

# [Remove physical and cultural barriers; build inclusive societies 'for, by and with persons with disabilities' – UN](#)

3 December 2017 – Persons with disabilities, as both beneficiaries and agents of change, can fast track the process towards inclusive and sustainable development, and for the [2030 Agenda](#) to truly live up to its promise to 'leave no one behind,' all physical and cultural barriers must be removed to create societies that provide real opportunities for everyone everywhere, the United Nations has said.

The theme of the 2017 edition of the [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) is 'Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all,' and the UN is urging governments, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, academic institutions and the private sector to work as a 'team to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

In his [message](#) on the Day, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embodies a commitment to building the capacities of those who face marginalization and exclusion to reduce their vulnerability to economic, social and environmental shocks.

In recent years, the international community has achieved notable progress in advancing the rights of the world's one billion persons with disabilities. Disability is recognized as a cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda, the [New Urban Agenda](#), which sets a new global standard for sustainable urban development, and the [Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction](#).

“Yet, persons with disabilities remain too often excluded from the design, planning and implementation of policies and programmes that have an impact on their lives. Too often they face discrimination in labour markets and in access to education and other services,” stated Mr. Guterres.

To overcome this challenge, the UN chief said, the path towards inclusive, accessible, usable facilities, technologies, infrastructure, services and products must be ensured by, for and with persons with disabilities.

“We must build on their agency, working together to design, develop and implement affordable and innovative solutions to realize equality for all,” he underscored, adding: “On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let us remove physical and cultural barriers, build resilient societies and create opportunities that truly leave no one behind.”

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Echoing that call, Audrey Azoulay the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), said in her message that

persons with disabilities are [on the frontlines of a world changing quickly](#) and societies transforming, and they are especially vulnerable to the impacts of humanitarian crises and environmental challenges.

“This cannot go on. We must integrate persons with disabilities into all decision-making and policies,” she emphasized, explain that UNESCO will continue acting across the board, starting with, among others, inclusive education, leading the Education 2030 Framework, drawing on UNESCO’s Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education to bolster educational systems that provide opportunity to all.

“UNESCO’s message is clear today. Building sustainable and resilient societies requires the inclusion, participation and empowerment of every woman and man, including persons with disabilities,” stressed Ms. Azoulay, adding: “This is about equal rights and dignity” this is about the better future we seek to build for all.