

VOICE

— UN DESA —

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Join UN DESA at the SDG Pavilion at COP 28!

“What happens in Antarctica doesn’t stay in Antarctica,” said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres upon returning from his recent trip to the southernmost continent to witness the melting sea ice. “We live in an interconnected world.” Just ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Secretary-General issued a call for urgent global climate action to “not let the hopes of people around the world for a sustainable planet melt away.”

UN DESA is answering the call by hosting for the fifth time the [SDG Pavilion](#) on the margins of COP28, offering two weeks of panel discussions, fireside chats and interviews aimed at making clear the interconnectedness of the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sessions on renewable energy (SDG 7), the ocean (SDG 8), sustainable cities (SDG 11), forests (SDG 15) and more will showcase ways people are taking action to get the world back on track to meet its carbon emissions goals. Increasing climate financing and ensuring the long-term success of small island developing States (SIDS) also are key focal areas.

The SDG Pavilion aims to be truly inclusive, and its more than 100 events will be organized by Member States, civil society organizations and UN offices from around the world, in addition to UN DESA. All of the sessions will be streamed live on the [UN DESA YouTube channel](#), and the [full programme](#) is available online.

Li Junhua, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Head of UN DESA, will attend COP28 and participate in sessions that highlight the benefits of the circular economy, ways to leverage special drawing rights for climate and sustainable development, and support the upcoming 2024 SIDS Conference in Antigua and Barbuda.

“The Pavilion will focus on real, meaningful climate action,” Mr. Li said. “If you are attending COP28, be sure to join me and the UN DESA team in our SDG Pavilion. We’ll have events there every day, showing how action for the global goals can help the climate challenge, too.”

Watch the SDG Pavilion live from Dubai on the [UN DESA YouTube channel](#), and follow UN DESA’s [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts to see the highlights. You can add your thoughts to the conversation, too, by using [#SDGPavilion](#).



EXPERT VOICES



United to achieve the SDGs for, with, and by persons with disabilities

The five dimensions of sustainable development – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships – are all essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ahead of this year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we discussed with UN DESA’s Guozhong Zhang, how including persons with disabilities in all these dimensions can create a more equal world for everyone.

People (focus on women and girls with disabilities):

How can we ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not left behind when pursuing gender equality and the SDGs?

“We must develop and implement policies that address the intersectionality of gender and disability. This means removing barriers to education, healthcare and other essential services. It means promoting equal opportunities for decent work by improving physical accessibility, providing necessary accommodations, and promoting inclusive pathways from education to employment. It is also important to create platforms for women and girls with disabilities to share their experiences and contribute to decision-making processes.”

Planet (focus on climate change and its impact on persons with disabilities):

How does climate change affect persons with disabilities, and what measures can be taken to reduce these impacts?

“Climate change is a global issue that impacts everyone, but it can have particularly severe effects on persons with disabilities due to their challenges with mobility, obtaining information, and existing health conditions. To address this, it is important to design inclusive climate change adaptation and disaster response plans, prepared in close consultation with persons with disabilities. This means providing accessible emergency information, accommodating persons with different disabilities in evacuation procedures, and involving persons with disabilities in planning processes. It is also crucial to create accessible and resilient infrastructure, such as healthcare facilities, to improve the safety and preparedness of persons with disabilities in the face of climate-related challenges.”

Prosperity (focus on allocating financial resources for inclusive development):

How should we allocate financial resources to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities?

“The inclusion of persons with disabilities in development is crucial for global prosperity. This means ensuring that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from development. To achieve this, we need to allocate financial resources effectively and adequately, and ensure that disability is mainstreamed in financing for development. This involves investing in accessible infrastructure in public spaces, transportation, and buildings to remove physical barriers. Additionally, funding should be allocated to research and development of assistive technologies to improve the quality of life and autonomy of persons with disabilities.”

Peace (focus on the impact of conflict on persons with disabilities):

How can humanitarian responses be customized to meet the needs of persons with disabilities during conflicts?

“Conflict and other emergencies often have disproportionate effects on persons with disabilities. We need tailored strategies that address the specific needs of persons with disabilities, such as physical accessibility, sign language interpreters, and accessible information formats. It is essential to provide training to emergency personnel to increase their awareness of, and ability to respond, the needs of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, we must ensure that persons with disabilities are involved in planning and decision-making processes to consider their unique perspectives and create more effective responses.”

Partnerships (focus on collaboration with the global community of persons with disabilities):

In what ways can partnerships with organizations led by, or representing, persons with disabilities help accelerate SDG progress?

“Partnerships with the global community of persons with disabilities are essential for the success of the SDGs. By collaborating with this community, we can obtain valuable insights, innovative solutions, and untapped abilities. Persons with disabilities have a distinct viewpoint on the challenges and opportunities of development, and they can play a vital role in designing and implementing inclusive solutions. These partnerships help design accessible programs, promote the effective implementation of disability-inclusive policies, and ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes capture genuine impact.”

Learn more about these efforts and follow this year’s observance of the [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) on 1 December 2023 at UN Headquarters in New York live via [UN Web TV](#).





7 approaches the public sector employed to respond to a global crisis

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, public institutions faced unprecedented challenges. Governments worldwide grappled with fundamental questions, seeking ways to sustain essential

government functions and deliver critical public services. [The World Public Sector Report 2023](#) explores the transformative impact of these efforts. Learn of 7 approaches the public sector employed to respond to the crisis and contribute towards achieving the SDGs.

1. Rapid adaptation in crisis: The pandemic forced public institutions to break from conventional norms and embrace experimentation and innovation. In response to disrupted processes, sectors like education swiftly transitioned to online teaching, while the health sector experienced rapid regulatory changes, technological advancements and shifts in service delivery.

2. Innovative solutions across sectors: Public institutions found novel ways to deliver critical services. From digitalization in health services to the reimagining of workforce structures, the crisis prompted innovative approaches that reshaped the landscape of public service. Establishing strategic foresight centres of excellence can help build an anticipatory governance ecosystem across the public sector.

3. Transparent governance in unprecedented times: Tools were mobilized to ensure transparency and accountability in governmental actions. These tools tracked the use of public funds, policy changes affecting human rights and alterations in civic space. This collaborative effort involved various stakeholders working towards informed decision-making. Involving civil society organizations in monitoring response measures further enhances accountability.

4. Empowered public servants: In response to the pandemic's shift to remote work, discussions on promoting women's inclusion in public administration have burgeoned, crucial for enhancing public service responsiveness, inclusiveness, and resilience. Motivated by the need for innovation, public servants reduced red tape as standard operating procedures were loosened, collaborating with civil society organizations to inform the public and provide services to marginalized communities.

5. Renewing social contracts: trust and civic safeguards: Crises amplify doubts about the system's effectiveness. Renewed social contracts, built on trust, are crucial for addressing challenges, responding to crises and achieving SDGs. Safeguarding civic space requires regular reviews of emergency powers. Engaging civil society involves innovative methods, enforcing access to information laws and combating misinformation.

6. Fast-tracking SDG decision-making: Existing analytical tools are crucial for SDG decision-making, requiring tailored advice to align with policymakers' demands for smoother integration. Leveraging global networks is crucial for disseminating analytical tools, highlighting their advantages in addressing interconnected SDGs and offering capacity-building opportunities.

7. Digital governance safeguards: The pandemic accelerated the shift to digital governance, emphasizing the need for enhanced safeguards and oversight of digital

technologies. Strengthening individuals' data rights protections is essential for responsible digital administration.

As the world has emerged from the pandemic, the [World Public Sector Report 2023](#) provides valuable insights into the transformative impact of these innovations. Explore examples from diverse sectors, countries, and institutions to understand how positive changes in the public sector can be preserved and leveraged in a complex global context.



SDG BLOG  Edward Ndopu, UN Secretary-General's SDG Advocate and award winning, internationally acclaimed activist and humanitarian



Centering disability justice in the fight for climate action

By Edward Ndopu, UN Secretary-General's SDG Advocate and award winning, internationally acclaimed activist and humanitarian

In my exploration of the critical intersection between disability and climate change, I've had a profound realization: disability issues are not peripheral but central, crucial for innovative approaches in our collective fight against climate change. At this pivotal moment, the urgency for action is palpable, yet a significant piece is often missing from our climate dialogue. The experiences and needs of people with disabilities are frequently overlooked in policy discussions and sustainable practices. This omission is not just a gap in our approach; it's a significant flaw. Those with disabilities face heightened risks in environmental disasters and extreme weather events, making their inclusion in climate action plans not just necessary but essential. My advocacy is for an inclusive approach to climate action, one that elevates the voices and needs of the disabled community, ensuring they are not an afterthought but key contributors in shaping a resilient, equitable future for our planet.

People with disabilities represent the world's largest minority group, with over one billion individuals facing various physical, sensory, intellectual, and emotional challenges. Yet, their voices and leadership are often marginalized or ignored in climate discussions. It's time to change that narrative and recognize that addressing the needs of people with disabilities is not just an act of inclusion; it's a catalyst for innovation and progress in our fight against climate change.

Climate change poses a severe threat to all, yet its impacts are most acutely felt by vulnerable communities. Within these groups, people with disabilities are particularly at risk, facing unique challenges that often go overlooked. During extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, or heatwaves, standard evacuation plans and emergency response systems frequently fail to consider the needs of those with disabilities. This oversight can lead to dire consequences, with individuals with disabilities finding themselves stranded, unable to access safe locations due to the lack of accessibility features in emergency shelters or transport services.

Moreover, the escalation of temperatures associated with climate change can significantly worsen existing health conditions, particularly for those with disabilities. Heat stress, respiratory problems, and other health issues are exacerbated, necessitating that healthcare facilities not only be more accessible but also better equipped to cater to the specific needs of individuals with disabilities. This includes ensuring that medical equipment is accessible, staff are trained in disability awareness, and facilities are designed to be more inclusive.

The neglect of the needs of people with disabilities in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies not only perpetuates existing inequalities but also undermines our collective efforts to address climate change. Inclusive climate action is essential, recognizing that protecting the most vulnerable among us strengthens resilience for everyone. By integrating disability considerations into climate policy, planning, and response, we can work towards a more equitable and effective approach to combating the effects of climate change, ensuring that no one is left behind in our quest for a sustainable future.

It's essential to understand that when we prioritize the needs of people with disabilities, we create positive externalities that benefit society as a whole. Accessibility innovations, such as ramps, accessible transportation, and assistive technologies, are not just solutions for individuals with disabilities. They are innovations that enhance mobility, convenience, and safety for everyone. Take, for example, curb cuts on sidewalks, initially designed to aid wheelchair users but now appreciated by parents with strollers, cyclists, and delivery workers.

Moreover, the ingenuity within the disability community has led to groundbreaking inventions that have broader applications. Voice recognition software, initially developed for people with limited mobility, has transformed the way we interact with technology. Braille, developed for blind individuals, has evolved into a tactile reading system used by sighted people in various applications.

In the fight against climate change, this innovative potential must not be squandered. By involving people with disabilities in the development of climate solutions, we tap into a wellspring of creativity and adaptability. For instance, individuals with sensory disabilities have unique insights into the auditory and tactile aspects of our environment, which can inform early warning systems for climate-related disasters. Wheelchair users and individuals with mobility challenges can provide valuable input on accessible infrastructure design, making urban spaces more resilient to extreme weather events.

In my personal journey, I've seen firsthand how disability can spur innovation and resilience. As someone with a physical disability using a wheelchair, I've gained a profound appreciation for assistive technologies. These innovations, aimed at making the world more accessible, have not only revolutionized my life but also opened the door to numerous opportunities. They've enabled me to actively participate in education, employment, and advocacy, breaking barriers that once seemed insurmountable.

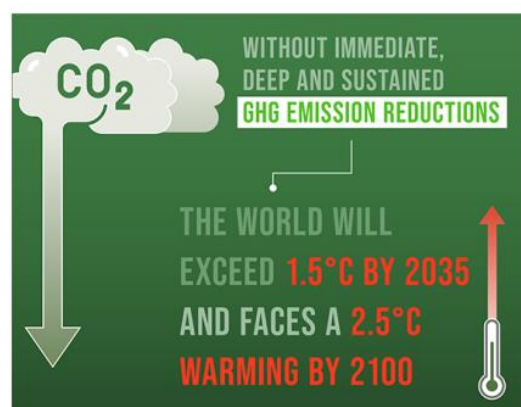
My experiences have led me to recognize that disability is a crucible for innovation, especially in tackling climate challenges. This perspective underscores the necessity of elevating the role and voices of people with disabilities in our climate action efforts. In doing so, we ensure that our journey towards a sustainable, inclusive future leaves no one behind.

In summary, disability is not a peripheral issue but a fundamental aspect of our society. People with disabilities, forming the world's largest minority group, are uniquely affected by climate change. Addressing climate issues effectively requires us to recognize disability as a hub of innovation, where solutions tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities yield broad benefits. By focusing on the leadership and insights of disabled individuals, we can drive progress and foster a more inclusive and resilient world for everyone. It's vital to align the needs of people with disabilities with the urgent mission of climate action, benefiting their well-being and the betterment of society at large.

** The views expressed in this blog are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of UN DESA.*



SDG 13 IN NUMBERS



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