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Report on the implementation of the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (2020–23)

Summary: This document constitutes the first report on the Office's implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) and the related ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2020–23, as instructed by the Governing Body at its 340th Session (November 2020). The document refers to progress and areas for improvement in terms of disability inclusion, including a summary of the annual reporting to the United Nations on the ILO's implementation of the UNDIS, as of 2021.

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Related documents: [GB.340/INS/9](#).

▶ Background

1. The Governing Body, at its 340th Session (November 2020), considered document GB.340/INS/9 on the ILO disability inclusion policy and strategy. This document provided an overview of the ILO's long-standing commitment to disability inclusion and its leadership in, and implementation of, the [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) (UNDIS). The document further outlined potential elements of future multi-annual disability inclusion strategies, based on the UNDIS accountability framework, and set out a proposed ILO policy on disability inclusion for the Governing Body's approval.
2. The proposed policy was guided by the ILO's work to promote social justice and decent work and informed by the UNDIS. It was the result of extensive consultation with ILO senior managers, the departments responsible for the implementation of particular UNDIS indicators (known as "ILO UNDIS Indicator Custodians"), the ILO Staff Union, ILO staff with disabilities and staff with dependants with disabilities.
3. At its 340th Session, Governing Body members expressed strong support for the draft policy and further strengthened it by their comments, emphasizing issues such as the experience of the tripartite partners with disability and the importance of social dialogue. In its decision, the Governing Body requested the Director-General to finalize and implement the policy, taking into account its guidance. It further instructed the Office to put in place multi-annual strategies to implement the policy, starting with the 2020–23 period, in the light of the UNDIS. In addition, the Governing Body instructed the Office to monitor its implementation of the UNDIS and to produce a report for information on a biennial basis on progress and areas for improvement.¹
4. The current document constitutes this first report for information, noting progress and areas for improvement in terms of disability inclusion, including the latest update on the ILO's implementation of the UNDIS, as requested by the Governing Body.
5. Following the 340th Session, the Office incorporated comments made by Governing Body members into the draft policy, consulting with ACTRAV, ACT/EMP and representatives of the Director-General in order to ensure that the issues raised had been sufficiently addressed. At the same time, work was carried out to develop the first multi-annual ILO strategy which would contain ILO-specific indicators and targets, in collaboration with departments and offices involved.
6. In July 2021, the ILO Senior Management Team approved the final version of both the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and the Strategy. The ILO Disability Inclusion Policy was issued on 16 September 2021 in a Director-General's Announcement, designated as Internal Governance Document System (IGDS) No. 590. The Office subsequently published the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2020–23 as a single document with a foreword by the Director-General in which he characterized greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the ILO as "a moral imperative for each and every one of us".²

¹ GB.340/INS/9/decision.

² ILO, [ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2020–23](#), 2021, 1.

▶ A consultative and collaborative process

7. Consultation and collaboration exemplify the ILO's overall approach to disability inclusion, which increasingly includes persons with disabilities – particularly ILO staff with disabilities and staff with dependants with disabilities. This approach is in line with the disability community's slogan, "Nothing about us without us".
8. The emerging networks and support systems composed of ILO staff are a testament to this approach. Since 2019, ILO UNDIS Indicator Custodians have contributed to the implementation of and reporting on UNDIS indicators. The Disability Champions Network was established in December 2021. This network consists of a group of staff working on disability inclusion at all levels of the Organization; they act as catalysts to assist disability mainstreaming in headquarters and field offices. Most recently, in June 2022, the ILO Employee Resource Group on Disability Inclusion was launched. This independent group of ILO colleagues, who either have disabilities or who have dependants with disabilities, or both – helps to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace, drawing on lived experience.
9. This collaboration between emerging networks across the Organization speaks to the commitment and dedication of ILO staff to disability inclusion, which, accompanied by strong support from senior managers, is key to the implementation of the UNDIS as described below.

▶ ILO UNDIS reporting and self-rating

10. Under the annual UNDIS reporting process, United Nations (UN) entities rate themselves based on an entity accountability framework covering 15 indicators in four core areas, namely: leadership, strategic planning and management; inclusiveness; programming; and organizational culture.
11. Entities rate their implementation of the indicators using the ratings "not applicable", "missing", "approaches requirements", "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements". The UNDIS self-reporting ethos promotes realistic and frank appraisal, viewing disability inclusion as a continual process of improvement. Self-ratings of "missing" and "approaches requirements" are therefore initially expected during the first years of UNDIS implementation as several indicators require policies, surveys, studies and other products to be developed before the minimum requirements can be reached.
12. The ILO subscribes to this strict self-reporting ethos, closely following the requirements of the UNDIS indicators and their accompanying technical notes and guidelines.³ The UNDIS secretariat has recognized the ILO for the frankness of its reporting in its three annual UNDIS reports to date, covering activities in 2019, 2020 and 2021; the ILO's self-ratings for those years are compared in the table below.

³ United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, [Implementing the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy: Tools and Resources](#).

► ILO self-rating for UNDIS indicators (2019, 2020, 2021)

UNDIS indicator	2019	2020	2021
1. Leadership	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Meets requirements
2. Strategic planning	Missing	Missing	Missing
3. Disability-specific policy/ strategy	Missing	Approaches requirements	Meets requirements
4. Institutional set-up	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Meets requirements
5. Consultation with persons with disabilities	Missing	Missing	Missing
6. Accessibility	Missing	Missing	Approaches requirements
6.1. Accessibility of conferences and events	Missing	Missing	Missing
7. Reasonable accommodation	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements
8. Procurement	Missing	Missing	Missing
9. Programmes and projects	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements
10. Evaluation	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements
11. Country programme documents	Missing	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements
12. Joint initiatives	Exceeds requirements	Exceeds requirements	Exceeds requirements
13. Employment	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements
14. Capacity development for staff	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements	Approaches requirements
15. Communication	Missing	Missing	Approaches requirements

Source: ILO annual UNDIS reports for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

- 13.** The table above indicates that, over the past three years, the ILO has made steady progress in disability inclusion. This includes steadily reducing the number of “missing” self-ratings for UNDIS indicators from eight in 2019, to six in 2020, to four in 2021. In order to fulfil “approaches requirements” for these remaining four indicators, the ILO is developing a number of policies and guidelines as required by the UNDIS. Significant progress in this regard is expected by the end of 2023.

▶ Summary of UNDIS/ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy implementation

14. This section briefly summarizes the ILO's latest advances in disability inclusion, based on its UNDIS report for 2021.⁴ The information is organized by UNDIS indicator and refers to the corresponding strategy areas under the ILO Disability Inclusion Strategy 2020–23.⁵ The following paragraphs note important achievements, challenges and steps ahead.

Leadership: UNDIS indicator 1 (ILO Strategy area “A”)

15. During the three years of implementation of the UNDIS, ILO senior managers – including, notably, the Director-General – have displayed strong commitment to, and high-profile leadership on, disability inclusion. In particular, 2021 was a watershed year during which senior managers made crucial public statements and presentations championing disability inclusion, both inside and outside the ILO.⁶ These activities culminated in the publication of the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy as a Director-General's Announcement (IGDS No. 590) in September 2021. In this Announcement, the Director-General stated clearly that the main goal of the policy was “to ensure that the ILO is a fully-accessible and inclusive organization that values disability as an expression of human diversity”.⁷ Senior managers have also shown leadership by encouraging staff to join the ILO's Disability Champions Network; their continued leadership in this and other areas will be needed in order to ensure progress across all UNDIS indicators.

Strategic planning: UNDIS indicator 2 (ILO Strategy area “B”)

16. The current ILO Programme and Budget for the biennium 2022–23 provides a basis for disability-inclusive programming, as it includes disability issues at the levels of long-term impact, policy outcome and output. The ILO intends to grow from this base, strengthening Office-wide guidance and related capacity-building efforts in 2022–23. Going forward, the ILO intends to make its commitments to disability inclusion through the Executive overview section of the Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2024–25. According to the ILO Strategy, the ILO plans to reflect its commitment to disability inclusion in the new programme and budget in results statements and/or indicators, and to state a commitment to include disability disaggregated data where relevant. Stating this commitment would go towards fulfilling the criteria for “approaches requirements” under this indicator.

⁴ All UN entities and UN country teams engaged in the UNDIS submit annual reports to the UNDIS secretariat; the data so gathered are aggregated and used to produce a system-wide report for the United Nations Secretary-General, for submission to the General Assembly.

⁵ The ILO Disability Inclusion Strategy addresses all issues covered by the UNDIS indicators. In some cases, specific areas of the ILO Strategy encompass several UNDIS issues. For example, area F (The ILO becomes an employer of choice for persons with disabilities) addresses both UNDIS indicator 7 (Reasonable accommodation) and indicator 13 (Employment).

⁶ The video message released by the Director-General, “ILO Director-General message on ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy”, 27 September 2021, is a valuable tool to promote disability inclusion throughout the Organization.

⁷ See IGDS No. 590, para. 2.

Disability-specific policy/strategy: UNDIS indicator 3⁸

17. In 2021, the ILO published its Disability Inclusion Policy and its first multi-annual Disability Inclusion Strategy 2020–23 as a single document. These guiding documents provide a crucial framework for the implementation of disability inclusion throughout the ILO, covering all UNDIS areas including issues such as programming, employment, communication and procurement. By its submission of the present report to the Governing Body, the ILO fulfils requirements for the highest level of self-rating under this UNDIS indicator for 2022.⁹

Institutional set-up: UNDIS indicator 4 (ILO Strategy area “C”)

18. In keeping with the UNDIS, the ILO has a specialized Disability Team within the Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch (GEDI) of the Conditions of Work and Equality Department (WORKQUALITY). In 2021, the Disability Team played a significant role in working with senior managers and departments to launch the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy. Furthermore, it helped to establish the ILO Disability Champions Network, which currently has more than 60 members from ILO headquarters and in the field. The ILO plans to consolidate and expand this network, both in terms of numbers and regional coverage.

Consultation with persons with disabilities: UNDIS indicator 5 (ILO Strategy area “D”)

19. Consultation with persons with disabilities is a pillar of UNDIS implementation. Within the ILO context, promoting interaction with persons with disabilities and their organizations is essential to understanding their needs, concerns and challenges, so that the ILO’s constituents can address them in various instances of social dialogue. Accordingly, the ILO collaborates and partners with organizations of persons with disabilities.¹⁰ Trade unions are increasingly partnering with such organizations, for example on decent work for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the steering committee of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network includes the International Disability Alliance as a member. In addition, a number of ILO field offices have established collaborative relationships with organizations of persons with disabilities, often in the context of particular development cooperation projects. However, such collaboration has not been systematic throughout the Organization; therefore, during 2022, the ILO plans to address this issue by preparing a guidance document on consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities that would take into account the specificity of the ILO’s mandate, including, in particular, the importance of social dialogue. Having such a guidance document would contribute to fulfilling the UNDIS criteria for “approaches requirements” under this indicator.

⁸ There is no corresponding area for UNDIS indicator 3 under the ILO Disability Inclusion Strategy, since having such a strategy itself fulfils requirements for the indicator.

⁹ In order to reach the highest self-rating (“exceeds requirements”) under this UNDIS indicator, a UN entity is required to implement its policy/strategy and provide an update to its governing body at least every two years.

¹⁰ According to the UNDIS *Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities: Indicator 5* (United Nations, May 2021), “Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) are non-governmental organizations led, directed and governed by persons with disabilities, who should compose a clear majority of their membership”, 11.

Accessibility/Accessibility of conferences and events: UNDIS indicators 6 and 6.1 (ILO Strategy area “E”)

20. Ensuring accessibility of all facets of the ILO’s processes, products and operations is a continual process that requires extensive collaboration across multiple departments. The ILO has carried out accessibility assessments and developed guidelines in areas such as premises, transport/accreditation, security, information technology and publications. For example, the accessibility of the ILO’s e-recruitment platform, ILO Jobs, was assessed in late 2021 as part of an ILO joint project with the International Telecommunication Union. Upon request, the ILO provides captioning and International Sign interpretation for high-level meetings. ILO publications, in particular flagship reports, have become increasingly accessible and training has been provided to selected ILO staff on how to make publications accessible to persons with disabilities. Some of the farthest-reaching improvements have been made in the physical accessibility of premises at ILO headquarters in Geneva and a growing number of field offices. Key to achieving the rating “approaches requirements” under UNDIS indicator 6.1 will be to determine the current status of accessibility of ILO conferences and events and to set priority actions. An important next step in this multi-faceted process is to further develop a draft strategy on accessibility of all ILO premises, and to begin drafting guidelines on accessibility of conferences and events, including for International Labour Conference and Governing Body sessions.

Reasonable accommodation/Employment: UNDIS indicators 7 and 13 (ILO Strategy area “F”)

21. The ILO has a policy on the employment of persons with disabilities, set out in Circular No. 6/655 of 19 July 2005, and has issued an Information Note on the reasonable accommodation reserve (IGDS No. 133).¹¹ While these guiding documents provide a good policy base, there is a need to update them and the ILO has begun to draft a revised policy document that would combine the substance of both. This initiative, led by Human Resources Development (HRD), will include consultation with the recently launched ILO Employee Resource Group on Disability Inclusion, in addition to social dialogue with the ILO Staff Union; the topic of this revision is on the agenda of the Joint Negotiating Committee for 2022. Furthermore, the ILO is currently collecting data in order to better understand the number of ILO staff with disabilities or dependants with disabilities and what barriers to inclusion they may be facing.¹² Additional data is needed in order to establish a baseline of the current number of ILO staff with disabilities, which will be further explored by HRD-led surveys in 2022–23. The revised regulatory framework and updated data will be crucial in reaching the ILO’s goal of becoming an “employer of choice for persons with disabilities”.¹³

¹¹ The reserve is used to finance reasonable accommodation (also known as “reasonable adjustments”) when required by an individual staff member with disability. These may include any number of adjustments to the work environment, for example, the provision of a screen reader or other software for a person with a visual impairment.

¹² For example, in 2021, the ILO carried out an Organizational Health Index (OHI) survey for staff across the Organization, to assess how organizational culture has evolved; it contained questions related to disability and produced results disaggregated by disability, among other factors.

¹³ See IGDS No. 590, para. 4. The Director-General indicates that “[t]hrough this policy, the ILO seeks to be an employer of choice for persons with disabilities, and to provide the highest level of support to our constituents in their disability inclusion efforts”.

Procurement: UNDIS indicator 8 (ILO Strategy area “G”)

22. Procurement plays a key role in the ILO’s commitment to ensuring that persons with disabilities have the same access as others to its goods, facilities, equipment, technology and services. The ILO engages with partners across the UN system on procurement, for example in the drafting of the High-Level Committee on Management Procurement Network *Guidelines on the Implementation of Indicator 8 – Procurement*. ILO procurement is based on fairness, equal access to ILO business opportunities and non-discrimination, which is also embedded in the terms and conditions of all ILO contracts. The ILO currently has procurement guidance that considers accessibility for persons with disabilities in certain sectors such as hotel and event service. In addition, it is working with the Disability Team on guidance relating to disability-inclusive procurement as part of its work on sustainable procurement. This policy development work contributes to achieving the criteria for the rating “approaches requirements” under this indicator.

Programmes and projects: UNDIS indicator 9 (ILO Strategy area “H”)

23. Office-wide steps and methods have been outlined on how to monitor and report on disability inclusion in ILO development cooperation programmes and projects. The ILO has also developed practical tools to mainstream disability inclusion in the project cycle, with particular focus on the development stage. That being said, available data indicates that disability inclusion perspectives are not being included sufficiently in ILO projects.¹⁴ A concerted effort is needed across the areas of development cooperation, partnerships, programming and evaluation in order to make significant inroads in this area. Discussions are under way to outline how to monitor and report on disability inclusion in programmes and projects from an integrated results and resource framework.

Evaluation: UNDIS indicator 10 (ILO Strategy area “I”)

24. Within the UN system, the ILO participated in developing the *Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations* with the United Nations Evaluation Group and in a working group to provide further guidance to the UN on this topic. Within the ILO, the ILO evaluation policy guidelines of 2017, as revised in 2020, mainstream disability inclusion and provide detailed guidance. In addition, the training provided to ILO evaluation managers covers disability inclusion. Rolling quality appraisals of project evaluations conducted on all project evaluations by an external entity (prior to the launch of the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy) indicated that there was significant room for improvement in terms of disability inclusion.¹⁵ Going forward (see UNDIS indicator 9 above), it will be important to clarify which projects are considered disability-inclusive, including in the light of their linkage to the programme and budget framework and Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), in order to facilitate the evaluation reporting process.

¹⁴ The ILO’s Evaluation Office, in *Decent work results and effectiveness of ILO operations: Ex-post meta-analysis of development cooperation evaluations, 2020 and 2021 (partial)* (ILO, 2021), measured, for the first time, the extent to which ILO projects address disability inclusion. It indicates that “[l]ess than one quarter (21 per cent) of the projects evaluated in 2020 incorporated elements of a disability inclusion perspective”, the most poorly rated criterion in the study, 53.

¹⁵ According to the evaluations, “only 28% of the reports obtained satisfactory ratings”; and “71% of the reports obtained scores below somewhat satisfactory” on disability inclusion. In fact, 65 per cent of evaluations conducted in 2020 were found to be “highly unsatisfactory” in incorporating disability inclusion elements. This finding points to the need for disability inclusion in the project design stage to be more explicit so that evaluations can appropriately capture this.

Country programme documents: UNDIS indicator 11 (ILO Strategy area “J”)

25. The guidance on ILO DWCPs, as well as the associated tools, takes into account the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance and the UNDIS requirements and is currently being applied for developing and appraising new DWCPs. A marker system was introduced in April 2020 to track and report on gender equality and non-discrimination results, including on disability; the ILO is planning to review the application of the marker’s functionality. A baseline of disability inclusion within DWCPs has been established by analysing the active, published documents as of 2021, which indicates that 71 per cent of the DWCPs have one or more outcomes that address disability inclusion (the ILO aims to increase this to 75 per cent for the 2022–23 period). The Decent Work Results dashboard indicates that 195 out of 972 results (20 per cent) reported as achieved in the 2020–21 biennium are tagged to disability inclusion (the ILO aims to increase this to 25 per cent for the 2022–23 period). Going forward, it is essential to encourage greater inclusion of disability in development cooperation projects and programmes that contribute to the achievement of the disability-inclusive results as defined in DWCPs.

Joint initiatives: UNDIS indicator 12 (ILO Strategy area “K”)

26. The ILO actively participates in inter-agency coordination mechanisms, programmes and initiatives. In 2021, the ILO implemented two global projects on disability-inclusive social protection funded by the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Also, drawing on its role of secretariat for the Global Business and Disability Network, the ILO is applying disability inclusion lessons learned by private companies within the ILO context, for example by supporting the establishment of the Employee Resource Group on Disability Inclusion. Moreover, the ILO Disability Team and the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) collaborated with the Disability Inclusion Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to produce a comprehensive, five-week interactive training course on disability inclusion for UNDIS focal points and others working directly on disability inclusion throughout the UN system. In 2022, ILO headquarters and the Turin Centre worked together to successfully roll out this course for the first time, with plans to continue offering it to UNDIS focal points and to continue playing a leadership role in the UN system.

Capacity development for staff: UNDIS indicator 14 (ILO Strategy area “L”)

27. The ILO provides multiple learning opportunities on disability inclusion. For example, its e-learning programme, “Inclusion of persons with disabilities”, is aimed at building awareness on disability issues and increasing commitment to the promotion of disability inclusion for all ILO staff. Several UN entities have used the ILO course as a model to develop their own courses. In August 2022, the ILO issued IGDS No. 610, making the e-learning course mandatory for all ILO staff and thereby further institutionalizing its disability inclusion approach; this will enable the ILO to fulfil criteria for “meets requirements” under UNDIS indicator 14 for the 2022 reporting period. As at the date of publication of the present report, 946 staff have completed the course. This represents 25 per cent of all staff. In addition, the ILO Disability Champions Network provides informal learning opportunities, such as peer-to-peer learning. Furthermore, the ILO continues to transform its face-to-face, interactive Disability Equality Training (DET) workshops into a distance-learning experience. The ILO plans to continue to

offer various learning opportunities on disability inclusion, including tailor-made courses for ILO senior managers.

Communication: UNDIS indicator 15 (ILO Strategy area “M”)

28. The ILO innovates across a range of communication products to promote disability inclusion and to reflect disability as a lived experience within the world of work. For example, the ILO publishes stories on disability inclusion on Voices, its new multimedia platform that spotlights powerful stories of people in the world of work with first-person perspectives. In addition, it publishes web stories – “Our impact, their stories” – showcasing the impact of ILO programmes and projects on the ground through their beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities. In order to ensure that all ILO communication products are inclusive and respectful of persons with disabilities, the ILO recently developed and disseminated its first Disability Inclusive Communication Guidelines; work is currently under way to develop a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

▶ Key issues moving forward

29. The ILO has made significant advances in disability inclusion over the past three years, particularly since the launch of its Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2020–23. However, the ILO is at an important moment in its disability inclusion efforts and these gains need to be institutionalized as “business as usual”, or they may be lost. Therefore, moving forward on disability inclusion will not just be about making new gains but also about retaining and consolidating gains already made.
30. An independent evaluation will be undertaken during 2023 in order to gather lessons learned from the implementation of the current Strategy, make course corrections and contribute to informing the next multi-annual strategy for the period 2024–27. This is in keeping with the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy, which proposes regular monitoring and evaluation and periodical reviews.
31. In addition, the continued commitment of all actors involved – including staff, staff representatives and ILO senior managers – is required in order to maintain the forward momentum on disability inclusion, including in relation to the ILO’s stated goal of becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities.
32. Furthermore, there is a real need to increase disability inclusion throughout ILO programmes and projects and to continue to provide the highest level of support to ILO constituents’ work on disability inclusion. Concerted efforts will be required throughout the phases of donor engagement, project creation, roll-out and evaluation in order to improve the current situation. A strong catalyst for this change would be the explicit inclusion and funding of disability-related issues in all future ILO programmes and budgets.