Declaration Dialogue linked to UN75 on Friday, May 29, 2020

Jose Viera speech addressing the zero draft of the declaration for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN

<https://www.un.org/pga/74/wp-content/uploads/sites/99/2020/05/UN75-Letter-from-the-co-facilitators-1.pdf>

Today we are building on two sections of the declaration in order to strengthen it: (1) how COVID-19 has particularly hit the most “vulnerable groups,” including persons with disabilities and (2) how we will leave no one behind to ensure and uphold everyone’s human rights and fundamental freedoms.[1]

In pre-pandemic life, governments often ignored or inadvertently left behind persons with disabilities in national and international development plans, however, there has been improvement since the adoption and subsequent implementation of the SDGs. Yet, due to the pandemic, once again we are moving backward, in which the most marginalized people are being left behind.

Learning from the unprecedented challenges in the last few months, we must build back better for a more equal, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive world. This means that all marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities – and particularly those from underrepresented groups – in rural and urban areas, including persons with deafblindness, and persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, as well as children, women, older persons and indigenous persons with disabilities – must have equal opportunities. We must turn to the SDGs to guide the rebuilding of our societies in which all are equal, included, and thriving.

The key to rebuilding is to follow the evidence and data. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that while it is universally known that persons with disabilities, along with older persons, are at increased risk, they by and large, have not been included in the COVID-19-related data collection efforts. This must stop, as rebuilding cannot happen without evidence and data. This keeps in line with CRPD Article 31 that requires States Parties to collect data on persons with disabilities and the commitment from 193 countries to collect data on persons with disabilities and to disaggregate data by disability by adopting the 2030 Agenda and the global indicator framework.

We need DPOs and the disability movement to be meaningfully included in data collection and analysis, and furthermore, statisticians, policy makers, DPOs, and allies need to learn from each other, use available data to address challenges and gaps in policies to realize international commitments and obligations by using existing tools and solutions for evidence-based policy making.

Regarding the declaration paragraph on leave no one behind, we would like to make the following suggestions:

* We ask that the paragraph goes beyond the recognition of most marginalized communities, and also calls for action to empower the most vulnerable, with particular attention to the post-COVID19 reality.
* We recommend adding a reference that calls for urgent data collection on the situation of the most marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities to inform policy action on the basis of data.

In closing, the inclusion and the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all phases of implementation is critical, not only to ensure that they are not left behind, but also because only they are the true experts when it comes to their complete inclusion in society. Through consultations and by partnering with persons with disabilities, governments will receive technical assistance, capacity building and access to data, which are essential to achieving inclusion and realizing the overarching principle of leaving no one behind.