation; Thammasat University; Transportation for All; UNICEF; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Wuhan East-Lake Institute for Social Advancement; and Wuhan University attended as observers.

68. The following guest speakers contributed to the session: Mr. Peter Grime and Mr. Andrew Byrnes, disability specialists on a consultant contract with ESCAP; and Mr. Yutaka Osugi, Professor at Tsukuba University of Technology.

B. Election of officers

69. The Working Group elected the following Bureau officers:

Chair:	Mr. Prabodh Seth (India)
Vice-Chair:	Ms. Abia Akram (Asia-Pacific Women with Disabilities United)

C. Agenda

70. The Working Group adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Review of the implementation of decisions and recommendations emanating from the sixth session of the Working Group.
5. Discussion on COVID-19 and persons with disabilities including initiatives to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic.

6. Review of recent progress in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.
7. Review of resource mobilization for progress in the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.
8. Preparatory process for the conclusion of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.
9. Any other matters.
10. Conclusion.

Annex

List of documents

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