



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Eightieth session**

Bangkok, 22–26 April 2024

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission: social development**Report on the ad hoc session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities held on 8 and 9 November 2023****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities held an ad hoc session in Bangkok and online on 8 and 9 November 2023.

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 the ad hoc session, the members of the Working Group discussed progress, initiatives and future plans concerning the six priority areas for disability-inclusive development outlined in the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032. They reviewed the draft operational guide on the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration. They also discussed: resource mobilization for implementing the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032; the establishment of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032; and the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. The Working Group adopted a set of recommendations to support the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration by 2032.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its eightieth session may wish to consider the present report with a view to providing guidance on the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration.

* ESCAP/80/1.

I. Recommendations

1. At its ad hoc session held on 8 and 9 November 2023, the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities made the recommendations set out below.

Implementation of the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, and use of the operational guide

2. The Working Group urged members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to strengthen interministerial and multi-stakeholder collaboration in implementing the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, at all levels.

3. The Working Group called upon members and associate members to provide financial and capacity-building support to enable persons with disabilities, including young people with disabilities, and their representative organizations to meaningfully and sustainably participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of rights-based laws and policies at both the national and local levels.

4. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to accelerate action on emerging and critical issues concerning disability-inclusive development, such as digital transformation, technological innovation, financial inclusion and climate change.

5. The Working Group recommended that members and associate members take urgent action to engage the private sector in all efforts to promote disability inclusion and requested the secretariat to enhance advocacy for disability-inclusive business practices in the region.

6. The Working Group provided comments on the draft operational guide on the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and requested the secretariat to revise the operational guide to take its comments into account. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to use the operational guide as a technical resource for supporting the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration, in line with their respective national contexts and on a voluntary basis.¹

Resource mobilization and partnerships

7. The Working Group encouraged members and associate members to mobilize more resources to support the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration, including through the multi-donor trust fund for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

8. The Working Group recommended that members and associate members strengthen partnerships with United Nations entities, development banks, civil society organizations, including international civil society

¹ The draft operational guide, as well as all other documents considered by the Working Group at its ad hoc session, is available at www.unescap.org/events/2023/ad-hoc-session-working-group-asian-and-pacific-decade-persons-disabilities.

organizations, and other stakeholders to accelerate disability-inclusive development.

Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

9. The Working Group recommended that the secretariat continue to work with organizations of persons with disabilities to provide training on disability inclusion, including disability equality training, in support of the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

II. Proceedings

A. Priority areas outlined in the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032 (agenda item 4)

10. The Working Group had before it the report on the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022 (ESCAP/APDDP/2022/3) and the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032 (ESCAP/APDDP/2022/3/Add.1).

11. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Thailand.

12. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia and Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Autism Network; Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) Consortium; and Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region. The representative of Samarthiyam made a statement in an observer capacity.

13. The secretariat gave a presentation on the Jakarta Declaration and highlighted the importance of the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to disability-inclusive development. The secretariat introduced the six priority areas for accelerated action during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032: (a) harmonizing national legislations with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; (b) promoting the meaningful participation of women and men with diverse disabilities of all ages; (c) improving accessibility through universal design; (d) galvanizing the power of the private sector; (e) promoting a gender-responsive life cycle approach to disability inclusion; and (f) closing disability data gaps and strengthening capacities to track progress in disability-inclusive development.

14. Working Group members shared good practices on the harmonization of national laws with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including through legislative reviews and amendments to laws not fully aligned with the Convention. They highlighted government efforts to develop policies, strategies and action plans to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities across sectors. Working Group members emphasized the importance of formulating a rights-based legal framework and strengthening implementation and monitoring mechanisms at the national, subnational and local levels.

15. Working Group members recognized the crucial role of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the effective development, implementation and monitoring of both general and disability-specific policies

and programmes. They stressed the urgency of increasing the representation of diverse disability groups in government decision-making bodies and political processes at all administrative levels. They underscored the importance of encouraging Governments and other stakeholders to mobilize resources for, and strengthen the capacities of, organizations of persons with disabilities, in order to ensure that persons with diverse disabilities are able to meaningfully participate in the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration.

16. Working Group members shared information on initiatives and measures to improve the accessibility of physical and digital environments. Examples included developing, updating and enforcing accessibility standards, incorporating accessibility considerations into urban and rural development plans and conducting accessibility audits on public facilities. Working Group members underscored the pressing need to promote a much wider application of universal design principles and ensure the accessibility of digital products and services in the context of accelerated digital transformation.

17. Working Group members emphasized the importance of fostering partnerships with private sector entities to accelerate disability-inclusive development. They noted that developing disability-inclusive business practices required concerted efforts to promote human rights in the private sector and engage persons with disabilities across the business value chain. Working Group members highlighted pioneering work on advancing disability inclusion in the tourism industry.

18. Working Group members stressed the necessity of adopting a gender-responsive life cycle approach to disability-inclusive development. They discussed endeavours to: enhance early childhood detection and intervention; promote disability-inclusive education, training and employment; increase access to social protections and disability-related services for persons with disabilities; and address the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities, such as limited participation in decision-making, violence and restricted access to justice. Working Group members also underlined the importance of empowering families and care partners, including their networks, to make sure that persons with disabilities had a good quality of life.

19. Working Group members noted the significant progress that had been made in disability data collection and analysis. They shared good practices on improving disability assessment and registration, incorporating the Washington Group questions on functioning into national censuses and surveys and using data to inform evidence-based policymaking and programming.

20. Working Group members emphasized the importance of multisectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration at the regional, national and local levels in implementing the Jakarta Declaration by 2032.

B. Operational guide on the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032 (agenda item 5)

21. The Working Group had before it the draft operational guide on the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.

22. Representatives of the following civil society entities made statements: Asia and Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; and Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region. Representatives of Samarthyam and the OKU Rights Matter Project made statements in an observer capacity.

23. The secretariat gave a presentation on the draft operational guide, focusing on the following aspects: drafting timeline; vision and objectives; target audience and usage; guiding principles; and structure, which encompassed overarching actions, specific actions for the priority areas outlined in the Jakarta Declaration, key actors and partners, and technical support and collaborative mechanisms and platforms.

24. Working Group members welcomed the development of the operational guide and expressed the hope that Governments and other stakeholders would use it as a technical resource for realizing disability-inclusive development during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032. They noted the continued relevance of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and the forward-looking nature of the Jakarta Declaration and the operational guide. They also provided comments on the draft and requested that these be taken into consideration by the secretariat, as appropriate, in the finalization of the operational guide.

25. Working Group members suggested that the secretariat make the operational guide available in accessible formats, including by developing an Easy Read version. While reminding Governments that the Jakarta Declaration was already available in Chinese, English, French and Russian, the Working Group also encouraged Governments to translate the Jakarta Declaration and the operational guide into other national languages to facilitate domestic awareness-raising and implementation.

26. Working Group members highlighted the following areas for increased efforts during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032: fostering interministerial and multi-stakeholder collaboration; mobilizing resources for organizations of persons with disabilities and increasing their participation in decision-making and monitoring processes; ensuring meaningful engagement of persons with lived experience of disability-related discrimination; empowering young people with disabilities; harnessing digital technologies to accelerate disability-inclusive development; enhancing the accessibility of financial services; partnering with the private sector on disability data collection and analysis; addressing the intersectionality of gender, disability and ageing; promoting disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction; and strengthening training on disability inclusion, including regional training of trainers.

C. Resource mobilization for the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032 (agenda item 6)

27. The representative of Pakistan made a statement.

28. The representative of Disabled Peoples’ International, Asia-Pacific region, made a statement. The representative of Samarthyam made a statement in an observer capacity.

29. The secretariat delivered a presentation on resource mobilization for the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032. It emphasized the continuing instrumental role of the multi-donor trust fund for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities in supporting disability-inclusive development in line with the six priority areas identified in the Jakarta Declaration. The secretariat also presented extrabudgetary projects funded by the Governments of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and by Rehabilitation International. The projects were focused on various thematic areas and contributed to the realization of disability rights and inclusion across the Asia-Pacific region.

30. Working Group members underscored the critical role of United Nations entities, international civil society organizations, development banks and other intergovernmental bodies in providing technical and financial support to Governments for implementing the Jakarta Declaration. Working Group members also emphasized the importance of supporting organizations of persons with disabilities and establishing close partnerships with them.

D. Establishment of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032 (agenda item 7)

31. The Working Group had before it the terms of reference of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032 (see annex II).

32. The representative of the Asia and Pacific Disability Forum made a statement.

33. The secretariat gave a presentation on the preparations for establishing the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032. The preparations included calling for expressions of interest from Governments and civil society organizations, ensuring that an equal number of government and civil society members were included in the composition of the Working Group and submitting the proposed composition to the Commission, at its eightieth session, for endorsement. The new Working Group would provide technical advice pertaining to the six priority areas for disability-inclusive development outlined in the Jakarta Declaration and review progress made in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.

34. Working Group members encouraged the secretariat to actively involve private sector entities and other stakeholders with expertise in the new Working Group, in an observer capacity.

E. Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (agenda item 8)

35. Representatives of the following Governments made statements: Malaysia and Thailand.

36. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: ASEAN Autism Network; Asia and Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Disabled Peoples' Organizations United; DAISY Consortium; and Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region. The representative of the OKU Rights Matter Project made a statement in an observer capacity.

37. The secretariat gave a presentation on the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by ESCAP, covering the background of the Strategy, the ESCAP disability inclusion policy and implementation plan, an overview of ESCAP progress reporting on the Strategy for 2022 and an introduction to United Nations resources on disability inclusion. In 2022, of the 15 indicators in the Strategy, ESCAP had exceeded requirements for five, met requirements for seven and approached requirements for the remaining three.

38. Working Group members commended the efforts made by entities of the United Nations system in implementing the Strategy. They highlighted the following areas for further action: encouraging the adaptation of the Strategy for national and subnational government actions, considering lessons learned in implementation; partnering with organizations of persons with disabilities to deliver disability equality training and follow-up activities that reflected the needs of diverse disability groups and were adapted to national and local contexts; developing a community of good practices for ongoing collaboration, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building; furthering the empowerment and engagement of the disability community, including young people and leaders from the most marginalized groups, such as persons with autism, through training and reasonable accommodation; increasing the employment of persons with diverse disabilities in the United Nations system, including by improving the accessibility of job application portals; and mainstreaming disability inclusion into United Nations entities at the country level, including by enhancing office accessibility and strengthening partnerships with local organizations of persons with disabilities.

F. Other matters (agenda item 9)

39. The representative of Malaysia made a statement.

40. Representatives of the following civil society organizations made statements: Asia and Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Disabled Peoples' Organizations United; DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; and Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region. The representative of Samarthyam made a statement in an observer capacity.

41. Working Group members reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and raising awareness about it during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032. They highlighted the following overarching actions for governments and other stakeholders: establishing multisectoral, multi-stakeholder and multilevel mechanisms to localize the Jakarta Declaration; mobilizing resources and enhancing partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities and private sector entities; building the capacities of emerging leaders and underrepresented groups in the disability community; and strengthening cooperation between developing and developed countries across the region.

42. Working Group members called for accelerated efforts by governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in the following critical areas: ensuring disability-inclusive digital transformation; promoting disability-inclusive tourism; increasing access to religious places for persons with disabilities; developing support systems, including community-based voluntary support, for persons with high care and support needs; addressing the needs of diverse disability groups in disasters, conflicts and other situations of risk; and standardizing terminologies and methodologies to generate accurate and comparable disability data.

43. The Working Group took note of the training courses and materials on accessible publishing and digital accessibility developed by the DAISY Consortium.

44. The representative of Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region, invited all present to attend the World Congress on Rehabilitation 2024, to be held in Abu Dhabi from 23 to 25 September 2024.

III. Organization

45. The Working Group held its ad hoc session in Bangkok and online on 8 and 9 November 2023.

46. The secretariat provided sign language interpretation services and real-time captioning developed by ESCAP using Microsoft Azure artificial intelligence for participants who had indicated a need for such support.

A. Attendance

47. Representatives of the following Governments attended: China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and Thailand.

48. Representatives of the following civil society organizations also attended: ASEAN Autism Network; Asia and Pacific Disability Forum; Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability Foundation; Asia-Pacific Disabled Peoples' Organizations United; DAISY Consortium; Disabled Peoples International, Asia-Pacific region; Rehabilitation International, Asia-Pacific region; Shuchona Foundation; South Asian Disability Forum; World Blind Union – Asia-Pacific; and World Federation of the Deaf Regional Secretariat for Asia.

49. Representatives of Samarthyam and the OKU Rights Matter Project attended as observers.

B. Election of officers

50. The Working Group elected the following officers:

Chair: Ms. Nantanoot Suwannawut (Thailand)

Vice-Chair: Ms. Reena Lee (Asia and Pacific Disability Forum)

C. Agenda

51. The Working Group adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Priority areas outlined in the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.
5. Operational guide on the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.

6. Resource mobilization for the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.
7. Establishment of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.
8. Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
9. Other matters.
10. Closing of the session.

Annex I

List of documents

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/APDDP/2022/3	Report on the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022	4
ESCAP/APDDP/2022/3/Add.1	Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032	4
ESCAP/80/6	Report on the ad hoc session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities held on 8 and 9 November 2023	
<i>Information available online</i>		
www.unescap.org/events/2023/ad-hoc-session-working-group-asian-and-pacific-decade-persons-disabilities	Annotated provisional agenda	3
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Annex II

Terms of reference of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032

I. Objective

1. The objective of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, is to provide technical advice and support to members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for the full and effective implementation of the Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032.¹

II. Functions

2. In pursuance of the objective stated in paragraph 1 above, the Working Group shall advise ESCAP members and associate members on the following:

(a) Ways and means to promote the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, at the regional, subregional and national levels to increase its visibility and influence;

(b) Technical issues pertaining to the six priority areas of accelerated actions identified in the Jakarta Declaration;

(c) Regional and subregional cooperation to advance the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032;

(d) Multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships among governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders to advance disability-inclusive development at the regional, subregional and national levels;

(e) Reviews of progress concerning the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration.

3. The Working Group shall advise the ESCAP secretariat on how to effectively implement the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, including by:

(a) Improving the accessibility of ESCAP premises and facilities;

(b) Strengthening disability inclusion in the core programmes of work and operations of ESCAP.

¹ In the Jakarta Declaration, the ministers and representatives of members and associate members of ESCAP requested the Executive Secretary to, among other things, continue to utilize the guidance of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, as appropriate, to support the effective implementation of the Jakarta Declaration, to make progress in achieving the goals set out in the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

III. Membership

4. The Working Group shall be composed of representatives of ESCAP members and associate members and civil society organizations, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities operating at the regional and subregional levels in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP members and associate members and civil society organizations admitted as members of the Working Group shall designate one individual as their representative. Members of the Working Group shall promptly notify the ESCAP secretariat of any changes in their nominated representative.

5. The tenure of members of the Working Group shall start from the date of the endorsement of the Working Group membership by the Commission and expire by the end of 2032. The membership of the Working Group shall be reviewed and updated, as necessary, at the midpoint review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, in 2027.

6. All ESCAP members and associate members shall be eligible for membership in the Working Group.

7. Expressions of interest by individual ESCAP members and associate members shall be submitted in writing to the ESCAP secretariat through the established official communication channel, namely through the designated seat of government or permanent representative.

8. The Working Group shall comprise no fewer than 10 members or associate members of ESCAP.

9. As a general principle, the Working Group should be composed of an equal number of government and civil society representatives.

10. Among the civil society organizations represented in the Working Group, at least half of the seats shall be allocated to persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Organizations of and for women with disabilities are particularly encouraged to submit expressions of interest. In the constitution of the Working Group, due attention shall be given to ensuring the representation of persons with diverse disabilities and a balance across subregions.

11. A civil society organization that meets the following core criteria shall be eligible to be considered for selection as a member of the Working Group:

(a) It must operate at the regional or subregional levels in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) It must be an organization or network that represents, supports or promotes the interests of persons with diverse disabilities;

(c) It must have technical expertise relevant to advancing one or more of the six priority areas identified in the Jakarta Declaration.

12. Expressions of interest by civil society organizations shall be submitted to the ESCAP secretariat in writing.

13. The proposed composition of the Working Group shall be submitted to the Commission at its eightieth session, in 2024, for endorsement. In the event of any changes to the composition of the Working Group at the midpoint review in 2027, the updated composition of the Working Group shall be

submitted to the Commission at its eighty-fourth session, in 2028, for endorsement.

IV. Observers

14. United Nations entities, subregional organizations, development partners, business associations and networks and other stakeholders that have expertise or initiatives dedicated to disability inclusion in the Asia-Pacific region may be invited to participate in the Working Group as observers.

15. Observers may provide advice and support on knowledge generation, collaboration and partnerships pertaining to one or more of the six priority areas identified in the Jakarta Declaration. They may observe meetings of the Working Group by invitation.

V. Rules of procedure

16. The Working Group shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

VI. Secretariat

17. The ESCAP secretariat shall serve as the secretariat of the Working Group. In that capacity, it shall, among other things, disseminate Working Group documentation in accessible formats, in English only.
