**Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum**

**Why a Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan is necessary**

**For the last 20 months Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum (CDPF) has been proposing to Commonwealth States, Commonwealth Accredited Organisations and the Commonwealth Secretariat of the pressing need for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2024 to adopt a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). CDPF urges the Committee of the Whole (COW) to recommend the adoption of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan as an addendum to the Communique. Here CDPF lay out the arguments and substance of taking this course of action.**

CDPF has over 100 Disabled People-led organisations in membership in 49 Commonwealth countries, with a representative elected Executive Committee. We seek to gain Equality for all the estimated 430 million[[1]](#footnote-1) disabled citizens of the Commonwealth and help member countries to fully implement the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UNCRPD (2006).](https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf)

Based on the CDPF experience of working with and across Commonwealth countries and within the Commonwealth attending CHOGM Forums, Ministerial Meetings and Commonwealth Secretariat events, we have formed the view that disabled people/people with disabilities are poorly served in terms of access, equality, inclusion and voice. While we recognise that CHOGM communiques in 2018 and 2022 have mentioned the UNCRPD, its implementation and challenging stigma, we have not witnessed any serious attempts to take forward the disability rights agenda across the Commonwealth. The United Nations adopted a [Disability Inclusion Strategy[[2]](#footnote-2)](https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN_Disability_Inclusion_Strategy_english.pdf) in 2018.The Commonwealth has no such comprehensive approach to disability.The Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum (CDPF) is proposing and lobbying for Commonwealth member states to adopt a Disability Inclusion Action Plan, covering Articles and Action Points, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa, October 2024.

It is 18 years since the UNCRPD was adopted at the United Nations. All but Tonga of our 56 member countries have now ratified the UNCRPD. **The implementation of the UNCRPD requires a root and branch change** **in the way disability is viewed across our countries**. The Convention takes to a new height the movement **from** the treatment of persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection **towards** viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent, as well as being active members of society. [The Convention gives universal recognition to the dignity of persons with disabilities.](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/convinfopara.htm)[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Implementation also requires countries to recognise** “that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. (UNCRPD Preamble- e) **Called a paradigm shift,** the UNCRPD requires countries to view persons with disabilities, including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society, on an equal basis with others. (UNCRPD Article 2) **Impairment has been with us as long as there have been human beings. It is society’s response that has to change to ensure full implementation and equality for all persons with disabilities.**

[Accessibility](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/convinfoguide.htm) is addressed on its own in UNCRPD Article 9 and is also a guiding principle of the Convention. This Convention marks the first time that the concept of accessibility is mentioned in an international human rights instrument. The extremely comprehensive way it is conceived in the Convention represents a sinificant move forward in the evolution of thinking in development and disability.

If the Commonwealth at CHOGM 2024 adopts the Action Plan it will provide ways to collaborate across countries on taking forward the implementation of full rights for persons with disabilities, who have not been mentioned in the Commonwealth Charter and other declarations. The Kigali [Declaration on Child Care and Protection Reform](https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-02/Kigali%20DECLARATION%20on%20Child%20Care%20and%20Protection%20Reform.pdf?VersionId=9wtz6M4XiIUnrZqfffqjv.1Ur9ZtKBVu) , 2022, provided ways of focusing on a forgotten area and has created new consensus across Commonwealth Ministerial meetings such as Education. The Disability Inclusion Action Plan will do likewise in 2024.

The theme of CHOGM 2024 "**One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Common Wealth"** looks at the core pillars of the Commonwealth through a resilience lens. CHOGM 2024 aims to strengthen:

* Resilient democratic institutions upholding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The Action Plan provides a strong commitment and realistic proposals for achieving human rights, democratic involvement and application of the rule of law for persons with disabilities, who have largely been excluded or overlooked in these areas.
* A resilient environment to combat climate change. Vital for the future of all of us, but persons with disabilities have been shown to be between 3 and 4 times more at risk in emergency situations and will find it harder to adapt to changing climate and environmental conditions[[4]](#footnote-4).
* Resilient economies that support recovery and prosperity. Persons with disabilities, especially women, continue to be excluded at much higher rates from employment and livelihood opportunities, creating a huge loss of GDP from every country[[5]](#footnote-5).
* Resilient societies to empower individuals for a peaceful and productive life. Continuing stigma, discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities must be tackled systematically to achieve this pillar[[6]](#footnote-6).

The [Disability Inclusion Action Plan](https://commonwealthdpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/THE-COMMONWEALTH-DISABILITY-INCLUSION-ACTION-PLAN-3rd-Draft.docx)[[7]](#footnote-7) [and Annex 1 of this document], defines terms and draws upon the UNCRPD, while the Action Points identify a series of actions that will take the implementation of the UNCRPD in each country and across the Commonwealth as a whole, forward in a step change. It will allow for the exchange of experiences, focus on gathering disaggregated statistics, provide training and coordination of expertise and raise the profile of disability rights for all Commonwealth citizens.

It has been argued that we do not need a stand-alone Disability Inclusion Action Plan and that we can prioritise mainstreaming of disability equality alongside gender and other neglected equality areas. Experience has taught the Disabled People’s Movement that the Commonwealth needs a **twin track** approach to disability, including measures to enhance the equality of persons with disabilities in all relevant declarations, policies and documents. But because there are specific requirements of reasonable accommodation, support and accessibility that do not apply in other equality areas, we also need a specific Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

2024 is the right year for the Commonwealth to raise its profile on disability equality. As we move forward grappling with increasing financial, economic, social, political and environmental problems; if disability equality and rights for persons with disabilities are not brought centre stage then, the likelihood is they will forever remain in the margins.

Earlier drafts of the Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan took the title of Protocol and Strategy. CDPF have decided on the advice of the Commonwealth Secretariat, especially Assistant Secretary Professor Luis Franceschi, that many states are fed up with passing declarations and want Action Plans which will help them tackle the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and forward their equality. CDPF Executive has agreed to this change as we think it so important to move implementation of Disability Rights forward across the Commonwealth.

CDPF has been contacting High Commissioners, Ministers and UN Representatives and the following is the level of support for adopting the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (as of 17th July 2024). The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is already supported to be adopted at CHOGM by Gambia, Malta and the United Kingdom. The following states are looking favourably at adopting through discussions with High Commissioners and state parties at the UN, but have yet to commit: -Antigua Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, Cyprus, Gabon, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, New Zealand, Pakistan, Samoa, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Togo and Zambia. All other London High Commissioners have been written to with updates.

Commonwealth Accredited Organisations through the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations IFCO have endorsed the Disability Inclusion Action Plan. A highly successful side meeting was held on 11th June 2024 at the Conference of State Parties[[8]](#footnote-8) in New York, on why we need this Disability Inclusion Action Plan to be adopted at CHOGM 2024. Speakers from the Governments of Malta, United Kingdom and Bahamas supported and Luis Franceschi, Assistant Secretary General Commonwealth said: “Samoa is sympathetic and it would be necessary and important to adopt the Disability Inclusion Action Plan at CHOGM as an addendum to the Communique. This will require state parties to move as an addendum”.

CDPF has not ‘gone to the wall’ on the language. CDPF favour ‘disabled people’ as we are disabled by the barriers in society, not our impairments. Therefore, we favour identity first language. It is the social and culturally derived oppression that has to be changed by removing barriers and giving us equal rights. However, we have recognised that a number of States and many people prefer person first language ‘persons with disabilities’ and so we have adopted ‘persons with disabilities’ in this Disability Inclusion Action Plan and when discussing the UNCRPD.

**The Communique**

CDPF Comment ***The One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Common Wealth'*** **CDPF** would like to point out that the paragraph **II.6**  copied below, while a more comprehensive coverage than previously of disability equality,  does not acknowledge  the existence of the Commonwealth Disability Action Plan, which already has a significant number of countries who have indicated their support and potential support. CDPF therefore propose the amendments below (shown in red and underlined), to be added to the proposed policy options. CDPF support the proposed High Level Advisory Commission, but think it should be made up mainly of representatives of Disabled People’s Organisations from across the Commonwealth.

CDPF also strongly think if the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is adopted by CHOGM then its development could be deleted leaving the task of the High Level Commission to advise on implementation of the Action Points and developments. This would save at least 2 years on implementation. CDPF welcome the increased focus on Disability at Ministerial Meetings and have participated, but this is not sufficient to lead to the change needed to set a course of increasing disability equality across the Commonwealth. This must be led and informed by the lived experience of representative disabled people/persons with disabilities from across the Commonwealth as the main part of the High Level Advisory Committee.

**II Resilient Democratic Institutions, Point 6 states**

**"Protecting the human rights of persons with disabilities**- Disability is a crosscutting issue that necessarily requires an intersectional approach and the importance of strengthening disability inclusion was identified and discussed as a key issue at the 13th Commonwealth Women Affairs Ministerial Meeting (13WAMM), the 10th Commonwealth Youth Ministerial Meeting (10CYMM), the March 2024 Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting (CLMM) and is a core workstream of the Human Rights Unit.

In pursuit of an inclusive Commonwealth, the following actions are being proposed:

Ø Heads reaffirm their commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities and

emphasise the importance of disability inclusion as an integral part of achieving

the SDGs.

“Ø Heads will be invited to adopted The Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan as an addendum to the Communique to guide the Commonwealth’s work on disability inclusion and equality.” (amendment to add)

Ø Heads will be invited to recommend the establishment of a High-Level Advisory

Commission of Persons with Disabilities to consist mainly of representatives of Disabled People’s Organisations from across the Commonwealth (add) to advise on the development and implementation of a disability inclusion strategy, as well as the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities."

**Considering an alternate form of words for the Action Plan**

CDPF are open to an addendum to the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan which makes clear that the paradigm shift from charity /medical views of disability to social/human rights view should be the Commonwealth, approach as in the UNCRPD and the list of action points to inform the work of countries and the High Level Disability Forum which must have a majority of representatives of Disabled People’s Organisations.

At its recent Executive Meeting in Kenya (7th to 11th July, 2024), CDPF agreed to this, although still preferring the original Disability Inclusion Action Plan being adopted in full, ( See Annex 1) CDPF are mindful that Leaders will prefer to adopt an Action Plan rather than protocols and declarations and bearing in mind that all but one country have ratified the UNCRPD; CDPF are prepared to put forward the following form of words **as an addendum** to the Communique. This has 2 additional action points that were not in the draft we consulted Commonwealth countries on.

**Alternate form of words**

“The Commonwealth is home to a significant population of persons with

disabilities, estimated at over 430 million, with a majority (over 60%) being

young people under 30. Recognizing this, Commonwealth Heads of

Government Meetings (CHOGM) of 2018 and 2022 urged Member States to

implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(UNCRPD). We reiterate our commitment to the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The UNCRPD, ratified by 55 out of 56 Commonwealth states, prohibits

discrimination based on disability. It represents a paradigm shift from the

traditional, charity, medical model to a social, human rights model of disability, recognizing people with disabilities as equal rights holders. The time for action is now. We call upon CHOGM leaders in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat to adopt the following measures to ensure meaningful inclusion of Commonwealth citizens with disabilities, starting from the 2024 CHOGM and beyond:

A. Within two years of this agreement CHOGM agree to hold a meeting of Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for Disability to consider and share experiences on its implementation with a view to this becoming a regular Commonwealth event;

B. Gather disaggregated statistics in line with the Washington Group questions and protocols in Census, Household Surveys and other statistical activities;

C. Collaborate in setting up a Commonwealth Country Dashboard on progress on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and implementation of the UNCRPD;

D. The Commonwealth Secretariat will support country members and civil society organizations in the reporting requirements to the UN CRPD Committee in Geneva;

E. For ongoing collaboration in expertise and financial assistance between member countries, especially between those more economically developed and the rest to develop implementation of the UNCRPD and disability equality;

F. Ensure that reasonable accommodations over access to buildings, access to information and accommodation is increasingly built into the planning of Commonwealth events;

G. Over time, develop a pool of Disability Equality Trainers and Access Auditors, within and between Commonwealth countries to facilitate Disability Equality Training and Access Audits of buildings and infra-structure;

H. Develop the capacity in collaboration with Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to run systematic Disability Equality Training for Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Civil Servants, Advisors and Non-Governmental Organizations;

I. Run all Development Plans through the requirements of the UNCRPD and the need for disability equality;

J. To increase the number and seniority of persons with disabilities employed in the Governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat;

K. Work with the private sector to develop cheap and effective assistive devices and technology and ensure its distribution to those who would benefit most;

L. Develop inter-country training and exchange of technicians who are able to develop the necessary competency to utilize such devices;

M. To implement the UNCRPD; the Commonwealth should give priority to collaborating in developing Inclusive Education, Health Care, Work opportunities for persons with disabilities and supporting measures that will enable persons with disabilities to take part in elections and stand for office.

N. Set up a Commonwealth Disability Advisory Committee with representation from DPOs in the Regions, CDPF, Reps of State Parties, Commonwealth UNCRPD Committee Members and others relevant.

**The CDPD Executive when it met in July 2024 identified 2 further policy areas O & P that CDPF had not consulted upon, but thought them essential to include.**

O. Recognising that persons with disabilities are at significantly more risk in climate emergency events and humanitarian situation, agree to prioritise their support and inclusion in climate emergency preparation measures and support in other humanitarian situations.

P. Support the organisation and involvement of Women with disabilities and youth with disabilities and other underrepresented groups of people with disabilities such as indigenous people, neurodiverse individuals, those with mental health conditions and those with cognitive impairments.

TO BE ADOPTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN

SAMOA, OCTOBER 2024

The adoption of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is just the beginning of a step change to implementing disability equality across the Commonwealth. We will need additional funding from donor countries, foundations and private business. CDPF has already started discussing with potential partners the setting up of a Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Fund to be launched at the Global Disability Summit 3 in Berlin on 2nd and 3rd April 2025. The key message that **is essential is that the Commonwealth “ups its game” on Disability Inclusion and the adoption of Action Plan gives this possibility.**

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**Annex1**

**3rd Draft: THE COMMONWEALTH DISABILITY INCLUSION PROTOCOL ACTION PLAN**

**To be considered by States of the Commonwealth and to be adopted at CHOGM October 2024**

**Comments and support to R.L Rieser**

**General Secretary Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum**

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***Preamble*** *We, the Heads of State and Governments of the Commonwealth*

***Acknowledging*** *the significant population of persons with disabilities within the Commonwealth, estimated at up to 400 million plus citizens, with over 60% being children and youth aged 30 years or under*

***Welcoming*** *the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted on 13 December 2006, including provisions on care which should be provided based on free and informed consent informed by dignity, autonomy and the needs of the person*

***Welcoming*** *the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development*

***Considering*** *that Commonwealth Heads of States and Government meeting in 2018 and 2022 urged Member States to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*

***Further Considering*** *that 55 of 56 Commonwealth countries have ratified the UNCRPD that prohibits all forms of discrimination on the basis of disability*

***Recognizing*** *that Commonwealth countries have made various efforts to make real positive and inclusive changes of persons with disabilities and are at different levels of implementing the UNCRPD*

***Noting*** *that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that the rights of every individual are recognized in international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 16 December 1966 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 16 December 1966*

***Acknowledging*** *that persons with disabilities have inherent dignity and individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices*

***Recognizing*** *the diversity of persons with disabilities and including those with high support needs, as full and equal members of society*

***Concerned*** *that persons with disabilities continue to experience human rights violations, systemic discrimination, social exclusion and prejudice within political, social and economic spheres*

***Concerned*** *with the multiple forms of discrimination, high levels of poverty and the great risk of violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse faced by women and girls with disabilities*

***Concerned*** *to ensure that human rights and protections are equally enjoyed by children, youth and indigenous persons with disabilities, regardless of cultural, economic status or position*

***Determined*** *to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities ensuring their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

**Have agreed as follows:**

**Article 1 Definitions**

 For the purpose of this Protocol:

 “**Action Plan”** means the Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

**"Member States”** mean sovereign nations that have chosen to join the Commonwealth of Nations.

**"Persons with disabilities”** include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**"Disabled people”** means embracing the social model, realizing that the systematic barriers of environment, attitude and organisation are what disable people with impairments and lead to prejudice and discrimination.

 **"Discrimination on the basis of disability** “means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human and people’s rights in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. Discrimination on the basis of disability includes denial of reasonable accommodation.

**"Inclusion**” ensures that all individuals, regardless of their physical or mental differences, have the opportunity to fully participate, contribute and belong within a group, organization or society. It involves creating an environment that values diversity and actively works to remove barriers, both structural and attitudinal, that may prevent individuals from fully participating and realizing their potential.

**“Barriers”** refers to any factor including communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional, political, social, attitudinal or structural, which hampers the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society.

**"Accessibility”** refers to the design and provision of products, services, communications, environments and information in a way that allows all people, especially persons with disabilities to access, use and interact comfortably and effectivelyin all areas.

**“Communication”** includes means and formats of communication, languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, signs, large print, accessible multimedia, written, audio, video, visual displays, sign language, plain-language, human-reader, augmentative and alternative modes and accessible information and communication technology.

**‘’Commonwealth Secretariat means’’** the coordinating and administrative arm of the Commonwealth.

 **“Legal capacity”** means the ability to hold rights and duties and to exercise those rights and duties.

“**Reasonable accommodation”** means necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human and people’s rights.

**“Disability Equality Training”** is training delivered by disabled people based on Social Model/Human Rights paradigm, who have been trained in applying this thinking to empower persons with disabilities in their right to equality and to identify barriers and solutions for them in environmental and social structures.

**“Twin Track Approach”** integrates disability-sensitive measures into all Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth country policies and programmes and provides impairment-specific accommodations, support and accessibility for the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities.

**“Universal design”** means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

 **Article 2 Purpose**

The purpose of this Action Plan is to promote inclusion, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities living throughout the Commonwealth, by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Governments and other relevant agencies.

**Article 3 General Principles**

This Action Plan shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the following general principles:

* Ensuring inherent dignity and respect including the freedom to make one's own choices
* Non-discrimination
* Equality between men and women
* Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
* Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities (disabled people) as part of human diversity and humanity
* Accessibility
* Reasonable accommodation
* Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

**Article 4 Equality and Non discrimination**

1. Member States recognize that persons with disabilities are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law.

2. Member States shall prohibit all discrimination, on the basis of impairment and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds.

3.Member States shall promote equality and take all appropriate steps to ensure that individualized reasonable accommodation is provided for persons with disabilities.

4. Member States shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary and other measures in order to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and promote equality for persons with disabilities.

**Article 5 Human Rights Model of Disability**

Commonwealth Secretariat and Member States shall take appropriate and effective measures to remove systematic attitudinal, communication and infrastructural barriers that discriminate against persons with disabilities within the Commonwealth, by fully implementing the social model/human rights model of disability in line with United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

**Article 6 Equal and Meaningful Participation**

1. Commonwealth Secretariat and Member Countries commit to include persons with disabilities in a meaningful way in their work, and to effectively incorporate a disability-inclusive approach in all their research, policies, programmes, projects and operations.
2. Commonwealth Secretariat shall be intentional in including persons with disabilities as speakers and moderators during conferences, meetings and proactively ensure accessibility.
3. Commonwealth Secretariat and Governments shall ensure measures to ensure that women with disabilities enjoy these priorities equally with men with disabilities.
4. Commonwealth Secretariat and Member States commit to promote physical and digital accessibility both at headquarters and in field offices through the implementation of Universal Design principles, and through the proactive identification, removal and prevention of barriers.
5. Commonwealth Secretariat commits to ensure the accessibility of all meetings, conferences and events, whether they are conducted face to face or virtually, at Secretariat and in the field.
6. Commonwealth Secretariat and Member States shall put in place appropriate measures to effectively remove barriers, transform society and bring about changing attitudes towards persons with disabilities.
7. Member States shall establish clear accessibility standards for all communications and online and face-to face meetings to ensure they are inclusive of persons with disabilities.
8. Commonwealth Secretariat and Governments shall ensure that all documents, presentations, and materials shared during meetings are created in accessible formats.
9. The Commonwealth will adopt a twin-track approach to Implementation of Disability Rights. This means generally including a disability equality perspective across all activities (as the first track), but also recognizing that persons with different types and degrees of impairment require specific reasonable accommodations and support to exercise equality.

**Article 7 Promote Disability-Inclusive** procurement of goods and services, including for employment of third party contractors who work for Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Governments.

**Article 8 Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Policy Development**

1. Commonwealth secretariat and Member States shall ensure that when developing, adopting and implementing policies, laws and programs relating to persons with disabilities, there is direct engagement, consultation and involvement of them as experts through their recognized representatives, to ensure perspectives of persons with disabilities are incorporated.

**Article 9 Equal Employment of Disabled Staff**

1. Commonwealth Secretariat shall champion recruitment of persons with disabilities and ensure Member States are putting in place effective measures and strategies to ensure barriers are progressively removed to enable a wide range of persons with disabilities to be employed in the public and private sector, including by reserving and enforcing minimum job-quotas for disabled employees.

**Article 10 Implementation**

The Secretariat and Member States shall ensure the implementation of this Action Plan and shall indicate in their periodic reports submitted to the Commonwealth Secretariat, including the legislative and other measures undertaken for the full realization of the rights and strategies recognized in this Action Plan and by collaborating with implementing the Action Points.

**Article 11 Emergency Situations and Risk Reduction**

Persons with disabilities have been shown to be most at risk in the recent global Covid-19 pandemic and in the increasing hazards created by climate change and natural disasters. Persons with disabilities should be maximally involved in emergency measures and risk reduction programmes and procedures.

**Article 12 Capacity Building**

Commonwealth Secretariat and Member States shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary and other measures, in order to build capacity of Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Civil Servants, Advisors and Non-Governmental Organizations in understanding Disability Equality.

**Article 13 Cooperation within Commonwealth Secretariat, Member Countries and Accredited Organizations**

Cooperation with member States and within the Commonwealth Secretariat, at the level of headquarters and through Country Teams and Accredited Organizations to ensure effectiveness and consistency in implementing disability inclusion throughout the system, while considering each organization’s unique needs and characteristics**.**

**THE COMMONWEALTH DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN - ACTION POINTS**

**The CHOGM leaders agree in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat to progressively realize the above 13 Articles and the following Action Points:**

1. That within 2 years of this agreement CHOGM agree to hold a meeting of Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for Disability to consider and share experiences on its implementation with a view to this becoming a regular Commonwealth event;
2. To gather disaggregated statistics in line with the Washington Group questions and protocols in Census, Household Surveys and other statistical activities;
3. To agree to collaborate in setting up a Commonwealth Country Dashboard on progress on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and implementation of the UNCRPD;
4. Commonwealth Secretariat will support country members and civil society organisations in the reporting requirements to the UN CRPD Committee in Geneva;
5. For ongoing collaboration in expertise and financial assistance between member countries, especially between those more economically developed and the rest to develop implementation of the UNCRPD and disability equality;
6. To ensure that reasonable accommodations over access to buildings, access to information and accommodation is increasingly built into the planning of Commonwealth events;
7. Over time, developing a pool of Disability Equality Trainers and Access Auditors, within and between Commonwealth countries to facilitate Disability Equality Training and Access Audits of buildings and infra-structure;
8. Agree to developing the capacity to run systematic Disability Equality Training for Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Civil Servants, Advisors and Non-Governmental Organizations;
9. To run all Development Plans through the requirements of the UNCRPD and the need for disability equality;
10. To increase the number and seniority of persons with disabilities employed in the Governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat;
11. To work with the private sector to develop cheap and effective assistive devices & technology and ensure its distribution to those who would benefit most;
12. To develop inter-country training and exchange of technicians who are able to develop the necessary competency to utilize such devices;
13. To implement the UNCRPD the Commonwealth should give priority to collaborate in developing Inclusive Education, Health Care, Work opportunities for persons with disabilities and supporting measures that will enable persons with disabilities to take part in elections and stand for office.
14. Set up a Commonwealth Disability Advisory Committee with representation from DPOs in the Regions, CDPF, Reps of State Parties, Commonwealth UNCRPD Committee Members and others relevant.

**The CDPD Executive when it met in July 2024 identified 2 further policy areas O & P that CDPF had not consulted upon, but thought them essential to include.**

1. Recognising that persons with disabilities are at significantly more risk in climate emergency events and humanitarian situation, agree to prioritise their support and inclusion in climate emergency preparation measures and support in other humanitarian situations.
2. Support the organisation and involvement of Women with disabilities and youth with disabilities and other underrepresented groups of people with disabilities such as indigenous people, neurodiverse individuals, those with mental health conditions and those with cognitive impairments.

**TO BE ADOPTED BY THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN SAMOA, OCTOBER 2024 [including the agreement to implement the Action Points]**

1. The Commonwealth population is estimated to be 2.7 billion. The World Health Organisation estimate 16% of the world population as living with long term impairments that in interaction with barriers in the environment, organisation and attitudes disabled them. This means 430 million people with disabilities living in the Commonwealth [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [UN\_Disability\_Inclusion\_Strategy\_english.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN_Disability_Inclusion_Strategy_english.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [UN Enable - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Paradigm Shift](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/convinfopara.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Climate change has been demonstrated to have both a direct and indirect impact on the effective enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are often among those most adversely affected in an emergency, sustaining disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality, and at the same time being among those least able to have access to emergency support”. OHCHR <https://www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change/impact-climate-change-rights-persons-disabilities> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://portulansinstitute.org/the-high-cost-of-exclusion-and-what-we-need-to-do-about-> suggests a loss of 7% of GDP. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bond Stigma Disability and Development 2022 <https://www.bond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/stigma_disability_and_development.pdf> Also see WHO World Report on Disability for thew extent of Disability Discrimination which has only increased since 2011 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564182> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://commonwealthdpf.org/disability-inclusion-action-plan/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1y/k1y4trenq3> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)