United Nations A/HRC/61/53

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 January 2026

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Sixty-first session
23 February–2 April 2026
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Right to employment for persons with albinism

Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond

Summary

In the present report, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond, analyses the right to employment for persons with albinism, focusing on a wide range of barriers to accessing employment and developments in law and policy at the national level, as well as highlighting good practices. The Independent Expert makes recommendations to ensure the full realization of the right to employment for persons with albinism. Furthermore, the Independent Expert outlines activities carried out in the implementation of her mandate in 2025, including collaborative work, research initiatives, community and State-level engagements and training programmes.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond, is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 28/6 and 55/18. In the report, the Independent Expert focuses on the right to employment for persons with albinism and their experiences in different regions.

2. In preparing the report, the Independent Expert sent a call for inputs in the form of a questionnaire to Member States and held consultations with civil society and non-governmental entities through virtual meetings and surveys. As part of the information-gathering, the Independent Expert interviewed 24 experts, including activists and campaigners on albinism in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Information and perspectives, including data and research findings, from organizations working in the area of employment were also received by the Independent Expert for the report.

3. In response to the questionnaire, the Independent Expert received submissions from eight Member States, namely Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. The submissions provided insights into existing policies and legislation on employment rights, as well as good practices and recurrent challenges. The submissions and meetings with civil society and other entities provided the basis for the analyses and recommendations in the present report.

Activities of the Independent Expert in 2025

4. During the reporting period, the Independent Expert carried out various activities in the implementation of her mandate, some of which are highlighted below.

5. The Independent Expert conducted a country visit to Portugal from 17 to 26 November, where she met various stakeholders, including State and local officials, as well as a broad range of civil society organizations. The visit presented the Independent Expert with an opportunity to assess the human rights situation of persons with albinism. At the end of the visit, the Independent Expert shared, in a statement, her views on addressing related concerns with government authorities.

6. As part of efforts to mainstream albinism in international forums, the Independent Expert participated in conferences and workshops, both in person and virtually, on a variety of topics and issues. Those included judicial responses to violations and abuses against persons with albinism, the plight of persons with albinism as refugees, the impact of skin cancer on the albinism community globally, climate change, discrimination and harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks.

7. The Independent Expert continued to engage with albinism groups around the world, including by participating in activities organized by those groups and carrying out capacity-building programmes for persons with albinism. From June to December, the Independent Expert carried out a range of activities, including technical assistance and advocacy, in support of the access to justice project for persons with albinism, especially those on the move. She also carried out activities to celebrate International Albinism Awareness Day, in support of the application to have sunscreen added to the World Health Organization Model List of Essential Medicines. On 5 September, the World Health Organization Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines added sunscreen to the List.[1]

8. Collaboration between the Independent Expert and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child resulted in the development and publication, in April, of a guiding note on reporting on the rights and welfare of children with albinism in Africa. The guiding note contains key indicators to assist African Union Member States to fulfil their reporting obligations under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, with a specific focus on addressing the particular challenges faced by children with albinism.

[1] See https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/B09474.

II. Definitions

A. Employment

9. “Employment” is the common term that people use to refer to earning a living. In the present report, the Independent Expert adopts the term “employment” for that reason. Its meaning in the report should be understood as a broad term, covering activities by which a person produces goods or services, contributes to society or secures a livelihood. That includes formal waged employment, self-employment, work within the informal economy and subsistence-based activities, such as small-scale farming. Within international human rights law, the term “work” is generally used in place of, or interchangeably with, employment.

B. Albinism

10. Albinism is a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited condition that occurs in populations all over the world, regardless of race or ethnicity.[2] The most common form of albinism, oculocutaneous albinism, is characterized by lack of melanin pigment in the hair, skin and eyes, causing susceptibility and vulnerability to skin damage from exposure to the sun, including skin cancer. Persons with albinism also have visual impairments, including photophobia, nystagmus, low visual acuity and refractive error, and sometimes strabismus. Global estimates of the prevalence of albinism are contested; however, recent estimates vary between 1 in 12,000 and 1 in 15,000 in Western societies and between 1 in 4,000 and 1 in 7,000 in Africa. The highest prevalence rates are found in population isolates, ranging from 1 in 22 to 1 in 1,300.[3] Moreover, there is often a lack of disaggregated data on the restrictions that persons with albinism experience in relation to participation, which remains a major hindrance to the effective formulation of a rights-based approach to their situation.

III. Normative and policy framework

A. Relevant international human rights laws and standards

11. Employment-related rights are recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and include the right to work, to just and favourable conditions of work and to just and favourable remuneration (art. 23). The Declaration also sets out complementary human rights such as the right to social security (art. 22), which encompasses income support to compensate for loss of earnings resulting from unemployment, sickness or disability and workplace injuries.

12. Persons with albinism are protected under existing international human rights conventions that guarantee rights for all persons, as well as instruments that give additional protections for specific groups of persons, such as women or children. Those include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which protects the right of all persons to work (art. 6) and to just and favourable conditions of work (art. 7). They also include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prohibit discrimination in employment.

13. The concept of “work” as specified within international human rights law must be “decent work”, which is work that respects the rights of all persons. Decent work must be

[2] Jennifer G.R. Kromberg, “Epidemiology of albinism”, in Jennifer Kromberg and Prashiela Manga, eds., *Albinism in Africa: Historical, Geographical, Medical, Genetic, and Psychosocial Aspects* (San Diego, Academic Press, 2018), pp. 57–79.

[3] Jennifer G.R. Kromberg, Kaitlyn A. Flynn and Robyn A. Kerr, “Determining a worldwide prevalence of oculocutaneous albinism: a systematic review”, *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science*, vol. 64, No. 10 (July 2023).

freely chosen or accepted; forced labour does not constitute work and must be prohibited by States. Additional protections are given to children and young people from all forms of economic exploitation and forced labour, as well as all forms of work likely to affect their development or health.[4]

14. As persons with albinism fall within the framework of persons with disabilities, the employment-related rights guaranteed under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities apply to them. The right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others, including the right to just and favourable conditions of work, equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions and protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability, are recognized in article 27 of the Convention. States Parties are required to take measures such as promoting employment and self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and ensuring the provision of reasonable accommodation in the workplace.

15. Reasonable accommodations comprise modifications, adjustments and support that are needed to ensure the equal enjoyment or exercise of a human right or fundamental freedom. A duty to provide reasonable accommodations exists from the moment that they are requested or the need becomes apparent. That duty is distinct from the duty to ensure accessibility, which requires proactively designing environments, systems and services to be universally accessible without regard to the needs of a particular person.[5]

16. In the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), the International Labour Conference affirmed the universal obligation of all Member States to respect, promote and realize fundamental human rights at work. Those include: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the effective abolition of child labour; and (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. In 2022, the Declaration was amended to recognize a safe and healthy working environment as a fifth fundamental principle and right at work.

17. ILO has adopted several conventions requiring Member States to ensure the protection of the occupational safety and health of workers. Those include the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), which requires Member States to establish national policies on occupational safety and health and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), which requires Member States to promote continuous improvement of national occupational safety and health systems. The World Health Organization has also carried out extensive work to promote occupational health and safety as an integral part of public health.[6] As those measures and initiatives are designed to protect the right of all persons to a safe and healthy working environment, persons with albinism also benefit from their implementation.

B. Relevant national policies and laws

18. Persons with albinism are covered under employment laws and policies that prohibit discrimination on other grounds, particularly colour and disability. In a 2021 review of employment-related non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation protections found that 62 per cent of countries broadly prohibited disability-based employment discrimination, while 52 per cent guaranteed reasonable accommodation to workers with disabilities.[7] General national policies that protect the employment-related rights of all persons, including occupational safety and health laws, may also benefit persons with albinism even when they are not specifically mentioned.

[4] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 18 (2005).

[5] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 8 (2022).

[6] For example, the World Health Organization Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health (2008–2017).

[7] Jody Heymann, Elizabeth Wong and Willetta Waisath, "A comparative overview of disability-related employment laws and policies in 193 countries", *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 25–34.

19. Persons with albinism are protected by national policies and laws that prohibit discrimination on other grounds such as gender and age. However, intersectional protections are rarely reflected in specific provisions with just 3 per cent of laws on reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities specifically mentioning women with disabilities.[8]

20. Few countries and territories have specific laws and policies on albinism that contain provisions on employment. For example, in Panama, the law on persons with albinism[9] extends relevant employment provisions and protections found in laws on persons with disabilities specifically to persons with albinism (art. 20). That includes the requirement for any termination of employment of a person with albinism, or the parent or guardian of a child with albinism, to be only on grounds specified by law and subject to an investigation and prior authorization by the Ministry of Labour and Workforce Development (arts. 20 and 21). Furthermore, the law requires that employers of persons with albinism take appropriate measures to reduce the exposure of persons with albinism to the sun during their journey to work. On the basis of that law, the Supreme Court of Justice in Panama declared null and void the dismissal, without due process, of a young woman with albinism from her job at the Municipality of Panama.[10] In Guinea, the law on persons with albinism requires the State to guarantee education for children with albinism to enable them to eventually obtain sustainable employment.[11] It also requires the State to create favourable conditions for the employment of persons with albinism (art. 25). In Puerto Rico, the law on persons with albinism and Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome also extends existing non-discrimination legislation in relation to employment to persons with albinism.[12]

21. Nigeria has a national policy on albinism in which it recognizes the right to meaningful employment of persons with albinism and encourages the creation of employment opportunities and safe working environments.[13] In line with the African Union Plan of Action to End Attacks and Other Human Rights Violations Targeting Persons with Albinism in Africa (2021–2031), several countries in sub-Saharan Africa have adopted national action plans addressing the rights of persons with albinism. The national action plans of Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda[14] include promoting access to work, income-generating opportunities and social protections. All national action plans further promote inclusion for persons with albinism in other areas, such as education, thereby strengthening their realization of employment-related rights.[15]

IV. Persons with albinism and barriers to employment

A. Accessing employment opportunities

22. Persons with albinism face numerous barriers to securing employment. Due to a lack of disaggregated statistical data, there are no reliable estimates of the precise employment disparities that they experience globally. However, data for persons with disabilities more broadly provide a relevant comparison. Globally, among the working-age population, 27 per cent of persons with disabilities are employed, compared with 56 per cent of persons without disabilities, meaning that persons with disabilities are less than half as likely to be employed. Those disparities are significant in every global region.[16]

[8] *Disability and Development Report 2024: Accelerating the Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations publication, 2024).
[9] Act No. 210 of 2021.
[10] Panama, Judicial Branch, Administrative Tribunal, Case No. 1190532022.
[11] Act No. 2021/0016/AN, art. 15.
[12] Act No. 109 of 2022.
[13] Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education, *National Policy on Albinism in Nigeria* (2019).
[14] Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, "National Action Plan for Persons with Albinism 2020–2025".
[15] A/HRC/55/45.
[16] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*.

1. Poor educational opportunities

23. Albinism is a congenital condition meaning that all individuals with the condition have had it since birth. Children with albinism face multiple barriers to accessing education, including stigma and bullying from peers and teachers and difficulties in accessing learning materials and navigating school environments due to visual impairments.[17] As with employment, the lack of disaggregated statistical data means that there are no reliable global estimates of the exact educational disparities experienced by children with albinism. However, statistics for children with disabilities more broadly show that at all ages and levels of education, children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than children without disabilities. Children with disabilities also experience more difficulty achieving foundational reading and numeracy skills compared with children without disabilities.[18]

24. Poor educational opportunities are therefore the earliest barriers to accessing employment for persons with albinism. Given that persons with albinism experience multiple barriers to accessing education, they often enter the job market possessing lower levels of formal education, qualifications and skills compared with their peers without disabilities. That contributes to the difficulties that they experience securing employment opportunities. In addition, difficulties caused by the condition, such as visual impairment, compounded by lack of access to reasonable accommodations, frequently limit their access to the skills development and vocational training opportunities that could address those gaps. In recognition of those educational barriers, the National Development Plan of Colombia, for example, guarantees "inclusive education and work to ensure independence and autonomy".[19]

2. Stigma and discrimination

25. Persons with albinism frequently face stigmatizing beliefs from employers when looking for employment opportunities. Specifically, they are often assumed to be incompetent or not capable of being productive because of the actual or perceived difficulties that the condition may cause such as visual impairment. Moreover, they may be assumed to be physically weak and unable to do manual labour. In some regions, other damaging myths are a common cause of stigmatization, including that albinism is the result of a curse or that it is contagious.[20]

26. Conversely, during her country visit to Lesotho, the Independent Expert was informed that employing someone with albinism was seen as good for business. It is believed that the presence of someone with albinism will make the business prosper. While such superstitions may make it more likely for persons with albinism to be employed in customer-facing roles or small businesses in Lesotho, they are problematic due to their dehumanizing nature. Furthermore, even with those myths, the belief that persons with albinism are incompetent persists. One interlocutor, for example, recounted how the authenticity of her academic qualifications had been questioned by a prospective employer who had not expected anyone with albinism to be capable of achieving such high grades.[21]

27. Such stigma and myths sometimes lead potential employers to not hire them. Other discriminatory reasons include reluctance to employ persons with albinism with visible cancer-related markings on their skin[22] or a general concern that they will discourage customers from visiting businesses. Persons with albinism in Brazil,[23] Fiji,[24] Kenya,[25]

[17] See A/HRC/55/45.
[18] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*.
[19] Submission from the Government of Colombia.
[20] Christopher Chu and Harry Dao, "Past and contemporary myths and misconceptions of oculocutaneous albinism in Africa", *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, vol. 72, No. 5 (supplement 1) (2015).
[21] A/HRC/58/57/Add.2, para. 60.
[22] Farai Maunganidze, Kudakwashe Machiha and Martha Mapuranga, "Employment barriers and opportunities faced by people with albinism. A case of youths with albinism in Harare, Zimbabwe", *Cogent Social Sciences*, vol. 8, No. 1 (2022).
[23] See A/HRC/46/32/Add.1.
[24] See A/HRC/40/62/Add.1.
[25] See A/HRC/40/62/Add.3.

Madagascar,[26] Mozambique,[27] South Africa[28] and Panama[29] all reported experiencing such stigma. In Mozambique, persons with albinism reported that, although they were often called for employment interviews based on their applications, after a face-to-face meeting with the employer they were often not recommended for the post.[30] In other countries, albinism groups have observed that employers often mask their stigma about albinism by providing an unrelated justification for their hiring decision that is compliant with national employment law. Those reasons are used to deny persons with albinism employment or further work opportunities, even in situations in which they have successfully met performance standards in internships or prior roles.

3. Self-censorship in job applications

28. Due to the likelihood of encountering stigma and discrimination from employers, persons with albinism face difficult decisions about if, and when, to disclose their albinism during the recruitment process. Since many job applications are now completed online, they often have the option to withhold disclosing that they have the condition until later stages, such as interviews. Moreover, for some individuals, particularly those who are ethnically white, their albinism may not be immediately apparent to other people without voluntary disclosure. One individual with albinism indicated to the Independent Expert that they advised others with albinism to withhold disclosure throughout the recruitment process to mitigate the risk of stigma and discrimination, unless disclosure was unavoidable.

29. While non-disclosure of albinism may be a helpful personal strategy to mitigate the risk of stigma and discrimination, it is problematic given that many have existing support needs that must be met to enable their equitable participation in the recruitment process. Those include adaptations to any aptitude tests or examinations that need to be taken as part of the recruitment process, including the provision of extra time, which may be required due to visual impairments that disadvantage them compared with other candidates. Decisions around whether and when to disclose albinism and related support needs are therefore complex and challenging for persons with albinism. One individual with albinism reported to the Independent Expert that they had been denied a job opportunity because they had used their personal mobile phone to assist with reading text during a job aptitude test.

30. In addition, frequent experiences and expectations of stigma and discrimination when searching for employment opportunities cause some persons with albinism to experience low self-esteem and a loss of confidence. Those feelings may lead them to avoid applying for job opportunities for which they are otherwise well qualified. Anticipated difficulty obtaining essential accommodations during the recruitment process also discourages applications.

4. Inaccessibility of transport for travelling to interviews

31. For many persons with albinism, access to transport is also a concern. Their visual impairment means that many are prohibited from driving, necessitating reliance on public transportation to attend job interviews, which may not be readily available, affordable or reliable. Persons with albinism are at risk of skin cancer through exposure to ultraviolet radiation when they have to travel long distances on foot to job interviews under strong sunlight.[31] Some persons with Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome have difficulty breathing and may need to travel on public transport with an oxygen tank or rely on family or friends to drive them there.[32] In many countries, persons with albinism also experience frequent incidences of harassment and physical violence when navigating public places.[33] Depending on the timing and location of interviews, as well as the location of their homes, travel to

[26] See A/HRC/52/36/Add.1.
[27] See A/HRC/34/59/Add.2.
[28] See A/HRC/43/42/Add.1.
[29] See A/HRC/55/45/Add.1.
[30] A/HRC/34/59/Add.2, para. 49.
[31] See A/78/167.
[32] A/HRC/58/57/Add.1, para. 47.
[33] Amnesty International, *Southern Africa Journal on Albinism and Socio-Economic Rights* (2025).

interviews may pose a risk of abduction, mutilation and killing in countries in which attacks occur.

5. Actual or perceived unsuitability of jobs

32. A small minority of jobs may be unsuitable for some persons with albinism because there is currently no way that they can be adapted to be carried out safely by individuals who have very severe visual impairments. Those include jobs for which the central duty is driving, such as taxi driving, as many countries impose visual impairment-related restrictions on who can obtain a driving licence for the purposes of road safety. However, it is worth noting that even in those cases reasonable adaptations may be possible. For example, some states in the United States of America allow the use of bioptic telescopes for driving.[34] Situations in which individuals are reasonably excluded due to impairments are often addressed broadly within employment legislation. For example, the European Union Employment Equality Directive permits member States to allow differential treatment of persons with disabilities in employment when a genuine occupational requirement exists that cannot be fulfilled due to an individual's impairment.[35] Those cases are thus classed as differential treatment (treating persons with disabilities differently for relevant reasons) rather than disability discrimination (treating persons with disabilities differently for irrelevant reasons).[36]

33. That issue has several implications for persons with albinism. First, although most persons with albinism are capable of performing most jobs when the appropriate reasonable accommodations are provided, overall, the range of suitable occupations that they can currently access remains narrower than for persons without disabilities, resulting in inherent disadvantage. Second, even in situations in which employers do not hold explicit stigma towards persons with albinism, they are often unaware of the occupational requirements that persons with albinism can meet and the range of accommodations available, leading to unjustified exclusion from job opportunities (i.e. discrimination). Third, occupational requirements for some jobs may not be clearly advertised, causing persons with albinism to spend time applying for positions that later prove unsuitable. An individual with albinism recounted to the Independent Expert that, after applying for roles that appeared unrelated to driving, it transpired that a valid driving licence was required, leading to disqualification each time.

34. Unjustified exclusion from job opportunities can be further complicated in countries that require pre-employment medical assessments as a condition of access to significant parts of the formal sector. In China, vision is one of the categories that individuals are assessed on within pre-employment health checks for many roles. Persons with albinism are likely to fail at that stage, providing employers with grounds to withdraw job offers, without discussion of how their needs could be reasonably accommodated. Similarly, in Malaysia, candidates for government employment must undergo medical assessments to determine fitness for work. Many assessors wrongly deem candidates with albinism "unfit to work", unaware that, with reasonable accommodations, they can perform the role effectively.

6. Intersectional discrimination

35. All the barriers that persons with albinism experience to securing employment are influenced by intersecting characteristics such as gender, age and socioeconomic status. For instance, in many contexts, women experience greater exclusion from education and labour markets compared with men. Globally, women with disabilities are the least likely to be employed relative to men with disabilities, women without disabilities and men without disabilities.[37] Women frequently also have care responsibilities and globally that is the

[34] A/HRC/58/57/Add.1, para. 10.

[35] Lisa Waddington, "Fine-tuning non-discrimination law: exceptions and justifications allowing for differential treatment on the ground of disability", *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, vol. 15, No. 1-2 (2015), pp. 11–37.

[36] Mark T. Carew and Tom Shakespeare, "Beyond disability stigma: examining tolerance and intolerance toward disability issues", *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, vol. 26, No. 1 (2024), pp. 450–463.

[37] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*.

principal reason for women being outside the labour force.[38] Older persons with albinism are likely to have experienced greater exclusion from education compared with younger generations, resulting in lower levels of formal education and literacy. Consequently, they may have a greater need for targeted opportunities to develop skills and vocational training to enhance their employability in the labour market.

B. Barriers in the workplace

1. Hostility and microaggressions

36. Even when persons with albinism successfully obtain employment, they face numerous barriers within the workplace itself. Employers, co-workers and customers frequently display negative attitudes towards them, ranging from overt hostility, such as name-calling, harassment, bullying or staring, to more indirect behaviours, such as avoidance, invasive questioning or unwarranted micromanaging. Examples shared with the Independent Expert include a private doctor with albinism not receiving potential clients when he advertised his services with his photograph, but receiving phone calls from interested patients when he readvertised without his photograph,[39] customers in retail settings waiting for assistance from an employee without albinism and a conference attendee asking another attendee with albinism if they could take photos of their hair and guide dog to show their child, which indicates that use of an assistive product or reasonable accommodation, such as a white cane or guide dog, can itself attract stigma and discrimination in workplace environments.

2. Lack of, or poor access to, reasonable accommodations

37. Persons with albinism typically require a range of reasonable accommodations to enable them to work on an equal basis with others, reflecting the dual impact of their condition on their vision and skin sensitivity, as well as wider barriers in society. Moreover, individuals with rarer forms of albinism, such as Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome or Chediak-Higashi Syndrome, may require additional support, including for barriers related to their bleeding, lung or gastrointestinal conditions.[40]

38. Persons with albinism are at much higher risk of developing skin cancer from exposure to the ultraviolet radiation in sunlight compared with the general population.[41] Reasonable accommodations to remove that barrier include sun protection measures, such as sunscreen, protective clothing and shaded workstations. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work or adjusted hours, may also be appropriate depending on individual need and regional and seasonal factors.

39. Many persons with albinism have visual impairments, including reduced visual acuity, nystagmus (involuntary eye movements), photophobia (light sensitivity), strabismus (misalignment of the eyes) and impaired depth perception.[42] Consequently, they require reasonable accommodations to mitigate those barriers, including access to assistive products, such as colour filters, adapted writing and reading stands, screen readers and magnifiers, or adapted materials containing large-print text. Workstations may also need to be positioned to minimize glare and room lighting suitably adjusted.

40. Persons with visual impairments also experience difficulty navigating physical environments. Reasonable accommodations to address those barriers include ensuring workplaces are clear of obstacles that are difficult for someone with visual impairment to see and use of clear signage, as well as textured ground surfaces and high-contrast markings. Other assistive products or support may be needed for navigation, such as white canes.

[38] ILO, “The impact of care responsibilities on women’s labour force participation” (Geneva, 2024).
[39] A/HRC/52/36/Add.1, para. 64.
[40] See A/HRC/58/57/Add.1.
[41] See A/78/167.
[42] Bradley J. Kirkwood, “Albinism and its implications with vision”, *Journal of the American Society of Ophthalmic Registered Nurses*, vol. 34, No. 2 (2009), pp. 13–16.

41. Persons with Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome or Chediak-Higashi Syndrome may further experience impairment with the coagulation system leading to excessive bruising and bleeding. Some individuals with Chediak-Higashi Syndrome experience additional difficulty with balance and walking in adulthood.[43] Measures to ensure that work tasks are safe and workplaces easy to navigate physically for those individuals help to reduce the risk of accidents that could cause uncontrollable bleeding. Some persons with Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome experience difficulty breathing and gastrointestinal complications, requiring well-ventilated workplaces and easily accessible toilets. Remote working could also qualify as a form of reasonable accommodation for those with breathing and gastrointestinal complications.

42. Although public transport accessibility falls primarily under governmental responsibility, employers retain a duty to mitigate its impact on the ability of persons with albinism to reach the workplace and perform their roles on an equal basis with other persons. In situations in which an individual with albinism faces difficulty accessing public transport, employers should consider reasonable accommodations, such as flexible working hours, assistance with remote working arrangements or individualized travel assistance. In some instances of good practice, local authorities in some countries offer on-demand transportation services for persons with disabilities, including persons with albinism.

43. The preceding list of reasonable accommodations for persons with albinism is not intended to be exhaustive. Exact needs vary from individual to individual and depend on the nature of the job and tasks being performed. Some persons with albinism may already own an assistive product or support such as a magnifier, white cane or a guide dog. The reasonable accommodation in such a circumstance is permitted use within employment, rather than provision of a new assistive product or support. Individuals may experience different needs and require different accommodations according to intersectional characteristics such as gender. Moreover, albinism-related needs are not static, but may change over time according to personal factors, such as developing further related health complications, and situational factors, such as businesses introducing new job functions or technologies.

44. Some reasonable accommodations for persons with albinism also comprise occupational safety measures that employers have a legal duty to meet for all employees. For instance, as individuals who experience visual impairment, persons with albinism may require tailored emergency workplace evacuation plans to adequately ensure their health and safety.[44] In some countries, persons with albinism are at risk of experiencing attacks or threats while working because of persistent stigma and harmful beliefs about albinism. In Malawi, there are reports of teachers being relocated to safer communities to address that risk. While a pragmatic solution, that may disadvantage persons with albinism in other ways, such as the right to live independently and be included in the community.[45]

45. Even when employers agree to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with albinism, obtaining assistive products and other required supports is often a lengthy process. Delays commonly arise from lack of coordination between business units on implementation, absence of clear procurement or funding arrangements and disagreements among suppliers and funding bodies on responsibility for costs. Those delays can be particularly problematic in situations in which an individual is on probation but does not receive the support during that period. Frequently, assistive devices are procured on the basis of supplier agreements or cost considerations, rather than an assessment of individual requirement.

3. Lack of awareness of employers

46. Even in circumstances in which employers do not hold albinism-related stigma, they may nevertheless possess a lack of awareness of common needs of persons with albinism and the range of support and solutions available. That can lead to misperceptions that the needs

[43] Anitha Ajitkumar, Siva Naga S. Yarrarapu and Kamleshun Ramphul, *Chediak-Higashi Syndrome* (Tampa, StatPearls Publishing, 2018).

[44] ILO, *Promoting Diversity and Inclusion Through Workplace Adjustments: A Practical Guide* (Geneva, 2016).

[45] Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, art. 19.

of employees with albinism are too expensive or difficult to accommodate or that specific needs requested by an employee are not important, compared with more "typical" requests. Conversely, some employers may view albinism as an "easy" disability to accommodate, perceiving the condition to only result in changes to skin pigmentation requiring sunscreen protection. More broadly, lack of knowledge about specific job roles among the general public can subject persons with albinism to misguided comments about their abilities. For example, one individual with albinism reported to the Independent Expert that they had been questioned about how they could operate a specialized piece of visual equipment despite having low vision – an unnecessary question since the equipment concerned was no longer widely used in the profession.

47. Lack of employer awareness is exacerbated by the fact that many persons with albinism feel reluctant to disclose their support needs. One person with albinism interviewed by the Independent Expert spoke about hiding their use of a magnifier to avoid being discriminated against by employers. Some individuals may avoid disclosing the fact they have albinism to employers at all, while others make cosmetic changes such as dyeing their hair in an effort to appear similar to other workers and negate workplace stigma.

4. Actual and perceived conflict of reasonable accommodations with occupational health and safety procedures

48. Occasionally, reasonable accommodations for persons with albinism may conflict with standard employer occupational health and safety procedures. For example, an employer may prohibit animals from being in the workplace to ensure that the health of employees with dog allergies is not affected. However, that policy would conflict with providing employees with albinism with the reasonable accommodation of bringing their guide dogs to work. In some countries such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, that is likely to constitute disability discrimination under key anti-discrimination legislation.[46] Assessments of reasonable accommodation requests that appear to conflict with employer occupational health and safety procedures should be assessed on a case-by-case basis rather than the assumption made that they cannot be accommodated. In the example of guide dogs, steps could be taken to ensure that any employees with allergies have minimal contact with an animal.[47]

49. Numerous other factors make requesting reasonable accommodations difficult for persons with albinism. First, in many countries, implementation and enforcement of laws requiring reasonable accommodations is weak. Second, persons with albinism may lack official recognition or certification of the disability status needed to make requests for reasonable accommodations. In some settings, obtaining that certification can be difficult due to limited understanding among medical professionals of both the concept of disability and of albinism as a health condition. Third, procedures and systems for obtaining reasonable accommodations may force persons with albinism to request support under predefined categories, such as visual impairment, that only partially represent their lived experiences and needs. Fourth, persons with albinism themselves may be unaware of the support that they can obtain or of how to get it.

5. Inaccessible complaints mechanisms

50. When employees experience workplace grievances, they can typically seek redress through the justice system or other complaints mechanisms, such as employment complaints bodies, the national human rights institution or the ombudsperson where applicable. While not specifically related to employment, the case of a person being denied entry into a bank with their guide dog and the consequent awareness-raising of bank staff in Mexico exemplifies the importance of such mechanisms in creating a safer, more accommodating environment for persons with disabilities.[48] However, persons with albinism may experience additional barriers when accessing such bodies because reasonable accommodations in the

[46] See https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/assistance-dogs-guide-businesses-and-service-providers.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Submission from the Government of Mexico.

justice system are limited and unevenly implemented across regions.[49] For instance, almost three quarters of countries in the European Union provide legal information in accessible formats.[50] The inaccessibility of the justice system for persons with albinism is also a barrier for individuals who directly work or want to work in legal or associated professions.

C. Barriers to career advancement and leadership

51. Reliable global estimates of the magnitude of disparities experienced by persons with albinism are not available due to lack of disaggregated data. However, statistics for persons with disabilities more broadly suggest that they are likely to experience significant disparities in pay, career advancement and leadership-related barriers. Across 30 countries, 30 per cent of employees with disabilities earned wages in the bottom 20 per cent of the wage distribution, meaning that they earned less than 80 per cent of other employees.[51] The disability pay gap also varies by country income level, with persons with disabilities earning on average 9 per cent less in high-income countries compared with persons without disabilities, 10 per cent less in upper-middle-income countries and 26 per cent less in lower-, middle- and low-income countries.[52] In an analysis of 25 countries or areas, it was found that persons with disabilities were less likely than persons without disabilities to hold a position as a legislator, a senior official or a manager in 18 of these countries or areas. In some countries, employed persons without disabilities are twice as likely as persons with disabilities to work as legislators, senior officials or managers. Barriers to career advancement and leadership are also influenced by intersectional characteristics such as gender. For instance, within the membership of national coordination bodies on disability policies in 14 countries or areas in the Asia-Pacific region, the percentage of women with disabilities is on average 6 per cent, compared with 15 per cent for men with disabilities, 31 per cent for women without disabilities and 48 per cent for men without disabilities.[53]

52. Some employers who hire persons with albinism and provide reasonable accommodations may continue to hold stigmatizing attitudes and low expectations regarding their capabilities. Such biases can result in employees with albinism being overlooked for promotion and excluded from leadership positions. In some cases, employers may also express discriminatory concerns about assigning persons with albinism to public-facing senior roles, based on assumptions that their appearance could negatively affect interactions with customers or business partners.

53. Frequent experiences and expectations of employment-related stigma and discrimination, as well as experiencing access barriers in the workplace, can cause persons with albinism to experience low self-esteem, stress and a loss of self-confidence at work, which in turn may hinder career advancement. Persons with albinism reported to the Independent Expert that the combined impact of access-related barriers and negative perceptions from others had contributed to their decision to discontinue their chosen career path.

54. Although persons with albinism are overall rarely found in leadership positions, globally there are several examples of leaders with albinism, including in politics. The Independent Expert was delighted to hear from a young man with albinism in Zambia who had recently announced his candidature for a mayoral position. Furthermore, the Independent Expert spoke to persons with albinism doing well in multiple disciplines, including academia, the sciences, finance, business and the judicial sector. Many of them, however, acknowledge that their journey had not been easy. Several individuals suggested that the ability of persons with albinism to advance in their career was influenced by their wider environment, including

[49] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Sevane Ananian and Giulia Dellaferrera, “A study on the employment and wage outcomes of people with disabilities”, ILO Working Paper No. 124 (Geneva, 2024).

[52] Alexandre Cote and Lena Morgon Banks, eds., *Global Disability Inclusion Report: Accelerating Disability Inclusion in a Diverse and Changing World* (New York, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2025).

[53] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024.*

their social class and the ability to obtain the right support during their education or earlier on in their career. One individual suggested that when persons with albinism were first included in the workforce, they were able to show their personal capability and overturn negative first impressions among colleagues, widening opportunities for career advancement. Increasing opportunities for positive interactions between persons with and without disabilities is noted as one of the most effective ways to counter disability stigma.[54]

D. Barriers in self-employment and in the informal economy

55. Globally, 58 per cent of the population work in the informal economy, the majority of these in the informal sector. Workers in developing countries account for the greatest share of informal sector workers, accounting for 61 per cent of workers in sub-Saharan Africa.[55] Disaggregated data for persons with albinism are not available, but statistics for persons with disabilities more broadly show that they are overrepresented in self-employment and the informal sector. Across 90 countries, 50 per cent of employed persons with disabilities are self-employed compared with 41 per cent of employed persons without disabilities. In both developed and developing regions, persons with disabilities are more likely to be working in the informal sector compared with persons without disabilities. For the majority of employed persons with disabilities living in developing countries, 54 per cent work in the informal economy.[56]

56. Earlier exclusion from education contributes to the high proportion of persons with albinism who are self-employed, particularly within the informal sector. In addition, barriers to accessing skill development and vocational training opportunities limit their ability to acquire the skills needed to increase earnings from self-employment or to transition from informal to formal employment. While international laws and standards, such as the Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Women and Youth in Trade, have developed to ensure the inclusion of some disadvantaged groups in the informal sector, persons with disabilities have generally not been taken into account.

57. Widespread stigma and harmful beliefs about albinism within communities can hinder the ability of self-employed persons with albinism to form business partnerships, obtain capital and attract customers. Such stigma may also reduce productivity. For example, farmers with albinism living in areas affected by threats of attack often limit their work activities or avoid certain locations due to safety concerns, leading to lower productivity.

58. Many persons with albinism working in the informal sector are forced to do jobs that require them to work for long hours under strong sunlight, increasing their risk of skin cancer.[57] Those individuals do not have access to reasonable accommodations and occupational safety measures, such as protective clothing or sunscreen, may also be difficult to obtain. Environmental factors, such as lack of shaded cover in trading areas, may exacerbate exclusion. Moreover, persons with albinism in informal employment lack access to social protection such as health insurance, disability benefits and income security, leaving them without coverage for medical expenses arising from skin cancer or other health conditions.

59. New economic modalities represent both barriers and opportunities for persons with albinism working in self-employment and the informal economy. For instance, social media is an avenue through which micro-entrepreneurs can grow their customer base or individuals can pursue entirely new income-generating opportunities such as digital content creation. However, persons with albinism may lack the skills necessary to participate in the digital economy and may face barriers, such as website inaccessibility. Moreover, persons with albinism may frequently encounter cyberbullying and lack the confidence to use social media to support their work as a result. In Zambia, for example, the Human Rights Commission

[54] Cote and Morgon Banks, *Global Disability Inclusion Report*.
[55] ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Update* (Geneva, 2023).
[56] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*.
[57] A/78/167, para. 41.

released a statement condemning online hate speech against a person with albinism on Facebook in 2024.[58]

E. Barriers to social protection for persons with albinism

60. Although the vast majority of persons with albinism can work if reasonable accommodations are provided, some individuals, such as persons who experience severe health-related complications from Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome or Chediak-Higashi Syndrome, may be unable to work for some or all of their adult lives. To mitigate that barrier, those individuals should be able to access adequate social protection, including income-replacement and disability-specific benefit schemes. For example, during her visit to Puerto Rico, the Independent Expert spoke to persons with Heřmanský-Pudlák Syndrome who had undergone double lung transplants and were unable to work before and after their procedures while they recovered. The length of unemployment lasts for years in some cases. In addition, they required support from a family member throughout that period who was consequently also unable to work. However, social protection coverage remains low and variations by region are wide. Globally, only 39 per cent of persons with severe disabilities receive disability benefits, ranging from 8 per cent in Africa to 92 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.[59]

V. Impacts of unemployment and underemployment on persons with albinism

A. Poverty and economic insecurity

61. Unemployment and underemployment have wide-ranging economic and social consequences for persons with albinism. Limited access to formal work opportunities constrains income generation, resulting in higher levels of poverty and economic insecurity for persons with albinism and their families. It also limits access to contributory social protection schemes, such as pensions and health insurance, which are typically tied to formal employment. That means that persons with albinism experience greater levels of disadvantage as they grow older and become more likely to experience ill health and extra costs. Many persons with albinism in those circumstances are unable to retire and are forced to keep working in dangerous conditions in the informal sector to support themselves and their families.

62. As working-age persons with albinism face higher unemployment and underemployment, alongside additional disability-related costs such as medicine, they have increased need for social protection, including both general income support and schemes to cover these extra costs. However, in many countries, disability benefits are not sufficient to cover those additional costs.[60]

B. Health

63. The health impacts of unemployment and underemployment are also significant for persons with albinism. Without stable income or employer-related benefits and accommodations, many persons with albinism cannot afford sunscreen, protective clothing or the necessary healthcare, including ophthalmological and dermatological services, heightening their risk of experiencing preventable skin cancer and other health complications.

[58] Zambia, Human Rights Commission, “The Human Rights Commission condemns hate speech against persons with Albinism”, 17 August 2024.

[59] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva, 2024).

[60] Ibid.

64. Many persons with albinism who experience unemployment and poverty are pushed into precarious situations such as begging for money to survive, which can place them at increased risk of attacks and physical violence from the community.

65. Exclusion from employment also reinforces the general stigma and discrimination persons with albinism experience as in many communities employment is a key indicator of social status. Persons with albinism may also experience low self-esteem and poor mental health as a result of exclusion from employment.

VI. Good practices

66. The barriers that persons with albinism face when accessing employment are complex and multifaceted. Effectively addressing them requires holistic approaches that support both persons with albinism (supply side) and address broader structural barriers among employers and those at the policy level (demand side). Persons with albinism are often included in employment interventions designed to support persons with disabilities more broadly. However, most disability-inclusive employment interventions have focused on "fixing" persons with disabilities rather than promoting broader systems change.[61] The good practices outlined below are presented by thematic area; however, they should be implemented in an integrated manner and developed in close consultation with persons with albinism and the organizations that represent them.

A. Supply-side intervention strategies

67. Skills development training provides individuals with employment-relevant skills. Persons with albinism can benefit from market-relevant vocational and technical training that is aligned with demand in local labour markets. Such programmes should include clear pathways to recognized qualifications, apprenticeships or job placements and should be delivered in accessible, non-discriminatory environments, with reasonable accommodations provided where necessary. They should also integrate employment-relevant soft skills training (e.g. interpersonal communication). Skills Training for Advancing Resources+ (STAR+) is an example of a holistic skills development programme that supports youth with disabilities to access waged employment in Bangladesh and is implemented by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.[62] Another example is the Programme to Promote Equal Employment Opportunities[63] for persons with disabilities in Argentina, which can also be accessed by persons with albinism.[64] Albinism groups, such as the Tanzania Albinism Society,[65] Black Albinism and the Albinism Society of Kenya[66] have also developed projects for economic empowerment of persons with albinism.

68. Some persons with albinism may prefer to be self-employed due to increased flexibility and ability to work from home. Holistic skill development programmes for persons with albinism should also support pathways to self-employment through entrepreneurship training. That training should cover topics such as business planning and compliance, financial management and accessing procurement and supply chains. The In-Business programme in Kenya is an example of a skills development programme targeting small business owners with disabilities in Kenya and is implemented by Light for the World.

69. Persons with albinism can also benefit from broader targeted employment support. Providing job coaches to support individuals with job applications, facilitating employer-to-

[61] Xanthe Hunt and others, "Effectiveness of interventions for improving livelihood outcomes for people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review", *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, vol. 18, No. 3 (2022).

[62] Tanvir Shatil and others, "Process evaluation of a disability-inclusive employment programme: examining the design and implementation of STAR+", *Oxford Development Studies*, vol. 52, No. 2 (2024), pp. 146–159.

[63] Programa promover la igualdad de oportunidades de empleo (resolution No. 124/11).

[64] Submission from Argentina.

[65] See https://dailynews.co.tz/youth-with-albinism-in-morogoro-trained-in-business-skills.

[66] See https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-12/ask_upr35_ken_e_main.pdf.

jobseeker matchmaking and creating accessible job search platforms are all approaches that have been implemented among persons with disabilities.[67] The Zero Project collates many such examples.[68]

70. Public schemes that offer free or subsided access to assistive devices (e.g. white canes) and other forms of disability-related support (e.g. sunscreen) to persons with disabilities are important to support persons with albinism prior to entering employment, including self-employment, as well as during work. The organization Participant Assistive Products, for example, aims to provide high-quality, low-cost assistive products and has shown interest in supplying sunscreen and magnifiers for persons with albinism.[69] Coverage of additional disability-related costs (e.g. greater transport needs) through comprehensive life-cycle social protection benefits is also crucial to ensure that persons with albinism have equitable access to employment.[70] For example, in Saudi Arabia, persons with disabilities and their families receive a government grant to purchase a private car. In Uzbekistan, payments are provided for workplace adaptations for persons with disabilities through the Unified National Labour System.[71]

71. Trade unions are an important source of support that help workers to understand and assert their employment-related rights. Ensuring that persons with albinism can access and participate in trade unions on an equal basis with others, so that unions are equipped to represent their concerns, is therefore a good practice.

B. Demand-side intervention strategies

72. Employers and co-workers should receive disability awareness training and sensitization that specifically covers the needs of persons with albinism. In many contexts, such training is delivered on an ad hoc basis by organizations of persons with albinism and albinism or disability-focused non-governmental organizations.[72] That could also create job opportunities for persons with albinism as training providers since one of the most effective approaches to combat stigma is facilitating contact between individuals and members of stigmatized groups. However, frequently, that training is carried out by persons with albinism on a pro bono basis. Media campaigns provide an opportunity for albinism awareness to be delivered at scale.[73] Websites such as the Job Accommodation Network[74] in the United States also provide excellent resources for employers seeking to better understand reasonable accommodation needs and possibilities for persons with disabilities.

73. Demand-side good practice models for enabling access to reasonable accommodations include centralized government accommodation funds, for example, the Access to Work Programme in the United Kingdom, and employer reimbursement or tax incentive schemes, for example, Disabled Access Credit and Barrier Removal Tax Deduction in the United States. Those mechanisms reduce or eliminate the financial disincentives that employers may perceive when hiring or retaining persons with disabilities, including persons with albinism.

[67] United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*.
[68] See https://zeroproject.org.
[69] Conversation with the organization's chief executive officer and co-founder. See https://www.participant.life.
[70] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024*–26, p. 145, for a list of global disability-inclusive social protection schemes, disaggregated by type of scheme.
[71] Submission from the Government of Uzbekistan.
[72] See, for example, the activities of Under the Same Sun in the United Republic of Tanzania.
[73] Cote and Morgon Banks, Global Disability Inclusion Report.
[74] See https://askjan.org.

74. Disability employment quota systems can also form part of demand-side measures to promote inclusive hiring. Such systems require public and private employers meeting certain criteria to ensure that a minimum percentage of their workforce consists of persons with disabilities. The Persons with Disabilities Act (2025) in Kenya requires any employer with 20 or more employees to reserve at least 5 per cent of jobs for persons with disabilities.[75] National and county governments are also required to reserve 5 per cent of jobs for persons with disabilities. One challenge for many persons with albinism is that albinism is not always recognized as a disability and therefore in some countries they do not qualify for the quota system.

75. Universal design is a good practice in relation to ensuring environments are accessible to persons with albinism, including workplaces, public buildings, digital platforms and transport systems. Universal design focuses on proactively creating environments and processes that are usable by all persons, without the need for individual accommodations.

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

76. **The information on the barriers to accessing employment for persons with albinism above is based on the little research that has been carried out into this area, as well as information obtained by the Independent Expert through country visits and interactions with relevant stakeholders, including for the present report. The information is not meant to be seen as an exhaustive list and further research will need to be carried out to identify and respond to specific barriers. However, it is clear that persons with albinism experience substantial barriers to employment that need to be addressed globally.**

77. **The Independent Expert recommends that States:**

(a) **Explicitly recognize persons with albinism within disability-inclusive employment policies and action plans, ensuring that these policies are accompanied by clear institutional responsibilities and accountability mechanisms;**

(b) **Ensure that disaggregated data are collected on persons with albinism and employment-related indicators. That data should also be disaggregated by other types of intersectional characteristics such as gender, race, education level and geographical location;**

(c) **Fund and develop skill development programmes for persons with disabilities, including albinism, ensuring that training content is aligned with local labour market conditions and that a broader package of support is provided alongside, such as assistive device provision, to ensure full participation. Those programmes should cover current and emerging labour market trends such as the digital economy and artificial intelligence;**

(d) **Implement and enforce measures to provide persons with albinism access to reasonable accommodations, including centralized government funds and employer reimbursement or tax incentive schemes. Those measures should be supported by capacity-building initiatives targeted at government officials responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with standards and requirements;**

(e) **Expand disability awareness and anti-stigma training for employers that addresses the needs of persons with albinism specifically;**

(f) **Implement a package of cross-sectoral support measures for persons with albinism comprising:**

(i) **Universal design of employment-related environments and processes;**

(ii) **Free or publicly subsidized access to assistive devices and other forms of disability-related support;**

[75] See https://new.kenyalaw.org/akn/ke/act/2025/4/eng@2025-05-13.

(iii) **Coverage of additional disability-related costs through comprehensive life-cycle social protection benefits;**

(g) **Support the meaningful participation of persons with albinism in workers' organizations by ensuring that trade unions are inclusive of persons with albinism and fostering formal collaboration between trade unions and organizations of persons with albinism.**