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Equal participation of persons with disabilities in political life

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass*

Summary

In the present report, submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution 53/14, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, provides an overview of the activities undertaken in 2025 and presents a thematic study on the equal participation of persons with disabilities in political life, particularly the right to stand for election and hold public office effectively.

The Special Rapporteur stresses that, despite a strong legal basis under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented in political decision-making worldwide. She identifies persistent barriers, including discriminatory legal restrictions linked to legal capacity, stigma and ableism, inaccessible political environments, lack of reasonable accommodation, financial constraints and limited access to political education and leadership pathways. She provides recommendations and calls for comprehensive reforms, including the repeal of discriminatory laws, affirmative measures to improve representation, binding accessibility standards, public funding to cover disability-related costs, strengthened data collection and sustained investment in empowerment and leadership development to ensure the meaningful and equal political participation of persons with disabilities.

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I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Heba Hagrass, submits the present report to the Human Rights Council pursuant to Council resolution 53/14. It contains a description of the activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur in 2025 and a thematic study on the equal participation of persons with disabilities in political life, particularly the right to stand for election and hold public office effectively.

II. Activities of the Special Rapporteur

A. Country visits

2. The Special Rapporteur carried out her second official country visit, to Colombia, in July 2025, and she is thankful to the Government for its cooperation during the visit. The report on the visit will be presented to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-first session.

B. Highlights of engagement with stakeholders

3. The Special Rapporteur engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders throughout the year to advance disability inclusion and promote a human rights-based approach to disability. She is particularly thankful to all the persons with disabilities and their representative organizations for their collaboration and sharing of experiences and information with her, in a year marked by cuts to international development assistance and pushback against diversity and inclusion, which have profoundly affected the work of many organizations worldwide. The continued liquidity crisis at the United Nations also restricted some activities in furtherance of the mandate, as well as other human rights mechanisms advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.

4. In March 2025, at the fifty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur presented her thematic report, in which she analysed how the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had included and affected women and girls with disabilities,[1] and the report on her country visit to Kyrgyzstan undertaken in September 2024.[2] At the session, she also moderated the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities, addressed the annual meeting of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions during a knowledge session on persons with disabilities and engaged with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and numerous representatives of States Members of the United Nations and civil society.

5. In April, the Special Rapporteur attended the third Global Disability Summit, held in Berlin, and delivered remarks at the closing session to over 3,000 participants who had gathered at the strategic forum. She met with ministers and senior officials from several countries and organizations of persons with disabilities and spoke at a number of side events. Later that month, she took part in the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, engaging in sessions on financial inclusion and the care economy.

6. In May, the Special Rapporteur contributed to an event for Protection of Civilians Week on women and girls with disabilities in emergencies and armed conflict. She also engaged in a virtual expert meeting organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the outcome document of the Second World Summit for Social Development and contributed to the expert workshop of the Human Rights Council on the role of the family, addressing the subject of employment and decent work for the parents and caregivers of persons with disabilities. She also met virtually with organizations of persons with disabilities from the State of Palestine, including Gaza, on the grave humanitarian situation and barriers to access to essential services. Throughout the year, the Special

[1] A/HRC/58/56.
[2] A/HRC/58/56/Add.1.

Rapporteur continued to draw attention to the dire human rights situation of Palestinians with disabilities.[3]

7. In June, the Special Rapporteur participated in the eighteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York, where she delivered an opening statement and spoke at several side events. Together with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the International Human Rights Clinic of Duke University, she organized a side event to launch a briefing paper on trafficking and persons with disabilities.[4] Later that month, she provided keynote remarks at the technical meeting of the first Disability Inclusion Initiative of the Group of 20, convened by South Africa, addressing disability inclusion in the context of new technologies and artificial intelligence.

8. In August, the Special Rapporteur attended the sixteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City. She notably advocated for the integration of disability rights into regional gender frameworks and emphasized the importance of inclusive care and support systems to promote and protect autonomy and independent living.

9. In September, the Special Rapporteur took part in the eighteenth World Congress of Inclusion International in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, and, in October, she delivered a video message at the annual conference of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, both of which were opportunities to speak about disability-inclusive care and support systems, including support for family caregivers.

10. In October, the Special Rapporteur presented her thematic report to the General Assembly,[5] in which she highlighted the barriers faced by children with disabilities and their family caregivers to the enjoyment of their human rights, including the gendered dimension thereof. In collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and other partners, she organized an event to raise awareness of the findings and recommendations of her report.

11. In November, the Special Rapporteur attended the Second World Summit for Social Development, in Doha, where she spoke at multiple side events and met with various partners. Her participation marked nearly a year of advocacy for disability-inclusive and rights-based language in the final outcome document of the Summit, including on care and support systems.

C. Communications

12. Summaries of the communications sent and replies received during the period covered by the present report are available in the communications reports of the special procedures and in the communications database of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

III. Advancing equal political representation for persons with disabilities

13. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Rapporteur wishes to focus on the core principles of active and effective participation and inclusion in decision-making processes. During the negotiations for the Convention, the disability movement rallied around the “nothing about us without us” motto, ensuring that persons with disabilities were recognized as equal

[3] See www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/un-experts-warn-gaza-city-offensive-will-be-apocalyptic-persons-disabilities.

[4] See https://law.duke.edu/sites/default/files/humanrights/260606-Duke_IHRC_Booklet-Final_Pages.pdf.

[5] A/80/170.

members of their communities whose voices were represented and integrated into decision-making processes. The Convention itself was shaped by the transformative power of the direct participation of persons with disabilities.

14. Over the past two decades, many efforts have rightly been placed on participation and meaningful consultation in decision-making processes, including through the representative organizations of persons with disabilities. In many ways, persons with disabilities have gained the proverbial seat at the table, through institutionalized consultative bodies, disability councils and umbrella organizations. Although the frequency of consultations has risen, it has not necessarily translated into meaningful and influential engagement in all relevant policy areas.[6]

15. Participation and representation in politics are at the core of democratic societies, human rights and social inclusion. For persons with disabilities, they are also a vital tool for protecting their rights, sharing expertise about needs and solutions and combating stigma and prejudice. Political participation and leadership are also highly symbolic and reflect the recognition of human diversity and the agency and capacity of persons with disabilities to lead and contribute to their communities.

16. Participation in politics includes voting, standing for election and holding public office. To date, policy measures, technical assistance and international cooperation have mostly been focused on the right to vote, for instance, regarding the accessibility of polling stations and election information. This is of the utmost importance, but it does not automatically translate into real influence over decision-making if the priorities of persons with disabilities are not part of the political programmes of candidates and parties. Voting alone does not mean being represented in political decision-making.[7]

17. Through the present report, the Special Rapporteur aims to shed light on the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities and the legal and policy measures and promising practices to protect and promote the right of persons with disabilities to stand for election and hold public office effectively, in line with the international human rights framework. She hopes to draw more attention to this neglected but crucial element of the right to participate in political and public life, particularly given that persons with disabilities remain underrepresented in politics worldwide. Moreover, significant cuts to international development assistance risk undermining the progress made so far and have led to shrinking the space for participation and advocacy.[8]

18. To prepare the report, the Special Rapporteur issued a call for input and received 79 responses from States, organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society and United Nations entities, among others.[9] The preparation of the report also entailed extensive desk research and document review, as well as interviews with persons with disabilities holding elected office. The Special Rapporteur is thankful to all those who contributed and shared valuable information.

A. Right to stand for election and hold public office effectively under the international human rights framework

19. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities represents the most authoritative articulation of the political rights of persons with disabilities globally, encompassing the right to vote, to be elected and to hold public office effectively. Importantly, it does not contain any restriction or exception on the basis of disability, which would constitute discrimination under article 2 of the Convention.

[6] See www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-7.pdf, p.187.

[7] Submissions from AsIAm Ireland, Autism Europe, and Association of People with Disability, Bangalore.

[8] Submission from International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

[9] Submissions received in accessible formats are available at www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-breaking-glass-ceiling-equal-participation-persons-disabilities.

20. Moreover, article 29 obliges States not only to refrain from discriminatory measures, but also to adopt positive measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in political life and hold public office effectively and equally. Positive obligations include ensuring the accessibility of voting procedures and information, guaranteeing secret ballots, authorizing assistance by a person of choice where needed and ensuring that candidates and elected officials with disabilities receive the support necessary to discharge their duties.[10]

21. The right to political participation is deeply intertwined with other rights protected under the Convention, particularly the right of equal recognition before the law (article 12), whereas linking political participation to legal capacity constitutes discrimination, for example, through deprivation of the right to vote or to hold public office on the basis of "established mental incapacity".[11] Earlier interpretations of international human rights law allowing such restrictions[12] should be considered incompatible with non-discrimination obligations in the light of the Convention.

22. The right to political participation is further connected with the obligations of non-discrimination, including reasonable accommodation and affirmative action (article 5), accessibility (articles 9 and 21), access to justice (article 13), close and active involvement in developing and implementing laws and policies related to political participation (article 4 (3)) and addressing the compounded barriers experienced by women and children with disabilities (articles 6 and 7). Both the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have underscored that targeted special measures should address the underrepresentation of women with disabilities.[13] The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (article 5 (c)) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (article 41 (1)) also protect political rights for subgroups of persons with disabilities who may experience multiple forms of discrimination.

23. Regional human rights frameworks also significantly contribute to the evolution of norms related to the political rights of persons with disabilities. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights guarantees every citizen the right to participate freely in government, while the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (article 31) requires States to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in governance processes and to provide comprehensive civic education to encourage the full participation of persons with disabilities. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, in force since May 2024, explicitly requires States to encourage effective participation by persons with disabilities in political life and to repeal or amend laws that restrict the rights of persons with disabilities to stand for or remain in public office on the basis of disability (article 21) and to support women with disabilities to participate in decision-making processes (article 27).

24. In Europe, the European Court of Human Rights rejected the blanket disenfranchisement of persons under guardianship as a violation of article 3, on free elections, of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights). The Court diverged however from the standards set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when it allowed restrictions on the right of persons under guardianship to vote when based on individual court decisions.[14] The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued a recommendation on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life to encourage and

[10] A/HRC/19/36, para. 15; and CRPD/C/ESP/CO/1, para. 48.

[11] Such restrictions are incompatible with article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; see A/HRC/19/36, para. 28.

[12] Notably, Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 25 (1996)) on participation in public affairs and the right to vote.

[13] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general comment No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, paras. 25 and 26; and Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities, paras. 60 and 64 (a) and (b).

[14] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Political participation of people with disabilities: new developments", 29 May 2024).

guide measures to ensure their full participation in political and public life and the removal of disability-based restrictions.[15]

25. Within the inter-American system, the American Convention on Human Rights protects political rights but still permits limitations based on "mental capacity" (article 23 (2)), which is incompatible with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in various sectors of life, including in politics (article 3 (1) (a)).

26. At the global level, the Sustainable Development Goals further reinforce the above legal obligations. Goal 16 calls for inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels, and Goal 10 calls for the social, economic and political inclusion of all persons, explicitly referencing disability. Together, these commitments underscore that political inclusion is not only a human rights obligation, but also a prerequisite for sustainable development.

B. Invisibility of persons with disabilities in data collection

27. Persons with disabilities remain largely underrepresented in political life, as confirmed in multiple submissions from various regions. The relative invisibility of persons with disabilities in politics is compounded by the very limited data on their participation as candidates in elections or as elected members of legislatures. This contributes to limited awareness and understanding of the barriers that they face to engage in politics, in turn hampering the formulation of appropriate measures to promote equal opportunities to stand for election and hold public office.

28. Whereas data on participation in legislatures should be collected and disaggregated by sex, age, disability and population groups, according to Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.7.1,[16] comprehensive and comparable data are only available on women's and youth participation. Disability-disaggregated data are not expected to be collected in the near future, as such data are considered sensitive, given privacy concerns (the choice to publicly self-identify or not), stigma and the prevailing reliance on medically certified disability status, which also poses confidentiality issues.[17]

29. Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union indicate extremely limited information being available on the number of parliamentarians with disabilities.[18] It also collects data on reserved seats in parliament for certain groups but without disability-specific information available. Gaps in data collection on persons with disabilities in the context of elections were also recognized within the European Union.[19] In submissions received from civil society from different regions it was also largely indicated that data on political participation were not collected systematically, and, if so, mostly were focused on voter registration.

30. To reconcile the obligation to collect disability-disaggregated data, in line with article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with concerns over sensitivity and privacy protection, surveys based on the standardized Washington Group short set of questions on functioning should be prioritized. This would allow for candidates and elected officials to self-report difficulties in core functional areas while preserving the confidentiality of survey respondents, ideally through surveys conducted by independent expert bodies, such as national statistical commissions.

[15] Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, recommendation No. CM/Rec(2011)14.

[16] Data for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.7.1.a includes members of parliament, speakers and committee chairs and is aimed at comparing the proportions thereof to national disability prevalence.

[17] See https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-16-07-01A.pdf.

[18] See https://data.ipu.org/.

[19] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Political participation of people with disabilities".

C. Barriers to political representation and measures to address them

31. Despite a robust international human rights framework protecting the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political life, persons with disabilities encounter numerous barriers when seeking to stand for election and hold elected office effectively.

1. Stigma and ableism

32. Stigma and ableist attitudes constitute structural barriers that exclude persons with disabilities from political leadership and decision-making. In the context of politics, ableism takes the form of persistent questioning of the competence, credibility, autonomy or "electability" of persons with disabilities. Worldwide, persons with disabilities are frequently perceived as being incapable of leadership, dependent on others or unsuitable to represent others, stereotypes deeply rooted in the medicalized and charitable models of disability. These stereotypes influence voters' decisions, discourage political parties from nominating candidates with disabilities and shape recruitment and selection processes in ways that exclude persons with disabilities from political positions.

33. The media significantly shape public perceptions,[20] for example, when persons with disabilities seeking to enter politics are portrayed through stigmatizing frames, such as narratives of personal tragedy or charity.[21] Such discourse takes attention away from qualifications and policy positions and focuses it instead only on disability.[22] As a result, the legitimacy of candidates with disabilities as political actors is undermined, while the perception that they are exceptions, rather than equal participants in democratic life, is reinforced. In some contexts, the use of derogatory language in political discourse further risks normalizing stigma and ableism, contributing to hostile or dismissive environments for political participation.[23]

34. Stigma and ableism can be internalized, with information received indicating that some persons with disabilities refrain from standing for election or pursuing leadership positions owing to fears of not being taken seriously, being subjected to attacks or harassment or facing discrimination once in office.[24]

35. Tokenism represents a more subtle but equally exclusionary barrier linked to stigma and ableism. Even when persons with disabilities succeed in being elected or appointed to public office, they are frequently perceived and treated as representatives primarily concerned with "disability issues", rather than as full political actors with the legitimacy and competence to contribute to all public policy matters.[25] Tokenism can have a chilling effect on political participation, as candidates with disabilities may anticipate being marginalized, instrumentalized or denied meaningful influence if elected.[26]

36. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has consistently emphasized that the mere existence of formal legal guarantees is insufficient where discriminatory attitudes continue to prevent persons with disabilities from exercising their rights on an equal basis with others.[27] Countering stigma and ableism in politics therefore requires a cultural shift, ensuring that persons with disabilities can exercise political leadership freely, autonomously and across all areas of public decision-making, without being confined to stereotyped or symbolic roles.

[20] Submission from Voices for Change Ireland.
[21] Submission from Instituto Jô Clemente.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Submission from APF France handicap.
[24] Submission from Humanity & Inclusion, Association of People with Disability, Bangalore.
[25] Submission from Comité de Entidades Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad de la Comunidad Valenciana.
[26] Submission from Sightsavers.
[27] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, , general comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination, para. 39.

2. Inclusive legal frameworks and election regulations, including affirmative action measures

37. Disability-based legal restrictions on the right to vote, stand for election and hold public office remain entrenched in national legislation in many countries and largely rooted in the denial of the right to legal capacity and guardianship regimes. They thus disproportionately affect persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, in contravention of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One study indicated that 91 per cent of countries had restrictions on persons with disabilities standing for election, with 65 per cent of them targeting persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities.[28]

38. Many constitutions and electoral laws continue to impose blanket restrictions with regard to voting, standing for election and holding public office on people deprived of their legal capacity and placed under guardianship regimes.[29] Within the European Union, for example, six countries automatically exclude people under legal guardianship from the voting process, while in six other countries courts can restrict the voting rights of those under guardianship.[30] Progress towards removing restrictions based on legal capacity has nevertheless recently been made in several European countries, for example, Luxembourg and Slovenia.[31] Court decisions have also played a positive role in limiting existing restrictions, for example, in Chile.[32]

39. Similarly, many national laws contain discriminatory and derogatory provisions that disqualify persons of "unsound mind", those considered "insane" or not "in full possession of their mental and physical capacities" from standing for election.[33] Such provisions may also contain a requirement for obtaining a physical and/or mental health certificate to be eligible,[34] again underscoring stereotypes about the capacity and eligibility of persons with disabilities.

40. Some countries maintain language restrictions on eligibility to stand for election. The requirement to read, write and speak the official national language omits the associated sign language. The focus on speaking abilities and the lack of legal recognition of national sign languages create specific barriers for people with hearing impairments to participate in political life, including as candidates for political office.

41. Electoral management bodies can take proactive steps to ensure inclusive policy development and the implementation of laws through regulations, policies and processes, as well as to comply with the duty to implement article 29 of the Convention. For instance, they can develop their own disability inclusion strategies, hire and meaningfully consult with persons with disabilities and mainstream disability into strategic and operational plans, giving particular attention to reasonable accommodation, accessible information about electoral processes and making complaint mechanisms accessible[35] to candidates with disabilities.

42. Some countries adopted specific affirmative measures to address inequality and increase the number of persons with disabilities in elected assemblies, for example, through quotas for candidates and political parties and reserved seats for persons with disabilities in legislatures. Submissions received included highlights of experiences from several African

[28] Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, *Disability and Development Report 2024*, p. 387.

[29] Submissions from 4Métrica Cuba, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the United Nations country team, North Macedonia.

[30] Submission by the European Disability Forum.

[31] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Political participation of people with disabilities", p. 16.

[32] Submission from Chile.

[33] Submissions from the Youth Leadership Cohort of the African Disability Forum and Deaf Zimbabwe Trust.

[34] Submissions from Election Resource Centre Africa, Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative, Nigeria, and others, and Islam Monirul.

[35] International Foundation for Electoral Systems et al., "Developing a disability inclusion policy: a strategic planning and implementation guide for election management bodies", December 2022.

countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as Egypt,[36] that established reserved seats for persons with disabilities in parliaments. The quotas created important guarantees that persons with disabilities would be represented at the highest levels of decision-making. Zimbabwe further codified that women with disabilities must be included within the existing gender quota for the National Assembly.[37] Other countries opted for requirements on political parties to include persons with disabilities in their candidate lists, for example, Kazakhstan and Mexico, which also led to increased numbers of persons with disabilities represented in legislatures.[38]

43. Caution should be exercised however when introducing and implementing quotas and reserved seats for persons with disabilities. Lessons from more well-established gender quotas are not easily transferable, with the questions around how to define and select candidates with disabilities being particularly sensitive given the diversity of the group, privacy considerations and the prevalence of medical approaches to disability. To ensure effectiveness, quotas need to be well planned, in close consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, and complemented by other measures.

44. If not carefully implemented, quotas can entrench inequalities, for example, when only men with disabilities or people with one type of impairment are added to candidate lists. Being elected through a disability quota can also lead to reinforcing perceptions of elected officials with disabilities as only dealing with "disability issues" and not being recognized as capable and interested in contributing to other policy areas. Moreover, introducing disability quotas should not be considered the end goal to achieve disability representation in politics – and thereby discourage further work – but rather one among a variety of measures to ensure equal political representation.[39] Quotas can also become a box-ticking exercise if not well enforced, for example, if persons with disabilities are only placed on ineligible positions in candidate lists or if they are expected by political parties to vacate the elected seat for others after elections, as observed in Kyrgyzstan.[40]

3. Accessibility, extra costs related to disability, and reasonable accommodation

45. Even in the absence of legal barriers, the political environment remains largely inaccessible and therefore discriminatory to persons with disabilities. Barriers in the physical, informational, communicational and digital environments mean that persons with disabilities who want to stand for election and hold public office are either excluded from many political activities or incur extra costs to pay for adapted transport, personal assistants, sign language interpretation, accessible campaign materials or assistive technologies. Such extra costs related to disability place candidates with disabilities at a structural disadvantage, compared with those without disabilities, and can be so prohibitive that they prevent persons with disabilities from participating in political life effectively.

46. Information and communication about political processes, election and campaign materials, nomination forms, party manifestos or public debates are rarely available in accessible formats, including Braille, sign language, audio description or Easy Read formats.[41] This creates significant barriers for candidates with disabilities to actively and equally participate in campaigns, meetings and debates, especially given the importance of information and communication in politics.

47. Similarly, the lack of digital accessibility and access to the Internet and digital devices is another barrier to effective political participation. Websites of political parties and public institutions frequently fail to comply with accessibility standards. Women with disabilities

[36] Submissions from Egypt and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.
[37] Constitution of Zimbabwe, art. 124 (1) (b).
[38] Submissions from Kazakhstan and Mexico.
[39] Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), "Guidelines on promoting the political participation of persons with disabilities", 2019, p. 58.
[40] See A/HRC/58/56/Add.1.
[41] Submissions from the Norwegian Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, Somaliland Disability and Handicap Organization and Uruguay.

might be particularly marginalized, given that they are less likely to own Internet-connected devices, such as smartphones.[42]

48. Inaccessible physical environments also prevent persons with disabilities from participating in political life. For example, inaccessible roads, transport and buildings make it difficult for candidates with disabilities to canvass during election campaigns. Lack of awareness about how disability affects participation in political life can further exacerbate exclusion, for instance, when political parties plan campaign activities without considering accessibility issues for persons with various impairments. As a result, inaccessible venues have prevented persons with disabilities from attending local party meetings, fundraisers and public debates.

49. Elected officials with disabilities also face physical, informational and communicational barriers to holding public office effectively – and incur extra costs to discharge their mandates effectively, which may outweigh the financial benefits of an elected position. The premises of national, regional and municipal assemblies, other public buildings and political party premises are often not fully accessible, while documents and debates are not systematically available in accessible formats.[43] Solutions and adjustments are made ad hoc, when institutions and venues are confronted with candidates and officials with disabilities, rather than through adequate planning,[44] which again points to the lack of systemic support and accessibility measures underpinned by legal requirements, including clear obligations and guidelines on providing reasonable accommodation. Candidates and officials with disabilities therefore often must rely on their own support networks and the goodwill of others to succeed in politics.

50. To guarantee equality, non-discrimination and participation, States have an obligation to enact and enforce accessibility standards and guidelines, provide reasonable accommodation and take specific measures to level the playing field and address accessibility barriers for persons with disabilities. Relevant public institutions, such as electoral management bodies, parliaments or municipal councils, as well as political parties, should put in place accessibility policies and strategies and be accountable for their implementation. Moreover, carrying out regular accessibility assessments and audits, in close consultation with persons with disabilities in all their diversity, should be the basis for identifying needs and formulating and updating strategies. Making assessments, recommendations and regular progress updates public, such as the 2023 accessibility review of the Parliament House in Australia, encourages accountability and implementation.[45]

51. Reasonable accommodation funds can be particularly effective in ensuring equal opportunities for candidates to participate in politics, but such mechanisms have not been widely deployed. In New Zealand, candidates with disabilities standing in parliamentary elections can apply for support through the Election Access Fund to cover disability-related costs, including equipment and technology, communication, personal assistance or accessible travel, accommodation and venues.[46] In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the now closed Access to Elected Office Fund provided grants for disability-related costs as part of standing for election.[47] Such funding mechanisms are particularly effective as they are available to individuals with disabilities without being contingent on political party membership.

52. In submissions received, examples were also highlighted from Belgium, France, Spain and Sweden, where municipalities and political parties provided support to persons with disabilities to hold elected positions at the municipal and regional levels, including accessible communication, personal assistants during meetings and sign language interpretation.[48] National legal frameworks can also provide for increased remuneration and financial support

[42] GSMA, “The digital exclusion of women with disabilities: a study of seven low and middle-income countries”, June 2020.

[43] Submissions from APF France handicap and the Association of People with Disability, Bangalore.

[44] Submission from Brazil.

[45] Submission from Australia.

[46] See https://elections.nz/getting-involved/election-access-fund/.

[47] See www.gov.uk/access-to-elected-office-fund.

[48] Submissions from Inclusion Europe and the Swedish National Association of the Deaf.

for elected officials with disabilities, allowing them to perform their duties effectively. In France, an entitlement for disability-related costs linked with persons with disabilities holding elected office is recognized in national legislation, and parliamentarians with disabilities have higher budgets to hire assistants.[49] In Greece, elected officials with disabilities at the municipal and regional levels are entitled to higher remuneration.[50]

4. Additional financial costs of political engagement

53. In addition to disability-related costs linked with inaccessible political environments, additional financial barriers can arise for persons with disabilities at multiple stages of political participation and intersect with pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities faced by persons with disabilities. Due to unequal employment opportunities, lower income levels and dependence on disability-related social protection schemes, persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty, which significantly limits their resources for political engagement.[51]

54. Costs related to party membership fees, nomination fees, campaign costs, travel expenses, campaign materials and communications, among others, can be significant for persons with disabilities.[52] In several countries, such costs are extremely high, which can exclude candidates without the adequate financial means, including persons with disabilities and particularly women and young people with disabilities.[53] Some countries introduced fee waivers or reductions for the nomination of candidates with disabilities or financial inducements for political parties, such as a reduced party registration fee, if party lists include persons with disabilities.[54]

55. In some contexts, the financial practices of political parties can reinforce the exclusion of persons with disabilities, for instance, when party nomination processes require candidates to financially contribute to campaign activities or mobilize private funding.[55] Party events and internal processes sometimes involve participation fees or financial expectations that are inaccessible to persons with disabilities, especially those that may rely on informal support networks.[56]

5. Investing in education, training and mentorship as prerequisites for political engagement

56. Limited access to inclusive education, including civic and political education and leadership skills training, remains a persistent barrier for persons with disabilities to stand for election, be elected and hold public office effectively.[57] The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities indeed highlighted links between the right to inclusive education and full participation in political and public life, while stressing that curricula for all students must include the topic of citizenship and the skills of self-advocacy and self-representation as a fundamental basis for participation in political and societal processes.[58]

57. The lack of political education and training is also reinforced by limited access to accessible information beyond formal schooling. Owing to stereotypes and stigma, civic and political education programmes typically exclude persons with disabilities or are not made accessible to them. Inaccessible campaign materials, policy documents and online content

[49] Submission from France.
[50] Submission from Greece.
[51] Submissions from Brazil, Coalición Colombiana por la Implementación de la Convención sobre los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad and Learning Disability England.
[52] Submissions from the African Albinism Network and Voice of Vision Impaired.
[53] Submissions from the Youth Leadership Cohort of the African Disability Forum.
[54] Submission from International Foundation for Electoral Systems.
[55] Submission from Humanity & Inclusion.
[56] Submission from Creuset d'orientation et d'intégration des personnes handicapées, Benin.
[57] Submissions from the Austrian Disability Council and the Independent Monitoring Committee of Austria.
[58] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education, para. 57.

place persons with disabilities, particularly persons with sensory, intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, at a disadvantage in political discourse.[59]

58. A positive impact can be achieved through targeted measures in education, training and mentorship for persons with disabilities, with the aim of increasing political awareness, confidence and participation, particularly among young persons with disabilities. Initiatives combining accessible civic education with practical experience, including internships, community engagement and interaction with political institutions, can have a particularly transformative impact. Specific training packages to build leadership skills and increase understanding of political and civic processes have been designed and successfully implemented, for example, by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.[60] Persons with disabilities who benefited from similar training courses have gone on to stand for election, serve in local councils, work as polling officials and take up roles within electoral management bodies.[61]

59. Partnerships between election management bodies, educational institutions, private enterprises and disability rights organizations, including for the development of training manuals for election officials, consultative mechanisms involving organizations of persons with disabilities and requirements for accessible political information, proved to be useful tools for enhancing the political participation of persons with disabilities.[62] The United Nations Development Programme, for example, supported accessible civic and education programmes and training courses for persons with disabilities to stand for election.[63]

60. Organizations of persons with disabilities are key partners for strengthening civic and political education and providing training and pipelines for leaders with disabilities, particularly among those who are the most disadvantaged. In Uganda, for example, the National Union of Persons with Disabilities and the Youth with Disabilities Forum have trained over 400 young advocates on electoral inclusion since 2022, with a focus on advocacy, digital storytelling and policy engagement.[64] In Benin, an organization of persons with disabilities trained 120 leaders with disabilities on political rights, public speaking and political engagement while also sensitizing journalists.[65]

6. Multiple and intersecting forms of disability-based discrimination in politics

61. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination compound exclusion and deepen inequalities with regard to participation in politics. The marginalization of women and young people with disabilities, who face persistent and systemic barriers at the intersection of disability, gender and age, was highlighted in particular, in the information received.

62. In general, women with disabilities face heightened scrutiny, reduced family and community support, limited access to education and employment[66] and lower levels of access to property and financial stability, which are detrimental to their capacity to stand for election and hold public office. Societal norms and patriarchal attitudes in many societies portray leadership as a male domain[67] and assign women, including women with disabilities, subordinate roles within families and communities.[68] Such societal norms and patriarchal attitudes are coupled with ableist assumptions that depict women with disabilities as dependent, incapable of leadership or unfit for public life. Family members, spouses and care providers might also exert an undue level of control over women with disabilities and actively

[59] Submission from Voice of Vision Impaired.
[60] See www.ifes.org/programs-initiatives/engage.
[61] Submission from Creuset d'orientation et d'intégration des personnes handicapées, Benin.
[62] Submissions from International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the United Nations Population Fund and Ecuador.
[63] Submission from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
[64] Submission from the Youth Leadership Cohort of the African Disability Forum.
[65] Submission from Creuset d'orientation et d'intégration des personnes handicapées, Benin.
[66] Submission from Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative, Nigeria, and others.
[67] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 40 (2024), para. 32.
[68] Submission from Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative, Nigeria, and others.

discourage them from seeking political leadership roles, including by withdrawing or threatening to withdraw their support.[69]

63. Violence and intimidation associated with politics, both online and offline, can be a particular deterrent for women with disabilities to actively engage in politics. Violence against women in politics in general is often normalized and tolerated, especially in contexts where patriarchy remains deeply embedded in society.[70] Specific studies and data on how violence affects the right of women with disabilities to participate in political and public life are scarce. A study on women parliamentarians in Africa, however, found that women parliamentarians with disabilities were the most seriously affected by violence.[71] Another study, on the 2024 elections in Ireland, revealed that fear of harassment and violence deterred women with disabilities from standing for election, particularly women who were also members of sexual minority groups.[72]

64. Even where gender equality frameworks or quotas exist, they frequently fail to benefit women with disabilities, who remain largely absent from elected bodies unless disability-specific mechanisms are in place. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has expressed its concern about the low levels of political participation by women with disabilities, in the context of reviews of the periodic reports of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[73]

65. Young people with disabilities also face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination as barriers to engaging in political life. In many countries, legal minimum age requirements for candidacy and holding public office restrict access to political leadership for young people, which is compounded by stigma that frames young people with disabilities as inexperienced, dependent or unsuitable for leadership.[74] The resulting underrepresentation of young people with disabilities in political structures, including youth councils and political party youth wings, contributes to policymaking processes that fail to reflect their perspectives and priorities.[75] According to information received, in some contexts, these barriers are reinforced by limited access to education, political training and mentorship opportunities for young people with disabilities.

66. Persons with disabilities living in rural or remote areas, persons of migrant origin, Indigenous persons with disabilities and persons with albinism were also highlighted as groups facing heightened marginalization and barriers to participation in politics, including as candidates for election. Geographical isolation, limited access to transport and digital technologies, language barriers, racism and cultural marginalization interact with disability-based discrimination to restrict access to political processes and leadership opportunities.[76] These barriers often result in the near invisibility of these groups within political institutions, depriving decision-making processes of their diverse lived experiences and perspectives.

7. Role of parliaments and political parties, including through international cooperation

67. Parliaments and other relevant public institutions have a responsibility to take measures to provide an enabling environment for elected officials with disabilities so that they have equal access to all parliamentary activities and can hold public office effectively. The information received contained examples of national parliaments that had created and implemented accessibility measures. For example, the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil has an

[69] Ibid.

[70] A/73/301.

[71] Inter-Parliamentary Union and African Parliamentary Union, “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa”, issue brief, November 2021.

[72] Aoife Price et al., “Disability, diversity and identity in Ireland’s local and European elections 2024”, University of Galway and Trinity College Dublin, 2025.

[73] CRPD/C/DEU/CO/2-3, para. 65; CRPD/C/HUN/CO/2-3, para. 56; CRPD/C/LVA/CO/1, para. 10; and CRPD/C/SVN/CO/1, para. 49.

[74] Submission from Transforming Communities for Inclusion.

[75] Submission from the Youth Leadership Cohort of the African Disability Forum.

[76] Submissions from the African Albinism Network, Comité de Entidades Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad de la Comunidad Valenciana and Australia.

accessibility coordination unit that has carried out renovations and provided technical support for parliamentarians with visual impairments.[77] The Parliament House in Australia maintains procedural and practical mechanisms to accommodate the needs of the members and staff of parliament, while parliamentary procedures were changed to be accessible and disability-inclusive, for example, by removing the requirement to stand for parts of proceedings.[78] The rules of procedure of the Parliament of Georgia also contain references to disability, including the provision of a service car and an assistant to parliamentarians with an "obvious" disability.[79] In Kazakhstan, both parliamentary chambers have established parliamentary groups chaired by parliamentarians with disabilities to initiate legislative amendments and exercise parliamentary oversight over the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[80]

68. Political parties can be enablers as well as gatekeepers with regard to persons with disabilities engaging in politics. In information received, submitters point to the lack of accessibility and inclusion within political party structures, which creates early exclusion to political participation that persists in the long term,[81] and lack of understanding and inclusion, with mostly charity-based approaches to disability being taken.[82]

69. Having persons with disabilities well represented within party membership is an important step towards recognizing disability voices and integrating them into mainstream political programmes and activities and identifying and mentoring prospective candidates with disabilities. Party members with disabilities can also boost the awareness and implementation of accessibility measures, including for meeting venues, information and communications. Most importantly, being included in political parties means that persons with disabilities can build connections and pathways to political careers within the political mainstream, rather than being singled out as representatives primarily concerned with disability issues.

70. Many political parties have training and leadership pipelines in place to attract young people and engage them in politics, but they are usually not accessible or targeted at young people with disabilities. Engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities, especially youth-led organizations, could prove impactful in this regard. Similarly, many political parties have youth and women's wings, internal sections that are aimed at strengthening the representation of young people and women within the party and in politics in general. Intentionally strengthening the intersectionality of party wings to attract and support members from groups that are particularly marginalized in politics – including women and young people with disabilities – would offer opportunities to strengthen the political representation of persons with disabilities.

71. Elected bodies and political parties can also allocate a proportion of their budgets for reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of candidates and elected officials with disabilities. Individual examples of political parties being supportive and accommodating the needs of their members with disabilities were shared with the Special Rapporteur; one example was to do so through the allocation of funding to support sign interpretation costs.[83] The main duty to provide reasonable accommodation and ensure equality of chances however lies with public authorities, which must ensure that persons with disabilities get the needed support to engage in politics and hold public office effectively independently of their affiliation with a political party. Having a general fund for accessibility during campaigns would provide a more equitable solution for all candidates with disabilities.

72. Public institutions should advise and guide political parties on disability inclusion and accessibility and facilitate capacity-building, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities, for staff of political parties and elected bodies to enable them to adequately communicate with persons with disabilities, including their members, and to provide the

[77] Submission from Brazil.
[78] Submission from Australia.
[79] Submission from Georgia.
[80] Submission from Kazakhstan.
[81] Submission from Austrian Disability Council.
[82] Submission from Deaf Zimbabwe Trust and Instituto Jo Clemente.
[83] Submission from the Swedish National Association of the Deaf.

necessary support and accommodations. It was indeed reported that staff of political parties and parliaments generally lacked adequate knowledge and skills to provide a disability-inclusive environment, whereas persons with disabilities were not prioritized or were disregarded.[84] Useful guidance exists in this respect, such as the disability inclusion checklist for political parties developed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).[85]

73. International and regional cooperation between parliaments, as well as between political parties, is valuable for supporting national efforts to promote, protect and fulfil the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life. It notably provides significant opportunities for exchanging good and effective practices and building common standards, as well as a space for politicians with disabilities to engage in networking and learning. In consultations with the Special Rapporteur, parliamentarians with disabilities highlighted in particular the value of attending the annual Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

74. As an international organization of 183 national parliaments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is particularly well positioned to promote and support efforts to strengthen disability inclusion and representation in national legislatures, similar to its work on developing standards, data and guidelines on women in parliament and on youth participation.[86]

75. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, a network of 180 legislatures from 56 countries, created a Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities network[87] to champion and increase the representation of persons with disabilities and to strengthen disability mainstreaming in member parliaments and across all activities of the association. The activities of the network are aimed at creating an enabling environment where parliamentarians with disabilities can hold office effectively. The network established a specific fund to raise the accessibility of member parliaments, published guidelines on disability-inclusive communications for parliaments and is working on guidance on conducting accessibility audits for parliaments. Benefiting from the support and knowledge of international parliamentary associations is particularly valuable for parliamentarians with disabilities from smaller constituencies, who might often be the only parliamentarian with disabilities in their legislature.

76. Regional parliamentary organizations are another mechanism to promote disability representation and share good practices. The representation of persons with disabilities should be taken into consideration in regional parliaments to which members are selected by their member States and domestic legislatures, such as the Pan-African Parliament.

77. Elections to regional parliaments, such as the European Parliament, provide further opportunities for ensuring adequate support and inclusion for candidates with disabilities and support to those elected. However, significant disparities in equal opportunities to participate exist, as elections are managed nationally in each of the 27 States members of the European Union.[88] Nevertheless, the European Parliament did take some valuable initiatives to promote inclusion, such as holding its annual Disability Rights Week.[89] The Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament in particular brings together parliamentarians from different political groups to advocate for and advance the rights of persons with disabilities, with its work programme including a focus on political participation and accessibility and inclusiveness of European Union elections.[90] The Intergroup also maintains dialogue with organizations of persons with disabilities, with the European Disability Forum acting as its secretariat.

[84] Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of OSCE, “Guidelines on promoting the political participation of persons with disabilities”.

[85] See www.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/8/c/473754.pdf.

[86] See www.ipu.org/impact/gender-equality/women-in-parliament; and www.ipu.org/impact/youth-participation.

[87] See www.cpahq.org/our-networks/commonwealth-parliamentarians-with-disabilities/.

[88] Submission from European Disability Forum.

[89] See www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/european-parliament-s-third-disability-r/product-details/20251021EOT08981.

[90] See www.edf-feph.org/disability-intergroup./

8. Disability-inclusive international cooperation

78. International cooperation, including official development assistance, plays an important role in promoting the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life in all their aspects. Programmes on democracy, rule of law and governance provide especially important mechanisms both for disability-targeted interventions and for mainstreaming approaches to disability that are based on human rights, including in programmes aiming to strengthen the political participation and representation of women and young people. With shrinking development assistance, strengthened efforts to mainstream disability in line with the human rights-based approach are vital to avoid regression and losing the gains made so far.

79. Some international and regional organizations have implemented projects and built capacity and guidelines to strengthen national implementation of the right of persons with disabilities to political participation, including the right to stand for election and hold public office effectively. It is important to ensure that lessons learned and good practices are shared and used further. Country-level assistance by the United Nations Development Programme, for example, included awareness-raising campaigns to encourage persons with disabilities to stand as electoral candidates, the development of analyses on gender and disability representation and supporting electoral management to develop disability inclusion tools and regulations to enhance the representation of persons with disabilities.[91]

80. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of OSCE has increasingly integrated the rights of persons with disabilities, not only as voters but also as candidates, into election observation and assessment reports, providing valuable recommendations for improvement. In 2021, the Office further convened an Advisory Panel on the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities, composed of independent experts, which led to the publication of the Dublin recommendations on the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life in the OSCE region in 2023.[92]

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

81. **Being included in decision-making and power-sharing is at the heart of citizenship. Access to and representation in political life is both highly symbolic, recognizing one's worth and capacity to contribute to the collective, and practical, ensuring that all voices are heard and have an equal say in how communities function. To be excluded from the political arena sends a powerful and negative message that one's views and ideas are unworthy and unvalued when it comes to the collective future. Persons with disabilities are acutely aware of the negative consequences of decisions "about us" being made "without us", which has historically translated into laws and policies based on the charity and medical approaches to disability that disregard the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities created a new paradigm to revert course and make policymaking – and political processes – inclusive for the benefit of all.**

82. **Nearly 20 years after the adoption of the Convention, representation in politics remains elusive for persons with disabilities. As a result, politics do not reflect the diversity of the people represented, with laws and policies all the poorer for the lack of inclusion of the voices and experiences of persons with disabilities. Significant barriers constrain opportunities for persons with disabilities to stand for election and hold public office effectively if elected, thus undermining their right to equal participation in political and public life. Identifying and removing these barriers has received relatively limited attention, however, including compared with other components of the right to political participation, such as voting. Moreover, the data needed to have a clear picture of the level of representation and related challenges are sorely lacking.**

[91] Submission from UNDP.

[92] Submission from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of OSCE; see also www.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/b/1/559254.pdf.

83. **There are multiple and entrenched barriers to standing for election and holding public office effectively, including stigma and ableism, legal restrictions, especially for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, lack of accessibility and reasonable accommodation, lack of disability-inclusive structures within political parties and relevant public institutions, gaps in civic and political education and few opportunities for mentoring and building leadership skills in the political space. The time, energy and financial resources needed to overcome these barriers are often prohibitive for persons with disabilities, especially for those that experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as women and young people with disabilities.**

84. **States Parties to the Convention must adopt comprehensive and integrated measures to address both direct and indirect barriers to political participation, combining legal reform, targeted positive measures, accessibility and reasonable accommodation to cover the extra costs related to disability, awareness-raising and sustained investment in education and empowerment. A single affirmative measure, such as reserved seats or waiving nomination fees for candidates with disabilities, can have only a limited impact if it is not part of wider and systematic reforms designed and implemented in close consultation with persons with disabilities. Building opportunities to gain qualifications, experience and leadership skills, coupled with adequate support, can be particularly effective in achieving sustainable progress whereby persons with disabilities are integrated into mainstream politics based on their competence and ideas, rather than being constrained to the role of disability representatives.**

85. **In this respect, the Special Rapporteur recommends that States:**

(a) **Implement awareness-raising initiatives to challenge beliefs about competence, leadership and decision-making abilities, particularly concerning persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and women and young people with disabilities. Highlighting success stories of leaders with disabilities should be particularly encouraged;**

(b) **Monitor, remove and sanction ableist and hateful discourse online and offline in the context of elections and politics and mandate election management bodies to develop related guidelines;**

(c) **Strengthen data collection systems to capture statistics on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in candidate lists and as elected members of legislatures, based on voluntary self-identification and privacy safeguards, as well as data and analysis on barriers to participation in political life;**

(d) **As a matter of priority, repeal discriminatory laws that restrict the right of persons with disabilities to stand for election and hold public office and bring legislation into line with articles 12 and 29 of the Convention, particularly ensuring the enjoyment of legal capacity and replacing substitute decision-making by supported decision-making regimes;**

(e) **Strengthen consultative mechanisms with organizations of persons with disabilities in the design and monitoring of electoral systems, particularly through cooperation with election management bodies;**

(f) **Consider adopting affirmative action measures to increase political representation of persons with disabilities, such as reserved seats in legislatures and disability quotas on election lists, in close consultation with persons with disabilities and after carefully analysing possible impacts, enforcement mechanisms and accessibility and support needs for candidates and elected officials with disabilities;**

(g) **Ensure that existing quotas and reserved seats include an intersectional approach, for example, that gender quotas expressly include women with disabilities and that reserved seats for persons with disabilities include cross-disability, gender, age and other characteristics;**

(h) **Review existing national laws and policies on elections and disability to recognize the right of all persons with disabilities to political participation, including**

standing for election and holding public office, and explicitly mandate electoral management bodies to develop, implement, monitor and report on policies and measures to promote and protect all components of the right to equal political participation for persons with disabilities, including through intersectional approaches;

(i) **Ensure that election management bodies have dedicated capacity and resources in this regard, including by hiring persons with disabilities and the appointment of focal points on the rights of persons with disabilities;**

(j) **Review campaign finance laws, nomination procedures and remuneration systems for elected officials, in cooperation with political parties and in close consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, to ensure that they do not have discriminatory effects;**

(k) **Adopt comprehensive and binding accessibility standards covering the physical, informational and digital environments and enforce them effectively at all stages of the political process, such standards should include accessible voter and civic education materials, nomination and registration forms and procedures, campaigning, debates, information on electoral processes, government websites, social media communications and polling stations and public buildings;**

(l) **Conduct and publish regular accessibility audits to ensure that standards are implemented and enforced effectively and that new gaps and needs are continuously identified and addressed;**

(m) **Establish a dedicated public funding mechanism to cover the extra costs related to disability and ensure equal election campaigning conditions for candidates with disabilities;**

(n) **Ensure that persons with disabilities, especially young people, have equal access to civic and political education and opportunities to build self-advocacy and leadership skills. Develop and implement capacity-building measures, such as training courses, mentorship and internship programmes, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities, universities, legislatures, political parties and other stakeholders;**

(o) **Provide training and guidance to political parties, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on the human rights of persons with disabilities, cross-disability and intersectionality, countering ableism, accessibility, reasonable accommodation and support and create tools for monitoring disability-inclusion, for example, through regular reports from political parties on disability-inclusion to electoral management bodies and commitments to disability inclusion in party codes of conduct. Adopt mandatory requirements for disability inclusion for political parties receiving public funding and for elected assemblies;**

(p) **Encourage political parties to use existing mechanisms for strengthening representation, such as women and youth wings and mentorship programmes, to systematically include persons with disabilities.**

86. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that international and regional cooperation associations and organizations, United Nations entities and donors:**

(a) **Harmonize international legal standards and related guidance with the inclusive interpretation of article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;**

(b) **Include the political participation of persons with disabilities, as voters, candidates and elected officials, in international development strategies and programmes related to democracy and governance;**

(c) **Strengthen regional and international networks to share good practices, lessons learned and guidance on the political participation of persons with disabilities as candidates for election and holders of public office;**

(d) **Support organizations of persons with disabilities to develop and implement capacity-building on civic and political education, advocacy and leadership, particularly for those facing heightened barriers, such as women and young people with disabilities and persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities;**

(e) **Strengthen the work of international and regional parliamentary associations to identify promising practices, provide technical assistance and guidance on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in political life and create spaces for networking and collaboration for parliamentarians with disabilities. The Special Rapporteur particularly encourages the Inter-Parliamentary Union to strengthen efforts to improve the representation of persons with disabilities.**