



Governing Body

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Institutional Section

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ILO disability inclusion policy and strategy

Purpose of the document

This document presents the rationale behind and a proposal on the structure and focus of an ILO policy on disability inclusion that reflects the commitment of the ILO to become a fully disability-inclusive organization. It also presents the framework of the multiannual strategies that would implement an ILO policy. It is being submitted with a view to implementing the recently adopted United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).

The Governing Body is invited to request the Director-General to finalize and implement the ILO policy, taking into account its guidance. It is also invited to instruct the Office to put in place multiannual strategies to implement the policy, to conduct monitoring and to periodically report to the Governing Body on progress and areas for improvement and to request the Director-General to take into consideration its guidance in pursuing the ILO's mandate to promote disability inclusion in the implementation of ILO strategic plans and the corresponding programmes and budgets, and in facilitating extrabudgetary resources (see the draft decision in paragraph 9).

Note: The consideration of this item was deferred from the 338th Session (March 2020) of the Governing Body. This document is a revised version of [GB.338/INS/8](#), updated with developments that have occurred since March 2020. Amendments have been made to paragraphs 7, 8 and 9(b).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Outcome 6: Gender equality and equal opportunities and treatment for all in the world of work.

Policy implications: Strengthen ILO capacity to accelerate greater and more meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: To be determined.

Follow-up action required: See the draft decision.

Author unit: Conditions of Work and Equality Department (WORKQUALITY).

Related documents: GB.316/POL/2.

▶ Background

1. The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) was launched in June 2019, with the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General describing it as a tool “to bring about the unified and transformative change we need” for disability inclusion in the UN.¹ Addressing issues such as strategic planning and management, inclusiveness and organizational culture, the UNDIS comprises a UN system-wide policy and an accountability framework against which all UN entities will report annually.
2. Based on its long-standing expertise in disability inclusion, the ILO served as Co-Chairperson of the working group of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which coordinated the work that led to the development of the UNDIS. In addition to this key coordinating role, the ILO provided particularly pertinent input to the UNDIS regarding: the indicators corresponding to the employment of persons with disabilities and the provision of reasonable accommodation; references to the ILO’s international labour standards; the role of staff unions and federations; and consultation with staff members with disabilities and staff members who have dependents with disabilities. The ILO also played an important role in the approval process, as the UNDIS was endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Programmes, chaired by the ILO, and the High-Level Committee on Management prior to its adoption by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination in May 2019.
3. One of the key indicators of the UNDIS accountability framework is the creation by UN entities of their own policies and strategies on disability inclusion. Accordingly, UN entities are currently developing or revising their own policies, tailoring them to their specific contexts and mandates, and aligning their organizational strategic plans with the UNDIS.
4. Within this context, the ILO is developing its own policy on disability inclusion. The policy would build on the ILO’s continuing work on disability inclusion, such as the policy on the employment of persons with disabilities of 2005² and the ILO’s Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2014–17, based on the Governing Body’s decision at its 316th Session (November 2012).³ The development of the ILO policy on disability inclusion is a logical extension of the Organization’s work to date, with the UNDIS providing the opportunity to work more broadly and comprehensively on disability across the Organization. Alignment with the UNDIS is also important in strategically positioning the ILO in the context of UN reform.

▶ Proposed ILO policy on disability inclusion

5. It is proposed that the ILO policy, in line with the common approach set out in the UNDIS for all UN entities, expresses the ILO’s commitment to the greater and more meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities and sets out how to achieve this through a preamble,

¹ United Nations: *Secretary-General’s remarks to the 12th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, New York, June 2019.

² ILO: *Circular No. 655 Policy on the employment of persons with disabilities*, 19 July 2005.

³ GB.316/PV(&Corr.), para. 379. See also GB.316/POL/2.

a policy statement and guiding principles. In addition, the ILO policy would draw on the particular principles of the ILO as an Organization dedicated to the promotion of decent work and social justice. While the UNDIS refers to the UN's overall commitment, framed by its international human rights standards, the ILO policy would base its commitment on the values laid down in the ILO Constitution, international labour standards and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. It would be important to ensure that the policy reflects the unique structure, mandate and values of the ILO, and the Governing Body may wish to provide guidance in this regard.

6. The ILO policy would detail a number of guiding principles, the areas of which are presented in the box below. These principles would build on key successes achieved under the ILO's Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2014–17, such as enhanced accessibility for persons with disabilities at ILO headquarters and the inclusion of disability in Decent Work Country Programmes. The principles would also address the key challenges observed in the application of the Strategy and Action Plan, such as the need for greater mainstreaming of disability issues, particularly in country programme outcomes. These successes and challenges are highlighted in the evaluation summary of the Strategy and Action Plan. A proposed policy, addressing these issues from an ILO perspective, is attached as an appendix.

- Consultation and social dialogue
- Employment and non-discrimination
- Accessibility
- Mainstreaming and targeting
- Capacity development and communication
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Human and financial resources
- Review of policy

▶ Framework for multiannual strategies

7. The ILO policy on disability inclusion would be implemented through multiannual strategies aligned with the timeframe of the overall ILO programming framework. These multiannual strategies on disability inclusion would address operational areas and include ILO-specific indicators, where necessary. These operational areas would be in line with the 15 indicators of the UNDIS accountability framework, as shown in the table below. The strategies would also ensure disability inclusion in policy work, as outlined in the relevant programme and budget. The Programme and Budget for 2020–21 focuses more heavily on disability inclusion than previous programmes and budgets, in line with the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, with a dedicated output under outcome 6 on equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work for persons with disabilities and other persons in vulnerable situations. The multiannual strategies would be adopted by the Senior Management Team, which would review progress regularly. The first multiannual strategy would cover 2020–23.

▶ **Indicator areas of the UNDIS accountability framework**

Leadership, strategic planning and management	Inclusiveness	Programming	Organizational culture
1. Leadership	5. Consultation with persons with disabilities	9. Programmes and projects	13. Employment
2. Strategic planning	6. Accessibility	10. Evaluation	14. Capacity development for staff
3. Disability-specific policy/strategy	6.1. Conferences and events	11. Country programme documents	15. Communication
4. Institutional set-up	7. Reasonable accommodation	12. Joint initiatives	
	8. Procurement		

8. The multiannual disability inclusion strategies will be the result of highly consultative processes that will take place throughout the Office. The strategies will clarify roles and responsibilities, assign custodian units to each indicator, and determine baselines and targets against which to track performance and measure progress. On the basis of the agreed UN-wide accountability framework, annual reporting to the UN on the implementation of the multiannual strategies was carried out in 2020 for the 2019 programme year, with the ILO's report containing its current and planned activities on disability inclusion. The first UNDIS report also contained information about disability-inclusive actions related to COVID-19, as well as any actions planned.

▶ **Draft decision****9. The Governing Body:**

- (a) requested the Director-General to finalize and implement the ILO policy on disability inclusion set out in the appendix to document GB.340/INS/9, taking into account the guidance provided during the discussion;
- (b) instructed the Office to put in place multiannual strategies to implement the ILO policy on disability inclusion, beginning in 2020–23, in the light of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy;
- (c) instructed the Office to conduct monitoring that coincides with the reporting period for the implementation of the accountability framework established by the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, and to periodically report to the Governing Body on progress and areas for improvement; and
- (d) requested the Director-General to pursue the ILO's mandate to promote disability inclusion in the implementation of current and future ILO strategic plans and corresponding programmes and budgets, and to facilitate extrabudgetary resources, taking into consideration the guidance provided during the discussion.

▶ Appendix

Proposed ILO policy on disability inclusion

Preamble

1. The ILO commits to meaningfully include persons with disabilities in its work, and to effectively incorporate a disability-inclusive approach in all its policies, projects, programmes and operations.
2. Guided by the ILO's mandate to advance social justice and promote decent work, and informed by the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the ILO reaffirms that persons with disabilities have the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, including labour rights, as all persons. This is consistent with the Declaration of Philadelphia that affirms that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity" and follows the human-centred approach set out in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, which includes "ensuring equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work for persons with disabilities".
3. In establishing this policy, the ILO reaffirms the relevance of its fundamental Conventions and recalls other relevant international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Policy statement

4. The ILO recognizes that decent work for all can be realized only if persons with disabilities, including those with physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory impairments, are fully and meaningfully included in the world of work, and that the ILO needs to lead by example.
5. To this end, the ILO will ensure that:
 - (a) persons with disabilities, including ILO staff, tripartite constituents and beneficiaries of its programmatic work, can fully contribute, on an equal basis with others, to the work of the Organization;
 - (b) its policies, projects, programmes and operations contain a human rights-based, gender-responsive approach to disability inclusion.
6. The Disability Inclusion Policy will be implemented through comprehensive multiannual strategies that establish indicators and targets for all relevant areas, against which progress will be assessed and gaps addressed, as well as through the development, review and application of general and disability-specific policies.

Guiding principles

7. The principles set out below will guide the implementation of this policy through the multiannual strategies.

Consultation and social dialogue

- (i) Ensure respect for social dialogue, and consult the Staff Union in the application of this policy, insofar as it impacts the conditions of service of ILO staff members.
- (ii) Consult and involve in a meaningful way staff members with disabilities and staff members who have dependants with disabilities, particularly on matters involving their career development, well-being, social benefits and health coverage.

Employment and non-discrimination

- (iii) Attract, recruit, retain and promote the career development of staff with disabilities, including through the provision of reasonable accommodation at work.
- (iv) Prevent and address all forms of stigma, discrimination, and violence and harassment on the basis of disability, including multiple and intersecting discrimination and discrimination by association.

Accessibility

- (v) Promote physical and digital accessibility both at headquarters and in field offices through the implementation of Universal Design principles, including in the procurement of goods and services, and through the removal of existing barriers.
- (vi) Ensure the accessibility of all ILO meetings, conferences and events, at ILO headquarters and in the field.

Mainstreaming and targeting

- (vii) Mainstream disability inclusion in the ILO's projects, programmes and operations, complemented by targeted interventions for persons with disabilities.

Capacity development and communications

- (viii) Build capacity on disability inclusion, including through awareness-raising and training, for staff at all levels, to help shape an organizational culture that values all persons.
- (ix) Ensure that internal and external communications are inclusive and respectful of persons with disabilities, and are available in accessible formats.

Monitoring and evaluation

- (x) Collect disability-disaggregated data to inform the design, implementation and monitoring of policies, projects, programmes and operations.
- (xi) Regularly monitor and evaluate the application of this policy and the multiannual strategies through which it will be implemented.

Human and financial resources

- (xii) Ensure the provision, within the biennial programmes and budgets, of adequate human and financial resources for disability inclusion for the implementation of this policy and the multiannual strategies.

Review of policy

- (xiii) Carry out periodical reviews and, if necessary, revise the policy to address gaps that are identified and future needs that arise.