

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
4/12/2020

- ✓ Many thanks to the United Nations and to all the governments and organisations behind this event
- ✓ I am very honoured to be part in this global event and share this exchange with such distinguished speakers
- ✓ Many issues have been covered during this panel, it will be impossible to react to all of them so I will have to focus on some issues which particularly resonate with me and where I can share some EU perspective/insights
- ✓ For those of you don't know me I'm Spanish, I'm representing here the European Economic Social and Economic Committee, which is the EU's main advisory body but I work for ONCE, which is one of the leading social economy and disability organizations in the world. We employ more than 70,000 people and a large majority of them have some type of disability
- ✓ Extremely interesting the presentation by Gopal Mitra about the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy. In Brussels we are also currently discussing a new European Disability Strategy for the period 2021-2030. The European Disability movement is lobbying very actively for it to be as ambitious as possible. I am sure that there will be synergies between both strategies. They are definitely valuable tools
- ✓ As it has been said on various occasions in the different panels Covid has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities faced by people with disabilities so any new strategy, be at UN, EU or national level, should adapt to the new reality and provide proportionate funds and resources
- ✓ The EU is currently discussing an extremely ambitious Recovery Fund worth 750 billion euros and similar exercises are happening in other continents and countries. It is critical that an important part is spent on ensuring that no-one is left behind, particularly disfavoured groups and notably people with disabilities. Again, recovery funding is something which is on top of the European disability movement advocacy agenda and it is in my view an indispensable tool
- ✓ As explained by Mr Kabir, integrating the gender element should be a priority as women with disabilities face double discrimination. Recent studies in Europe they also show that women with disabilities are even more disproportionately impacted by Covid. The double (and sometimes triple) discrimination faced by women with disabilities is something that needs to be systematically addressed with concrete and targeted measures. This is something the European Economic and Social Committee has highlighted in different reports and publications.
- ✓ A very concrete example of gender-specific discrimination is the forced sterilization of girls and women with disabilities, which happens in many countries, including developing countries. In my country, Spain, it was only last Wednesday when our politicians decided by unanimity to prohibit this practice, which goes against the UN Convention. We had a very emotional event in the Spanish Senate.

- ✓ Regarding the Multi-Donor Trust Fund I cannot but share and underline the importance of supporting policy relevant analytical work, best practice sharing and the provision of technical assistance, if we really want to build an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-Covid-19 World
- ✓ The involvement of civil society in policy-making is another critical element. The necessary interlocution and consultation platforms involving people with disabilities need to be created at all levels, including the local, regional and national levels. They need to be sustained in time and create ongoing communications channels through which people with disabilities can actively contribute to policy-making
- ✓ Finally, I feel particularly identified with the points made by Mr Yosuke Ishikawa. My organization ONCE is also a foundation so we see things through a similar lens. Coincidentally ONCE Foundation and Nippon Foundation have collaborated on different initiatives. Foundations we have a unique role to play to promote the mainstreaming of disability across all areas and sectors. Foundations often have at their disposal a unique mix of funding, expertise, general interest perspective and long-term thinking, which allow us to bring added-value to the table.
- ✓ I would need much longer to outline the different initiatives in which foundations can play an important role but let me highlight two concrete examples. We have created at European level a Disability Thematic Network, which aims at mainstreaming disability in the activities of the whole foundation and philanthropic sector
- ✓ In addition, we see foundations as part of the broader social and solidarity economy sector. In that context we are working in leveraging that sector potential, which in some countries represent up to 10% of the GDP, to advance the social and labour integration of people with disabilities. Yesterday, on the occasion of the International Day of People with Disabilities, Social Economy Europe published a best-practice guide illustrating practically how social economy enterprises can mainstream disability. After the event, I will share it with the secretariat in case you want to distribute it to the participants
- ✓ We will also share it with the United Nations Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, in which I represent the European Economic and Social Committee
- ✓ I think I my time is already over, I will leave it there

Pdh. Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna

EESC Member GIII