

Committee on Disability Matters
UNCRPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Wednesday 11th October 2023

Opening Statement

I thank the Chair for the invitation to meet with the committee to discuss the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) and the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

At the recent SDG Summit in New York political leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to *“end poverty and hunger everywhere, combat inequalities within and among countries and build peaceful societies that leave no one behind.”* Ireland played a key role in co-facilitating the Declaration with Qatar. The Taoiseach stressed in his statement that the text must become *“more than a piece of paper”* and reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to the 2030 Agenda, achievement of the Goals and ensuring that the world's poorest and most vulnerable are not forgotten or left behind.

Agenda 2030 recognises persons with disabilities as one of the vulnerable groups at risk of being left behind. While all SDGs and targets are applicable to persons with disabilities, there are 7 explicit references to persons with disabilities within SDG targets, including:

SDG 4: Quality Education

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

While persons with disabilities are included under the definition of vulnerable persons, it is recognised that disabled persons are not inherently vulnerable but can become vulnerable through social and environmental barriers. Removing such barriers in line with the UNCRPD is key to advancing the SDGs and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030.

Given the global objective of Agenda 2030, the Agenda recognises that a global partnership and spirit of global solidarity with people in vulnerable situations are required to ensure its implementation. Ireland's policy for international cooperation commits to reaching the furthest behind first in our efforts to support the achievement of the SDGs in developing countries, in particular to tackle extreme poverty and inequality.

To achieve a disability inclusive society, it is important that the SDGs are implemented in line with the UNCRPD and that they work in tandem. Ireland's National Implementation Plan 2022 – 2024 includes the strategic objective to further incorporate the principle of Leave No One Behind into Ireland's Agenda 2030 implementation and reporting mechanisms.

The Implementation Plan commits to holding three hybrid National Stakeholder Fora each year. An SDG National Stakeholder Forum Committee is convened annually, and their role includes ensuring the fora adopt a "whole of society" approach, ensuring increased awareness of the SDGs across society and the use of accessible communication. UNCRPD outlines an obligation on Government to engage with disabled people through their representative organisations, known as Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs). The 2023 forum committee included a DPO representative, and the implementation plan emphasises the importance

of engagement with DPOs. We will shortly be requesting expressions of interest from those who wish to participate on the committee for 2024.

The committee continues to work to ensure:-

- The use of plain English in all communications and reports
- Fora are hybrid events allowing access to all who wish to attend.
- Sign Language interpreters are present for all in-person and on-line communications.
- Live captioning is used at all fora for our on-line audience.
- Presentations and presentation materials are made available on request in advance of all events.
- An accessibility and inclusion officer is present at events.
- Event venues have full wheelchair access and clear facility signage is used.
- A quiet room is available to all attendants.

The January 2023 forum was specifically dedicated to defining what leaving no one behind means in an Irish context.

The 400 stakeholders who attended the fora agreed on the following definition to represent the Irish perspective of leaving no one behind: - *“An inclusive and empathetic society that empowers everyone to engage with and be represented in decision making, accelerating dignity, and enabling equal opportunities and equitable outcomes.* This definition will enable us to better ensure we were adapting the SDGs to meet national needs.

The UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) convenes in July each year. This year the Ministerial segment was attended by Minister Ryan who presented Ireland’s

Second Voluntary National Review (VNR). Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review (VNR) was developed under the theme of 'Building Back Better while Leaving No One Behind', informed by the underlying principle of Agenda 2030. The VNR reflects Ireland's strong economic recovery following the Covid 19 pandemic and our efforts to build back better while leaving no-one behind guided by the SDGs and Agenda 2030. It also provided an accessible and inclusive space for our national network of stakeholders to review Ireland's progress, offering their feedback and input on how they perceive Ireland is doing in terms of progressing the SDGs. Where progress has been made, this has been acknowledged and where work remains to be done, this has been called out.

The National Disability Authority contributed a chapter to our VNR, along with national stakeholder groups from a variety of sectors. The National Disability Authority, were asked to comment on Ireland's progress, offering feedback and input on how they perceive Ireland to be doing in terms of progressing the SDGs. All civil society chapters were completed on the principal of 'open drafting'.

This chapter together with the January SDG National Stakeholder Forum represents the beginning of the conversation on Leaving No One Behind in Ireland and not the end. The shared understandings and messages developed as part of the January SDG National Stakeholder Forum will be used to inform the development of guidance on the principle of Leave No One Behind which will be incorporated as an overarching element to progress the National Implementation Plan. In order to further ensure work across Government considers the needs of persons with disabilities and promotes their participation, it is intended to incorporate guidance in the SDG training course and toolkits for civil servants and Local Authorities.

As we enter the fourth year of the decade of Action for the SDGs it is important that we realise the opportunities that Agenda 2030 offers us to create a better, more just society, and that the SDGs are implemented in line with UNCRPD to ensure that we leave no-one behind.

Thanks You.