African Disability Forum, Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, ASEAN Disability Forum, Down Syndrome International, European Disability Forum, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families, Pacific Disability Forum, World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the DeafBlind, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry

International Disability Alliance

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Dear Ms. Natalia Kanem
United Nations Population Fund, New York

Tuesday 12 May 2020

Dear Ms. Natalia Kanem,

On behalf of the International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium, we want to express our deepest appreciation for UNFPA's significant efforts to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

However, we are concerned that not all communications have been made accessible for and inclusive of persons with disabilities. We are writing to request your immediate action in order to address the lack of accessible information shared by the UNFPA on the COVID-19. Many persons with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing persons, blind and partially sighted persons, and persons with intellectual disabilities are not able to access vital information being shared by UNFPA through public briefings, social media, webpages and other channels because the information is not provided in accessible formats. Looking into UNFPA's social media messages and blogs sharing information and update on ensuring access to sexual and reproductive rights during the pandemic, we find very limited reference to persons with disabilities including additional barriers they face, and measures required to ensure their full and equal access to these rights and effective participation.

Persons with disabilities should have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, information and communication technology and systems and other facilities in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD. Additionally, the Secretary-General launched the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) in June 2019 that provides a foundation for sustainable and transformative change toward disability inclusion throughout all pillars of the UN system. UNDIS contains 15 common-system indicators to measure the implementation of the Strategy, including indicators on accessibility, accessibility of conferences and events and communication.

We believe that by ensuring accessibility of information and communication, UNFPA would contribute more significantly in ensuring that people with disabilities including women and girls with disabilities and youth with disabilities are not discriminated against in the COVID-19 response and play an active role in addressing this global crisis. This would be particularly crucial for persons with disabilities and their

representative organizations who are working hard to advocate for equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and find information and messages shared by UNFPA as one of the main sources of guidance.

Accordingly, we request you to:

- Ensure that public briefings and webinars by UNFPA that are designed to update about the COVID-19 situation are accessible by providing captioning, International Sign interpretation, using plain language, speaking at a good pace, and avoiding technical terms and acronyms without providing proper explanation;
- Ensure that digital communications, including webpages and social media channels of UNFPA are accessible for all persons with disabilities by ensuring that it is possible to modify font and background colour, providing audio description for visual material such as infographics, diagrams and videos, and sharing Word formats and accessible PDFs rather than scanned versions of material;
- Take appropriate measures to ensure that all UNFPA staff, including the communication, web-management and public engagement teams, have the capacity to produce accessible information and are informed of and comply with accessibility requirements;
- Promote sharing of presentation materials in advance to sign language interpreters, CART providers and those using screen reader software.

We thank you very much for your consistent and continuous support and commitment to the human rights of persons with disabilities. We remain at your disposal for any support that we can provide including engagement with UNFPA communication team to provide more specific support to address this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Ana Lucia Arellano
Chair, International Disability Alliance

Dominic Haslam
Chair, International Disability and Development Consortium

Annex of resources to support the generation of accessible information

- International Disability Alliance and International Disability and Development Consortium: [Accessibility Campaign documents](#)
- CBM: [Digital Accessibility Toolkit](#)
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center: [Accessibility Tips for a Better Zoom/Virtual Meeting Experience](#)
- International Federation of Hard of Hearing People: [Accessibility during the Coronavirus](#) ([Word version here](#))
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES): [Holding Accessible and Inclusive Virtual Meetings](#)
- National Deaf Center: [What strategies are available for deafblind students using interpreters remotely?](#) and [COVID-19 information](#)
- National Deaf Center: [How to Host Effective and Accessible Online Meetings with Deaf Participants](#)
- Rooted in Rights: [How to Make Your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community](#)

- Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities: [Accessibility of Video Conferencing Apps and Services](#)
- The Big Hack: [Best video conferencing apps and software for accessibility](#)
- University of Washington: [Creating accessible videos](#) and [Adding captions in Zoom](#)
- Women's Major Group webinar series on online platforms and accessibility: (1) Methodology and accessibility [recording](#) and (2) [presentation](#) and Logistics [recording](#) and [presentation](#)
- World Blind Union, the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, and International Association of Accessibility Professionals Webinar [on How to Create and Evaluate Digital Documents](#)
- World Federation of the Deaf: [Guidelines on Providing Access to Public Health Information in National Sign Languages during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- World Federation of the Deafblind, European Deafblind Union, the African Federation of the Deafblind, the Latin American Federation of the Deafblind: [Recommendations on inclusive policies from the global deafblind community](#)