**Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum**

**We, the 430 million Disabled People/People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth declare it is time to end discrimination, protect and promote our dignity and equal rights!**

All but one of the Commonwealth countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The implementation is legally binding upon these Governments.

Yet our members across the Commonwealth tell us that the UNCRPD is more honoured in the breech than in the implementation.

Now 18 years after the UNCRPD came into being and 10 years since the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, we need a big push to implement them both across all Commonwealth countries and at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

It is for these reasons, the CDPF has been approaching Governments to get their support for a Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan at this CHOGM.

There are reservations from some, based largely on funding. Funding is not the main barrier. It is attitudes and the way they structure society.

**Impairment -** loss of physical, sensory mental or psycho-social function, is part of the human condition, caused by illness, genes, accidents, war and famine.

How cultures and societies respond to impairment is the main cause of disabled people’s disadvantage. As the United Nations say:

‘The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a UN human rights treaty that represents a major paradigm shift in how people with disabilities are viewed and treated:

**Human rights-focused** The CRPD views people with disabilities as full members of society with human rights, rather than objects of charity or medical treatment.

**Socially-oriented** The CRPD shifts the focus from an impairment-focused, biomedical model to a socially-oriented model.

**Equality under the law** The CRPD requires that people with disabilities enjoy full equality under the law.

**Accessibility** The CRPD addresses accessibility as a guiding principle.

**Mental impairment** The CRPD requires that mental impairment cannot be used as a justification for denying rights.’

**We, disabled people, all have different types and degrees of impairment, but are united by our opposition to the barriers of stigma, stereotypes, prejudice & discrimination, inaccessibility, illegality, outmoded organisational and educational ideas, notions of normality, exclusion from media, workplace, education, health provision, political systems, leisure activities and family life.**  We are united by our common oppression or **disablism.**

We therefore prefer to identify as ‘disabled people’ rather than ‘persons with disabilities. We are not the creators and carriers of our own oppression as ‘persons with disabilities’ implies.

However, whether you choose identity first language-‘disabled people’ or person first language ‘people with disabilities’, we are all united in the need for action by the Commonwealth to implement our rights. Training delivered by empowered disabled equality trainers to politicians and decision makers has proved the most effective method. This can bring about the paradigm shift envisaged by the UNCRPD and SDGs.

Some progress has been made in the draft of the **CHOGM Communique para 6**

“Heads reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring, protecting and promoting the full realisation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities, to fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recalling the 2023 Report of the Commonwealth Roundtable on Advancing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Heads urged the Commonwealth Secretariat to prioritise and expedite the establishment of a High-Level Advisory Group of Persons with Disabilities together with representatives of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities from across the Commonwealth, to effectively support member states, in advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Heads commended the ongoing work towards the finalisation of a Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and the important role of National Human Rights Organisations in monitoring CRPD implementation.”

CDPF think two things need to happen at CHOGM 2024 to ensure that by 2026 CHOGM can unanimously adopt a Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

1. A Ministerial Steering Group needs to be set up by Foreign Affairs Ministers at CHOGM this week.
2. The above needs amending so that the High-Level Advisory Group of Persons with Disabilities is comprised of a majority of representative Organisations of Persons with Disabilities from across the Commonwealth. For this to happen a Minister needs to move a short amendment. To replace “together with representatives” in line 8 (above) with “including a majority of”.

This would have the effect of ‘Nothing About Us’ (disabled people). This principle is outlined in Article 4.3 and 33.3 of the UNCRPD. The involvement of representative organisations of disabled people.

The Action Points will provide a useful road map to develop a Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan, to be adopted at CHOGM 2026

**“Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan - Action Points**

The UNCRPD 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. To this end Commonwealth Governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat

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.

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.”

CDPF have produced some films giving the arguments for the Action Plan

<https://youtu.be/j7DIxaaIUsY>

<https://youtu.be/KN1UwwCCM4U>

**National Umbrella Members of CDPF**:

**Australia** Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, People with Disabilities Australia **Bangladesh** National Grassroots Disability Org., Women with Disabilities Development Foundation, Barbados Council of the Disabled, **Belize** Assembly for Persons with Diverse Abilities, **Botswana** Federation of the Disabled, **Cameroon** Platform Inclusive Society for Persons with Disabilities, **Canada** Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Dominica Association Persons with Disabilities, Fiji Disabled People’s Federation , Fédération Nationale des Associations des et pour Personnes Handicapées du **Gabon,** Gambia Federation of the Disabled, **Ghana** Federation of Disability Organisations, **Guyana** Council of Organisations for Persons with Disabilities, **India** National Centre Employment Disabled People, **Jamaica** Combined Disabilities Association, United Disabled Persons of **Kenya,** **Kiribati** Te Teo Matoa , **Lesotho** National Federation of Org. of the Disabled, Federation of Disability Orgs. in **Malawi,**Malaysian Confederation of the Disabled, **Maldives** Association of Persons with Disabilities, **Malta** Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, Federation of Disabled People’s Organisations **Mauritius** , **Mozambiquian** Association of Disabled People, National Federation of People with Disabilities in **Namibia**, **Nauru** Persons with Disabilities Organisation, **New Zealand**Disabled People’s Organisations (DPO) Coalition, Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities of **Nigeria,** **Pakistan** Special Talent Exchange Program, **Papua New Guinea** Assembly of Disabled Persons, National Union Disabilities Organizations in **Rwanda,** National Council of and for People with Disabilities **St Lucia**, **St Vincent and the Grenadines** Voice of the Disabled, **Samoa** Nuanua Ol Alofa, **Sierra Leone** Union on Disability Issues, People with Disabilities **Solomon Islands,** Disabled Persons **South Africa**, **Sri Lanka** Disability Organisations Joint Front, Federation of Disabled Persons in **Swaziland**, **Tanzanian** Federation of Disabled Persons Organisations SHIVYAWATA, Naunau O’E Alamaite **Tonga** Association, **Trinidad and Tobago** Chapter of Disabled Peoples’ International, **Tuvalu** Fusi Alofa Association, National Union of Disabled Persons of **Uganda,** **UK** Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance, **Zambia** Federation of Disability Organisations. With a further 50 Associates in 49 countries and 2 overseas territories.

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