



DSPD/DESA Panel Discussion on



Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology
Accessible Technologies for Persons with Disabilities: Crossing the Digital Divide

Conference Room 8, United Nations Headquarters, New York
December 2, 2014, 10:00am – 1pm

Organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in partnership with the Singapore and Moroccan Permanent Missions to the United Nations

Overview

The importance of new technologies in promoting and enhancing human capabilities is not unknown. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones or the Internet, are unique infrastructures that expand access to key public services, promoting digital inclusion. In many parts of the developing world, access to new technologies have expanded the ability of small producers to be more effectively connected to the market, to access extension services and expand the scope of their financial inclusion. Similarly, new technologies have brought expert healthcare to remote areas, and improved the educational experience of many. In the developed world, digital technologies have become engrained in our daily lives, shaping the way we receive and use information, the way that we interact with our physical space and our patterns of communication, among other things. However, for the more than 1 billion people with disabilities (PwDs) around the world – 80 per cent of them living in developing countries - the benefits of many established and emerging technologies remains elusive.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD), which entered into force in 2008, constitutes a commitment of the international community to the inclusion of the disability perspective and persons with disabilities (PwDs) in all aspects of development. Furthermore, in line with Article 9 of the UN-CRPD, Member States agreed to ensure to PwDs access on an equal basis with others, to new technologies to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. They also agreed to promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.



The report of the ICT Consultation in support of the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September this year, titled “The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework”, identified the barriers that people with disabilities experience in accessing and using ICTs such as web services, mobile devices, television and computers. These barriers include the cost of making accessible ICTs and poor implementation of policies to promote the creation of accessible ICTs.

Accessible technologies can enable and accelerate the social inclusion of PwDs in education, employment, civic engagement, healthcare, culture, protection and entertainment. Ensuring accessibility and expanding access to assistive technologies should therefore become a key element of national, regional policies to remove the remaining barriers faced by PwDs. This will be fundamental for the post-2015 development agenda and for increasing innovation, strengthening environmental protection and driving social and economic development.

In line with the above and in partnership with the Singapore and Moroccan Permanent Missions to the United Nations, the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is organizing a panel discussion on “Accessible Technologies for Persons with Disabilities” on 2 December 2014 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The event will promote the theme of the 2014 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) on “Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology” and will feature successful policies and innovative best practices on accessible technologies for PwDs.

Objectives of the Panel Discussion

The key objective of the panel discussion is to identify, exchange, and examine good practices and lessons learned in the planning and implementation of policies and strategies to promote accessible technologies for sustainable development in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all.

In particular, the panel aims to:

- Foster the development and promotion of accessible technologies in order to create fair and equal opportunities for PwDs and support a disability-inclusive development agenda that will contribute to the emerging post-2015 global development agenda;
- Inspire all stakeholders to take concrete measures for the empowerment of PwDs through the use of inclusive and accessible technologies.



Discussion Questions

- How can we ensure that accessible and assistive technologies are widely available to PwDs and can be used to exercise their rights, considering equality and affordability?
- How can we inspire governments, industry and other stakeholders to promote accessible technologies policies in order to create equal opportunities for PwDs and support a disability-inclusive development agenda that will contribute to the emerging post-2015 global development agenda?
- What are examples of innovative good practices relating to accessible technologies for PwDs and how can they contribute to building inclusive societies?

Draft Programme

10.00am – 10:10am Opening remarks by moderator
10:10am – 12:10pm Speakers
12:10-1pm Interactive discussion

Moderator

Ms. Afaf Konja



Ms. Konja began her decade-long career in television and radio news at the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) local affiliate, KGTV/10 News in San Diego, California. Her interviews with world leaders have spanned throughout the global South and beyond to include the UN Secretary-General, UN General Assembly Presidents, along with in-studio and on location interviews with heads of State and Government. She has hosted live High-level red carpet galas including the South-South Awards for 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Working in the context of international diplomacy and global development as the Spokesperson for the President of the United Nations General Assembly at its 68th Session, Ms. Konja pulls from her vast hands-on experience, from live coverage at UN General Debates to special coverage at UN Conferences such as the UN Conference on Sustainable Development or Rio+20 and ECOSOC High-level Ministerial Reviews.

Ms. Konja has held periodical press conferences with and on behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly and produced official statements for distribution of bilateral meetings with heads of State and Government throughout the 68th Session. She graduated from San Diego State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Speech Communication and Journalism. She is a native of Iraq. She speaks Aramaic fluently and has a working knowledge of French. Afaf is a national of the United States.



Speakers

H.E. Ms. Karen Tan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, United Nations Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore



Her Excellency, Ambassador Karen Tan has served as the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations since August 2013. Prior to this, Ms. Tan served as High Commissioner to India from February 2011 to June 2013, with concurrent accreditation as Singapore's Ambassador to Bhutan and Nepal.

Before taking up her post in New Delhi, Ms. Tan served as Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva from September 2007 to December 2010. She was Ambassador to the Lao People's

Democratic Republic between February 2004 and August 2007.

She also served as First Secretary in Paris, from 1989 to 1992, and as Counsellor and subsequently Deputy Permanent Representative at the United Nations in New York from 1997 to 1999. She held various positions at the Ministry's headquarters, including Senior Deputy Director of Policy Planning and Analysis Directorate IV, Director of Human Resources and Director of Policy, Planning and Analysis Directorate II, having joined the foreign service in 1985.

Ms. Tan holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of London, and a Master of Science in European Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Ambassador, Permanent Mission to the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations



Before serving in his current capacity, Ambassador Hilale was Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva. He also served previously as Secretary-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Rabat from 2005 to 2008.

He was Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva from 2001 to 2005, and Ambassador to Indonesia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand between 1996 and 2001. He also held several positions in the Foreign Ministry, including that of Minister Plenipotentiary and member of the Office of the Secretary of State, from 1993 to 1996.

From 1991 to 1993, Mr. Hilale headed the Ministry Section responsible for the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council and International Organizations. He was Deputy Ambassador in Monrovia, Liberia, from 1979 to 1980; First Secretary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, between 1976 and 1979; and Second Secretary in Algiers, Algeria, from 1975 to 1976. He joined the Foreign Ministry in 1974.

Mr. Hilale received a degree in political science from Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco, in 1974.



Ms. Daniela Bas
Director, Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD)

<http://social.un.org> | <http://www.unsdn.org>

Ms. Daniela Bas is the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSPD/UNDESA).

As a political scientist and social development professional, Ms. Bas has accumulated close to 10 years' experience in the United Nations system promoting social development and social inclusion.

Her work outside of the UN system has also focused on inclusive development, including her work as the Italian representative designated by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers on the topic "Tourism for All" to the European Commission (Belgium).

Ms. Bas holds a degree in Political Science, with a focus on International Politics.

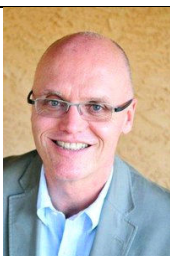


Ms. Frances West, Chief Accessibility Officer, International Business Machines (IBM)

<http://citizenibm.com/author/frances-west>

Ms. Frances West recently became IBM's first Chief Accessibility Officer. As leader of the Human Ability & Accessibility Center, Ms. West has brought to IBM more than 10 years of experience in enabling human ability through accessible ICT. Ms. West has served on the board of directors of the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Assistive Technology Industry Association and the U.S Business Leadership Network, among others. Ms. West also currently sits on the board of the World Institute on Disability, is a trustee at the National Braille Press and an advisor to the National Business & Disability Council.

For more than 100 years, IBM has advanced technology access for people of all abilities. Some of its earliest innovations include the first Braille printer, a talking typewriter and the first commercially viable screen reader.



Mr. Gary Fowlie
Head of the Liaison office of the International

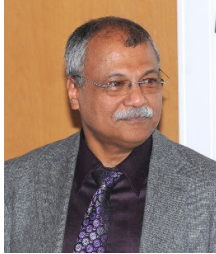
Mr. Gary Fowlie has been the head of the Liaison office of the International Telecommunication Union to the United Nations since 2009. Mr. Fowlie is an Economist and Journalist. He was a Producer/Reporter for the news service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for 10 years and a freelance reporter for The Economist.

Mr. Fowlie was responsible for communications for the UN World Summit on the Information Society (2003 and



Telecommunication Union (ITU)
<http://www.itu.int/>

2005) and from 2005 until 2009 was the Chief of Media Liaison for the United Nations in New York. Mr. Fowle is a graduate of the Universities of Alberta, Alabama and the London School of Economics.



Mr. Chapal Khasnabis
Department of Essential Medicines & Health Products, World Health Organization
<http://www.who.int>

To realize several articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) related to the provision of Assistive Technology; specifically article 32 - International cooperation on Assistive Technology, the World Health Organization recently launched a new global initiative – Global Cooperation on Assistive Health Technology (GATE). The goal of this initiative is to improve access to high-quality affordable assistive health products such as wheelchairs, prostheses, hearing aids, low-vision aids etc.

Mr. Khasnabis is working with the UN Agencies, international organizations, industries, donor agencies, professional organizations, academia, and organizations of/for persons with disabilities to develop the GATE initiative.

Mr. Khasnabis is a prosthetics and orthotics Engineer with Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Science. He has worked 13 years with the Government, 9 years with the Non-government Organizations and last 12 years with the World Health Organization.



Mr. Axel Leblois
Executive Director, G3ict
<http://www.g3ict.org>

Mr. Axel Leblois is the founder and president of G3ict, the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs launched in 2006 to promote the ICT accessibility dispositions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Prior to launching G3ict, he spent over 20 years at the helm of information technology companies in the United States including as CEO of Computerworld Communications, and CEO of IDC. Mr. Leblois has also served as a Senior Special Fellow of UNITAR, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and is a founding trustee of its North American affiliate CIFAL Atlanta.

Mr. Leblois currently serves on the Board of Directors of USICD, U.S. International Council on Disabilities, and GAATES, Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments. He is a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars on ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities organized for policy makers, civil society and the private sector to foster collaboration among multiple stakeholders.



Mr. Przemek Kuśmierek
CEO, Projekt migam.org
<http://migam.org/>

Mr. Przemek Kusmierek is Founder, and CEO of Migam, the automatic two-way sign language translator for smart devices capturing sign language with a depth camera and turning it into a text message, and likewise turning a text/speech message into sign language by means of a virtual avatar displayed on the screen. Mr. Kusmierek is Nutrition Analyst, IT Specialist, Economist, and Network Engineer. In the past Mr. Kusmierek was an IT Product Leader, now is trying to change the world with Migam.org.

Awards and distinctions include The World Summit Award, The New Europe 100, Most Creative People in Business in Poland, runner up in The World's Most Inspiring Social Innovations Using Digital Technology, and The Winner of The Virgin Academy. The objective of Migam is to solve problems and difficulties in communication between deaf people and the rest of society all over the world.