



#WeThe15

WeThe15: A global human rights movement for the 1.2 billion persons with disabilities

- **Multiple international organisations unite for decade-long campaign to transform the lives of 1.2 billion people**
- **Campaign led by International Paralympic Committee, International Disability Alliance, UN Human Rights, UNESCO, UNAOC amongst others**
- **For the first time ever, IPC, Special Olympics, Invictus Games and International Committee of Sports for the Deaf collaborate**
- **Airing of campaign film, symbol unveil and iconic purple landmark light-up highlight today's launch**

Multiple leading international organisations have united to launch WeThe15, which aspires to be the biggest ever human rights movement to represent the world's 1.2 billion persons with disabilities.

Launched ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, WeThe15 aims to end discrimination towards persons with disabilities and act as a global movement publicly campaigning for disability visibility, accessibility, and inclusion.

Spearheaded by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and International Disability Alliance (IDA), WeThe15 brings together the biggest coalition ever of international organisations from the worlds of sport, human rights, policy, business, arts, and entertainment. Together they will work with governments, businesses, and the public over the next decade to initiate change for the world's largest marginalised group who make up 15% of the global population.

Harnessing sport's unique ability to engage massive global audiences and create positive change, the IPC, Special Olympics, Invictus Games Foundation and the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (Deaflympics) have teamed up for the first time in history. The four organisations will use the profile of their international sport events and athlete communities to further raise awareness and understanding of the issues facing persons with disabilities around the globe.

Joining the sport organisations in this decade of action are International Disability Alliance, UN Human Rights, UNESCO, the UN SDG Action Campaign, the European Commission, The Valuable 500, Global Citizen, Global Disability Innovation Hub, the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), International Disability and Development Consortium, C-Talent, Global Goals Advisory, ATscale – the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology, Zero Project, and the Global Alliance of Assistive Technology Organisations (GAATO).

Aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, WeThe15 aims to change attitudes and create more opportunities by:

- Putting persons with disabilities at the heart of the diversity and inclusion agenda
- Implementing a range of activities targeting governments, businesses, and the public to drive social inclusion for persons with disabilities
- Breaking down societal and systemic barriers that are preventing persons with disabilities from fulfilling their potential and being active members of society
- Ensuring greater awareness, visibility, and representation of persons with disabilities
- Promoting the role of assistive technology as a vehicle to driving social inclusion

IPC President Andrew Parsons said: "WeThe15 aspires to be the biggest ever human rights movement for persons with disabilities and aims to put disability right at the heart of the inclusion agenda, alongside ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

“By uniting several leading international organisations and the world’s 1.2 billion persons with disabilities behind one common movement, we will make a tangible and well overdue difference for the planet’s largest marginalised group.

“Sport, and events such as the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, are hugely powerful vehicles to engage global audiences. By partnering with Special Olympics, Invictus Games, and Deaflympics, there will be at least one major international sport event for persons with disabilities to showcase WeThe15 each year between now and 2030. These sports events add great value to the campaign and underline the hugely positive impact sport can have on society. I strongly believe WeThe15 could be a real game-changer for persons with disabilities.”

Ana Lucia Arellano, Chairperson of the International Disability Alliance, said: “Over the past 20 years, a lot has been achieved regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities. We successfully advocated for the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as to be included in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

“Looking into the future, we recognise that there is still a lot to be done if we want to achieve the full inclusion of more than a billion persons we represent. We need new creative and innovative approaches, and we need much broader coalition to achieve that. WeThe15 has a unique opportunity and responsibility to achieve exactly that – to be a platform where more and new actors will come together making the ‘Nothing about us without us’ a real change for all persons with disabilities.”

Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said: “WeThe15 is bringing together a unique group of partners – disability-specific sports organisations, the disability rights movement, people from the private sector, researchers and the United Nations – to work together to change the narrative on disability, and to make human rights-based development a reality for persons with disabilities.

“We plan to build on the multiple Paralympic Games in Beijing, Paris, Milan and Los Angeles, particularly in the local communities, to make it clear that upholding and advancing the human rights of persons with disabilities is relevant, doable and necessary – for everyone’s benefit.”

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), said: “More than one billion people live with a disability today, and yet the world is still far from truly recognizing and honouring this 15 percent of society. It is time to change our perception of people with disabilities, and make their voices heard everywhere. The sporting achievements of the Paralympic athletes are, in this way, formidable sources of inspiration and examples for all of us. UNESCO is proud to join the WeThe15 movement and its unique coalition to build a world that puts inclusion front and centre.”

Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex, Patron of the Invictus Games Foundation, said: “One of the reasons why I was inspired to create the Invictus Games was to help destigmatise physical and invisible injuries and give the men and women who have experienced them a platform to show the world that they and we can accomplish anything, when we put our mind to it. Everybody at the Invictus Games Foundation is honoured to join the WeThe15 campaign and believe in its mission to inspire meaningful change in communities around the world.”

Launch activities on 19 August

To mark the launch of WeThe15 several high-profile activities are planned.

- **Campaign film:** A 90-second-long film that is a proud and vibrant celebration of persons with disabilities has been produced. From today (19 August) it will air across multiple digital channels, as well as TV channels in 60 countries with the aim of reaching at least half a billion people by the end of September.

- **Iconic purple symbol:** A new iconic purple symbol of inclusivity where the world's 15% with disabilities are no longer marginalised has been created and launched. Purple has long been associated with the disability community, but this is the first time a vibrant symbol exists that can unite the community and call for actionable change.
- **Purple light-up:** This evening to celebrate the launch of the campaign more than 125 iconic landmarks, spanning several countries and time-zones will light up purple. Landmarks that will be illuminated include New York's Empire State Building, Tokyo SKYTREE and Rainbow Bridge, Geneva's Jet d'Eau, Moscow's Ostankino Tower, Rome's Colosseum, the London Eye and the Niagara Falls spanning Canada and the USA.
- **Digital media:** Several activities are also planned across digital media channels. This includes the campaign symbol appearing on Twitter when #WeThe15 is used within Tweets and a special content series on Facebook about sport for persons with disabilities. Instagram and Snapchat will be providing special purple filters for users.
- **Tokyo 2020:** The campaign film will be played out during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony reaching an estimated global audience of 250 million people. Several other activities are planned during the Games. More than 20,000 temporary tattoos of the WeThe15 will also be distributed to athletes in the Paralympic Village to wear during competition.

For further information about WeThe15 please visit www.WeThe15.org and follow @WeThe15 on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Further quotes from organisations involved in WeThe15

- Caroline Casey, Founder of The Valuable 500, said: "The Paralympics is itself one of the largest sporting events in terms of global visibility. This partnership of so many international organisations coming together for the WeThe15 campaign is long overdue. That said, this is a ground-breaking moment for representation of people with disabilities around the world. To see these organisations working together as part of this global movement - working to destigmatise disability and committing to being fully inclusive is a massive leap in the right direction.
"Disability is often left out of inclusion debates- and that is no longer acceptable. We truly believe that this movement for global inclusion based on collective collaboration is essential - and business needs to be involved. I'm proud to bring the business community with the Valuable 500 and we look forward to supporting the campaign and helping it to evolve over the coming years."
- Helena Dalli, the European Commission's Commissioner for Equality said: "I am privileged to partner with the International Paralympic Committee to combat stereotypes and foster inclusion in sport.
"WeThe15 seeks to eliminate barriers and uphold the equal rights of persons with disabilities. This is our shared responsibility and it requires resolute and joint efforts."
- Eddie Ndopu, award-winning humanitarian and UN SDG Advocate, said: "It brings me tremendous joy to throw my unwavering support behind WeThe15. This historic campaign is the cultural tipping point 15% of the world's total population has been waiting for.
"Let it be known that from here on out, disabled people everywhere, from Dallas to Damascus, will hold strong in our refusal to participate in society's attempts to shrink and contain us. This is the dawn of our liberation. And, oh, what a glorious sight to behold!"
- Mary Davis, CEO of Special Olympics, said: "Global goals for development and equality will only be met when people with disabilities are taken off the margins."

“Since disabilities transcend borders, age, gender identity, income, and every other demographic, they are too often excluded from vertical programming. Sport is an incredibly effective way to get people with disabilities off the sidelines and accelerate the world’s progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. WeThe15 strengthens the approach of sport for development, and Special Olympics is proud to be a member of this coalition.”

- Gustavo Perazzolo, President of the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf, said: “Sport is a universal language that unifies people—persons with disabilities. For the first time, major disabled sports organisations will use the profile of their international sports events and athlete communities to remove barriers and protect the rights of persons with disabilities who have the courage to step up and go for what they believe in.
“WeThe15 is the dawn of a new time, time to stop considering the only perfection but start looking at the strengths of those out there changing the world, time for action with no prejudices and no one left behind. With everyone on board committed to eliminating the misconceptions and biases that hold back persons with disabilities, we will focus on changing perspectives and raising awareness. Everything is possible. Make it **happen, and the ICSD supports you!**”
- Michael Sheldrick, Co-founder and Chief Policy Officer, Global Citizen, said: "Global Citizen's mission to defeat poverty and defend the planet can only be achieved when everyone, everywhere is empowered to live their best lives and to contribute to the creation of a more equitable and just world. We are delighted to add our voice to the #Wethe15 campaign and to join forces with so many champions as we work together to centre the human rights of persons with disabilities in our shared future."
- H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), said: “The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is honoured to join the global human rights movement WeThe15. I hope that our collective efforts will contribute to end discrimination against persons with disabilities and foster a more inclusive society where, despite our differences, we can all live together peacefully as one humanity.”
- Marina Ponti, Director, UN SDG Action Campaign, said: “The UN SDG Action Campaign is proud to support the WeThe15 campaign to shine a light on the incredible achievements by persons with disabilities – from sports and the creative arts, to innovation and astrophysics. Inclusivity is at the heart of the SDG agenda, and we must all guarantee we keep the promise of leaving no one behind because it is up to all of us to ensure human rights for all, and to turn it around for people and planet.”
- Jon Lomoy, Board Chair of ATscale, the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology said: “Having access to assistive technology can make the difference between failure or success in school, between a job or unemployment, between a life of opportunity or a life of dependency. The athletes at the Paralympic Games show us what is possible in sports. It is up to all of us to follow their example and promote inclusion in all aspects of life.“
- Keely Cat-Wells, CEO of C-Talent and Zetta Studios, said: “WeThe15 is a historic movement created for and by disabled people, it shows the power we have as a collective and through solidarity, allship, and action we can build a kinder, more inclusive world. WeThe15 is breaking myths, smashing stereotypes and showing the world that we are not asking for special treatment, just equal treatment and true equality. I believe to change the world we have to learn to tell and listen to a new set of stories about the world that we want to create, by creating accessible spaces and hiring authentic voices. We are so proud to be working on WeThe15 to disrupt a broken system and build a better future for both disabled and non-disabled people.”

- Victoria Austin, CEO of Global Disability Innovation Hub and Director of the WHO Global Collaborating Center on AT at UCL, said: ““London 2012 showed us what’s possible. We set up GDI Hub to continue to drive disability innovation for a fairer world; we wanted to *‘change the world a little bit’*. By joining WeThe15, we know it’s time to *‘change the world a lot’*. It will be hard. But together, we can do hard things and never has it been more necessary to find our strength in each other - in all of our beautiful diversity. Lets do this!”
- Martin Essl, Founder and Chairman of the Board, Zero Project, said: “The WeThe15 campaign underlines the richness and depth of our global communities. The Zero Project is honoured to contribute to the We the 15 campaign with its research-driven attention to innovation and its solution-based communities for all persons with disabilities.”
- Dominic Haslam, Chair of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), said “WeThe15 is a hugely important global initiative, harnessing the power of sport to further the human rights agenda and the need for justice and equity for persons with disabilities around the world. IDDC is proud to be a member, working alongside organisations from around the world to deliver positive change.”

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To campaign film is available on YouTube from 07:00 JST on 19 August here:
https://www.youtube.com/embed/Ng6mT_EJy2Q

For further information or access to the WeThe15 campaign film (in various languages) or symbol, please contact either craig.spence@paralympic.org or Philip.dorward@paralympic.org.