

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat and the World Blind Union sign a milestone agreement to work together to make cities accessible for all

NAIROBI, 3 February 2020 – The UN agency focused on urban issues, UN-Habitat, and the World Blind Union (WBU) which represents over 250 million blind and partially sighted people, are joining forces to improve disability inclusion, universal design and accessibility in cities, towns and communities.

Nearly one billion persons with disabilities are expected to be living in urban areas by 2050, putting huge pressure on national and local governments to fulfil their obligations in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to ensure buildings, services and public spaces are inclusive and accessible to all.

UN-Habitat and WBU signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with joint commitments to accelerate UN-Habitat's work towards mainstreaming disability inclusion, universal design and accessibility within its strategies, policies, programmes and operations in line with the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, and the [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#).

UN-Habitat and the World Blind Union expressed confidence that the partnership would transform the global agendas into tangible practices in the Decade of Action and foster alignment of UN Habitat with the UNCRPD and UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

Mr. Rafael Tuts, UN-Habitat's Director of Global Solutions called the MoU a milestone.

"UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020-2023 has an increased emphasis on human rights, and for the first time explicitly highlights persons with disabilities as a vulnerable population within the plan's cross-cutting and social dimension, necessitating mainstreaming of disability inclusion throughout the UN-Habitat's operations."

The CEO of World Blind Union, Mr. Jose Viera, said the MoU was "pioneering a new partnership model between UN agencies and organisations representing Persons with Disabilities which will enable benchmarking of urban practices on disability inclusion, universal design and accessibility. WBU recognises that global agendas and the UNCRPD are mutually reinforcing for inclusive transformation and we will be a catalytic partner for UN-Habitat".

The WBU is coordinating a delegation of representatives of some 15 people with Disabilities to the Tenth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF10) in February 2020.

The delegation includes representatives of organisations of the blind and partially sighted, deaf, persons with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial and physical disabilities from Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Colombia, New Zealand and Sweden.



WBU and the delegates will host various events during the forum as well as take active part in Roundtables, Dialogues, side events, and networking events to actively participate to make contributions relevant for the WUF10 theme.

Ends

Background

The Memorandum of Understanding is aligned with the UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020-2023 with the primary objective to increase social inclusion, accessibility and participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in programs implemented by UN-Habitat and its partners at all levels. UN-Habitat and the WBU will work together on human rights and social inclusion, strategy and policy development, public space, urban planning and design, housing rights and design, urban mobility, capacity building, participation of persons with disabilities, engagement in flagship programmes and national urban policies.

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