



The Commonwealth

Meeting of Commonwealth Law Ministers and Senior Officials

Meeting Paper

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Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Information Note: Update on the Expert Working Group on the Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Executive Summary

This paper provides background information on the origins of the draft Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan (draft DIAP) and the role played by Commonwealth accredited organisations in the development of the draft DIAP. It outlines the establishment and purpose of the member country nominated Expert Working Group on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and also provides an update on their progress in finalising the draft DIAP.

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I. Introduction

1. At their meeting in October 2024 in Samoa, Commonwealth Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring, protecting and promoting the full realisation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities and to fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Heads also commended the ongoing work towards the finalisation of a Disability Inclusion Action Plan and the important role of National Human Rights Organisations in monitoring the CRPD implementation.
2. In February 2025, the Secretariat requested member countries to nominate suitably experienced senior officials to join a member country Expert Working Group (EWG), supported by an Advisory Group of Persons with Disabilities, and Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) under the principle ‘nothing about us without us’ to finalise the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan that had been developed by DPOs in 2023-2024. The EWG is the vehicle through which member countries will provide inputs and negotiate the contents of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

II. Background to the Draft Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan

3. The Commonwealth Secretariat is committed to supporting members in their work to ensure, protect, and promote the full realisation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities. At the 2018 and 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM), Heads urged member countries to ratify and implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
4. The Secretariat has collaborated with its partner organisations working on the rights of persons with disabilities to provide technical assistance to member countries to support their implementation of the Convention. Commonwealth member countries have made considerable progress in this regard. Additionally, the Secretariat with its partner organisations in collaboration with member countries undertakes awareness raising and consensus building activities in relation to the rights of persons with disabilities.
5. In 2023, the Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CDPF), an accredited organisation, developed a draft DIAP to further support member countries in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Commonwealth Heads of Government, at their meeting in Samoa in October 2024, commended the ongoing work towards finalisation of the Action Plan.
6. The Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan will not be binding. Rather, it draws on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to provide valuable guidance to member countries to support their implementation efforts. The DIAP sets out a framework for measures that member countries may undertake to implement CRPD and outlines how the Commonwealth Secretariat can support and facilitate such action.

III. Background to and composition of the Expert Working Group

7. In February 2025, the Secretariat requested member countries, through a letter to Law Ministers, to nominate suitably experienced senior officials to join a member country Expert Working Group (EWG), supported by an Advisory Group of Persons with Disabilities, and Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) under the principle ‘nothing about us without us’, to finalise the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan that was developed by the CDPF. Seventeen countries¹ nominated representatives to the EWG. All Commonwealth regions are represented in the EWG. In May 2025, the representatives of Canada and Eswatini were elected as EWG Co-Chairs by the EWG members. In January 2026, New Zealand replaced Canada as Co-Chair.
8. The Secretariat is providing administrative and logistical support to the EWG and facilitated adoption of the EWG’s Terms of Reference. The Secretariat also provides technical guidance and expertise when requested by the Co-Chairs and EWG members.
9. In parallel, the Secretariat convened an Advisory Group of Persons with Disabilities and Disabled Peoples Organisations (hereafter referred to as the ‘Advisory Group’) to be engaged by the Expert Working Group in a consultative and inclusive manner consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The members of the Advisory Group were selected from nominations received from Commonwealth member countries, Commonwealth Secretariat teams, Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, disabled people’s organisations, persons with disabilities, and partner organisations. Advisory Group members were nominated for their expertise in different areas relevant to the rights of persons with disabilities, geographic representation from each of the Commonwealth regions, gender parity, and the broadest possible range of impairments amongst its members, and serve in an independent capacity.
10. The members of the Advisory Group are Carla Qualtrough (Canada, former Member of Parliament and former Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion); Richard Rieser (UK, Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum), Sarah Kamau (Kenya, United Disabled Persons of Kenya), Floyd Morris (Jamaica, UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), Abia Akram (Pakistan, National Forum of Women with Disabilities), Setareki Macanawai (Fiji, former CEO, Pacific Disability Forum), Heather Walkus (Canada, Council of Canadians with Disabilities) and Rachael Chomba (Zambia, Zambian Federation of the Disabled). Additionally, the Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network (hereafter referred to as the ‘Youth Network’), represented by Parmi Dheensa, Dan Grice, Sabina Moce, and Joy Ubong, is engaged in an advisory capacity, similarly providing guidance, suggestions and recommendations to the EWG on the draft Action Plan.

IV. Work of the Expert Working Group

11. The EWG met virtually six times between May 2025 and January 2026.
12. The first EWG meeting focussed on operational and procedural matters, such as agreeing the terms of reference, working methods, electing a Chair, and setting a schedule for review of the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

¹ The Bahamas, Canada, Cyprus, Eswatini, Grenada, Kenya, Lesotho, Malta, Maldives, Mauritius, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and United Kingdom.

13. Consideration of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan began after the first meeting. The EWG reviewed and discussed the substance and appropriateness of each action in the draft DIAP. EWG members shared proposed revisions and underlying rationales. The EWG also discussed potential additional points and actions for inclusion.
14. The Advisory Group met independently several times in 2025 and 2026. Throughout the process, the Advisory Group provided the EWG extensive written feedback on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and responded to comments and proposals from the EWG.
15. The EWG, Advisory Group, and Youth Network held two joint virtual meetings in October 2025 and December 2025 to orally exchange views on the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan. In both meetings, the EWG received feedback on the draft DIAP text from the advisory bodies and queried the advisory bodies on specific points they had raised.
16. From July to December 2025, the Secretariat contracted an independent expert as a consultant to consolidate EWG members' views on the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan and revise the Zero Draft of the DIAP according to guidance received from the EWG.
17. The Disability Inclusion Action Plan has since gone through two extensive revisions. The consultant submitted a second draft of the DIAP at the end of August 2025. Following instructions from the EWG, a further revised DIAP was submitted in December 2025. This third version of the DIAP is the current working text.
18. The EWG is currently undertaking a structured, section by section review of the text. Minor revisions are being made as the EWG proceeds. The EWG will meet during the week of 16 February 2026 to complete its review and revision, with a final meeting to be held in March 2026, at which the EWG will discuss consensus and submission of the DIAP to Law Ministers for their consideration ahead of CHOGM 2026.

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