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**10th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum**

**A Decade of Action: Building a Resilient Recovery**

**SIDE EVENT AT THE ECOSOC YOUTH FORUM**

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“**Ramping up representation: promoting participation of youth with disabilities in pandemic recovery efforts”**

**6 April 2021, 9 AM New York Time**

1. **Background**

There are an estimated 180 to 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide, with over 80% living in developing countries[[1]](#footnote-1). There is growing evidence that young persons with disabilities throughout the world are disproportionately isolated within their own communities and are far less likely than their peers to achieve the same educational, employment and personal outcomes as is seen with their non-disabled peers[[2]](#footnote-2) especially in the Global South.

While the last few years have seen progress in the mainstreaming of youth with disabilities, and the building of leadership among them, the challenges posed by the COVID19 pandemic and related prevention measures have threatened to set this back. Experiences include barriers to accessing information, to understanding the preventive measures in place[[3]](#footnote-3), disruptions in access to education, trainings, and co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, inability to access essential services related to rehabilitation, assistive devices, and sexual and reproductive health services, healthcare, isolation from having been separated from their friends and colleagues, compromises to independent living and in some cases harassment from family members and others in the immediate surroundings, including sexual violence, with no recourse to support from peers or law enforcement[[4]](#footnote-4).

At the same time, innovations by youth with disabilities and organizations led by youth with disabilities have kept up a sense of community[[5]](#footnote-5), and in many instances, youth with disabilities emerged as leaders to promote inclusion, accessibility and access to basic needs and services to their communities[[6]](#footnote-6) having leveraged opportunities including those presented by technology. At the same time, the intersectional barriers experienced by youth from underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities limiting their potential for leadership and participation must be recognized and addressed.

In November 2020, in order to more effectively address these issues, and for young people with disabilities to engage with key disability rights stakeholders, including the United Nations (UN), to help better inform efforts in this area and to support young people in all of their diversity, the Office of the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth partnered with The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), The International Children's Emergency Fund, (UNICEF), The World Health Organization (WHO) and the SG’s disability inclusion team, and with the support of the Permanent Missions of Finland and Ecuador organized a global consultation for youth with disabilities where young people from over 51 countries participated. A high-level side event on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, alongside the 13th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSP), was also organized with this partnership. These were historic and landmark events at the UN where youth with disabilities expressed their vision for their inclusion and detailed how they wish to achieve that vision.

This event being organized during the 10th Anniversary of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, is a unique opportunity to further engage in dialogue with Member States on the Call to Action that was developed by youth with disabilities through the global consultation and their intervention at the 13th COSP. It is also an opportunity to think together about specific issues of relevance to youth with disabilities as well as their broader role in enabling and promoting sustainable development, and the barriers to be addressed to ensure the full and effective participation of youth with disabilities across all intersectionalities.

**Side Event**

On “***Ramping up Representation: promoting participation of youth with disabilities in pandemic recovery efforts***”, the panel will highlight the specific impact of the pandemic on youth with disabilities, including women and girls and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, particularly related to the relevant sub-group of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as selected by Member States for in-depth discussions at the 2021 High-level Political Forum (HLPF)[[7]](#footnote-7).

With the involvement of committed partners from UN Agencies, the panel will then explore a twin track approach toward all youth with disabilities aimed at promoting their inclusion and leadership in international human rights and development frameworks, including ECOSOC Youth Forum, in order to ensure that youth with disabilities are meaningfully involved in and are in a position to benefit from programmes and policies related to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in COVID-19 recovery efforts.

1. **Objectives of the side event**
2. Presenting the specific impact of COVID-19 and related lockdown measures on youth with disabilities, including women and girls and underrepresented groups, and their experiences in accessing and enabling services linked to Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16,
3. Presenting youth perspectives on inclusive COVID-19 recovery that ensures the inclusion of youth with disabilities across intersectionalities, towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including findings from the Call to Action in November 2020,
4. Identify synergies between various mechanisms and systems of the UN and with Civil Society Organisations to facilitate the inclusion and leadership of young people with disabilities including in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the HLPF, as well as carrying forward previous advocacy actions,
5. Highlight avenues for information sharing and engagement with the wider disability and youth mainstream movements, including the youth registered for the ECOSOC Forum, towards an enabling environment for the participation of young people with disabilities.
6. **Guiding questions for presentations and discussion**

* What was the distinct impact of the pandemic on youth with disabilities particularly with reference to experiences related to poverty and social protection, access to nutrition, healthcare including sexual and reproductive health, full and productive employment and decent work, accessing justice and the gains achieved on social, economic and political inclusion?
* What were the barriers for youth with disabilities, particularly from underrepresented groups to take on leadership roles in their communities to address the impact of COVID-19?
* What are the global partnerships and avenues for youth with disabilities to intervene and contribute to the efforts to address the global impacts of COVID-19 including in the monitoring mechanisms for Agenda 2030?
* How can the key stakeholders commit to furthering the Call to Action of November 2021

1. **Format and Agenda**

The side event will be held in a virtual format. The International Disability Alliance (IDA) will support with accessibility and inclusion of all participants by providing synchronic language interpretation services, International Sign (IS), and communication access real-time translation (CART).

The proposed **Agenda** is as follows:

1. Opening remarks by Mr. Jukka SALOVAARA, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN
2. Presentations by youth representatives on the impact of COVID-19 on youth with disabilities with reference to Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 and 16 and where available, instances of youth leadership in these areas, including the barriers to participation experienced,
3. Presentations by youth with disabilities who have engaged with the Youth Forum and HLPF processes as well as the CRPD Committee Review process on its potential to bring change.
4. Reflections of representatives from UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA and WHO on synergies between various mechanisms and systems of the UN and with Civil Society Organisations to facilitate the inclusion and leadership of young people with disabilities including in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the HLPF
5. **Platform to be used and Registration**

The event will take place via Zoom. The International Disability Alliance (IDA) can provide the platform and support with administration and logistics related to Zoom platform.

Registration for this webinar is at the following link:

<https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_P7FGvclGQ7Sqtk4ERosIeg>

For further information, kindly contact Rosario Galarza [rgalarza@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:rgalarza@ida-secretariat.org) and Amba Salelkar [asalelkar@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:asalelkar@ida-secretariat.org)).

1. **Speaker List**

* ***Kato Mark****:* Uganda, World Federation of Deafblind (WFDB)
* ***Mariana Camacho***: Costa Rica, Asociación Latinoamericana de Mujeres con Discapacidad
* ***Polyana Silva****:* ABRACA, Riadis
* ***Ramisha Ijaz:*** Pakistan, TCI Asia

1. www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-with-disabilities.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNFPA (2018) *Young persons with disabilities: global study on ending gender-based violence and realizing sexual and reproductive health and rights* p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Deandra Mouzon, "How Are Disabled Youth Coping With COVID-19 Pandemic?” https://youthtoday.org/2020/04/how-are-disabled-youth-coping-with-covid-19-pandemic/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. PAZA Podcast Episode 4, “Sexual and Gender based violence in the global pandemic: Exploring the experiences of women and girls with disabilities” https://www.this-ability.org/paza-episode4/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Vella Panti, an online house party for persons with disabilities” https://risingflame.org/project/vella-panthi-an-online-house-party-for-persons-with-disabilities/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. UN Office of the Secretary General’s Special Envoy on Youth, “Meet 10 leaders who can inspire you to change the world (10th Edition) – Special Edition dedicated to Young People with Disabilities”

   [/www.un.org/youthenvoy/2020/08/meet-10-leaders-who-can-inspire-you-to-change-the-world-10th-edition-special-edition-dedicated-to-young-people-with-disabilities/](https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2020/08/meet-10-leaders-who-can-inspire-you-to-change-the-world-10th-edition-special-edition-dedicated-to-young-people-with-disabilities/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 16 and 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)