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**Second meeting of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development
Inter-sessional Group of Experts on Disability (IGED)**

**Office of the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities,
Amman, 4-5 July 2017**

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BACKGROUND

The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) of Jordan kindly hosted the second meeting of the Committee on Social Development Inter-sessional Group of Experts on Disability (IGED) on 4-5 July 2017 at the Office of the HCD in Amman, Jordan. The objective of the group of experts is to strengthen ties and exchange information on disability policy and advance the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This second meeting of the IGED covered the following topics: (1) Updates from member States regarding their national disability policies; (2) Updates on the disability-related work and research of ESCWA; and (3) Discuss how to effectively translate disability laws into administrative practice, and what this means for government institutions and disability councils. Disability focal points from the following countries attended the meeting: Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. The next meeting of the IGED is tentatively scheduled to take place in early 2018.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Opening session

Prince Mired Bin Ra'ad Bin Zeid of Jordan opened the session and welcomed participants to the meeting. He noted that the new disability law in Jordan is a major achievement, and that the challenge now will be translating it into reality. He expressed optimism that because Jordan has many experts in disability, meeting the challenges of implementation will largely be a matter of coordinating the efforts of stakeholders in the public sector and the civil society. The Prince concluded by wishing all participants good luck with the meeting, and stressed the importance of learning about different experiences in the region.

Dr. Muhannad Alazzeah, General Secretary of the Jordan Higher Council for Affairs of Persons of Disabilities (HCD), emphasised that it was a great honour for the HCD to host the meeting. He expressed his appreciation for the work of ESCWA, with whom the HCD has established good relations. He also expressed his appreciation for his colleagues at the HCD who had been in constant contact with ESCWA and exerted great efforts.

Ms. Gisela Nauk, Chief of the Inclusive Social Development Section (ISDS), ESCWA, thanked Jordan and the HCD for the warm welcome. She noted that the HCD is a pioneer for disability policy in the Arab region and has been a reference point for others working in the field. ESCWA learned a lot from the HCD when it started to work systematically on disability policy. Ms. Nauk also noted that the IGED is a unique institution in the region. The only similar network is the European Commission High Level Group on Disability, and three experts from that network were in the meeting. The IGED was established in September 2016 in Beirut. It was now meeting officially for the second time, but unofficially for the third time. 17 out of 18 ESCWA countries are members of this network. Thus far, all 17 had not attended at the same time, but hopefully this would change. The only ESCWA country missing from the network is Libya, and work is ongoing to identify a focal point from them. The IGED was set up to increase cooperation, and the members are on the path towards achieving it.

The meeting was divided into two parts: the first would be more procedural, and the second dedicated to a specific topic. The specific topic chosen for this meeting was the challenge of translating disability law into administrative practice, or the “implementation gap”. This is a challenge for Europe and the Arab region alike, and Ms. Nauk hoped that there would be a fruitful exchange. She recalled that the IGED is composed of high-level experts from the Arab countries, and that ESCWA’s role is to bring additional expertise from abroad to further enhance the discussions. She expressed her gratitude to the three European experts who had kindly agreed to join the meeting. Europe and the Arab Region are very close to each other, and hopefully this meeting would generate cooperation that would bring the two even closer. Ms. Nauk reiterated her appreciation for Dr. Alazzeah and the HCD and wished everyone a profitable meeting.

[Opening remarks were followed by an introduction of all participants.]

Session 1: Updates from Member States on national disability policies

The session was moderated by Dr. Alazzeah. It consisted of a tour de table of member States and an open discussion.

Dr. Alazzeah began the session requesting participants to focus on recent achievements and plans or challenges for the next two years. Developments in Jordan would be presented in Session 3 the following day.

Mr. Ahmed Bel'azi, Director of Solidarity and Social Development, General Directorate for Social Advancement, Tunisia, explained that Tunisia has a tradition of working in the field of disability and has a number of strategies and tools in place. Its first report to the CRPD Committee was launched in Geneva in April 2011 and afterwards working with persons with disabilities to implement recommendations was challenging, particularly given the significant changes Tunisia underwent after the revolution. The country’s legislation first had to be harmonised with international treaties, and then a strategy for implementation had to be devised. The first step was to include an article (Article 48) on persons with disabilities in the new constitution. A committee of experts was then established to amend the law passed in 2005 in order to align it with the CRPD. The draft law is now being revised at the national level and will hopefully go to the cabinet and parliament for approval this year. At the implementation level, work has begun in cooperation with experts from the European Union, Spain and Germany on devising a new comprehensive strategy for persons with disabilities. Italy is helping Tunisia to turn the new strategy into tools and programmes. The strategy will be ready by December 2017.

The area of monitoring and data collection remains a challenge for Tunisia. The government provides a disability card for persons with disabilities. Some persons with disabilities chose not to apply for the card, with the implication that they are not included in statistics. For this reason, the Directorate for Social Advancement has partnered with the National Council of Statistics to carry out a study on comprehensively monitoring all persons with disabilities. They are currently waiting for the Ministry of Finance to approve and finance the study. Another important challenge Tunisia faces is enhancing persons with disabilities’ access to physical and virtual infrastructure, which also requires financial resources. Obtaining the disability card has been optional since the first law pertaining the disability was implemented. Some people, for cultural or social reasons, do not wish to apply for the card. Having a card grants privileges such as access

to transport and health care. To obtain the card, applicants must submit a dossier, including a medical certificate and information concerning their socio-economic situation, to the national or local committee in their governorate. The committees, which include persons with disabilities, then determine whether the applicant is eligible for the disability card.

Mr. Walid Ababutin, General Supervisor of Medical Services and National Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), informed that there are various ministries providing services for persons with disabilities in KSA, and that a committee was established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, headed by the Deputy of Social Welfare and Family, to coordinate the efforts of the different stakeholder ministries in matters related to persons with disabilities. Taking inspiration from other countries, including Jordan, this committee has worked on developing a National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities to be endorsed before the end of 2017. The country is now undertaking an initiative on diagnosis and classification of persons with disabilities. KSA is working on establishing a Council for the Persons with Disabilities by 2018.

Dr. Mervat Tashkandi, Advisor to the Minister, Disability and Gender Diversity Expert, Ministry of Economy and Planning, KSA, added that the Ministry of Planning has started working on establishing a National Strategy for Universal Accessibility for all members of the society inclusive of persons with disabilities and those with special needs, such as the elderly. This initiative pertains to infrastructure, transportation and mobility, and information and communication technology. This initiative is directly connected to KSA's 2030 Vision and in parallel with the Sustainable Goals (SDGs). In 2016, the Ministry of Labour adopted a new definition of disability and employment, an amendment of the labour law that includes reasonable accommodation, and the Mowaamah Certification System to assist in the enforcement of the employment quota, established and endorsed via a Ministerial Decision. An independent mechanism to enforce the Mowaamah Certification System has also been established and endorsed.

Mr. Bdraldeen Hamed, General Secretary, National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Sudan, commented that the National Council is now chaired by the Head of State, and all Ministries are represented. It had worked with the Union for People with Visionary Disabilities to get Sudan to ratify the *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled*. The campaign had succeeded, as the agreement was signed and adopted by parliament in 2013. More recently, the Council has worked with the National Council for Strategic Planning on a national strategy (2017-2030) that shall include the disability-related SDG indicators into national planning.

Concerning data and statistics, Sudan attended the workshop recently organised by ESCWA in Marrakesh. The Council has started participating in preparatory meetings for the 2018 census and proposed to the cabinet that it include questions on disability in accordance with the standards of the Washington Group, which was agreed. After 2018 there will be much more data available on persons with disabilities in Sudan. Improving statistics is one of the five goals in the strategic plan. In the past, staff carrying out the census have had difficulties accessing certain areas of the country afflicted by armed conflict, and thus the prevalence rate was about 5 per cent. The problem may occur again with the 2018 census.

The Ministry for Social Development, together with the World Bank, is implementing the Social Initiatives Programme (SIP), which will be a comprehensive programme that includes all services

for persons with disabilities. A survey on the needs of persons with disabilities is currently being carried out. Sudan wanted to attend the 10th session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD but had not been able to do so for visa-related reasons. Sudan is also partnering with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to improve the environment for and outreach to persons with disabilities and to prepare a national report. Mr. Hamed expressed hope that the focal points would be able to attend a Pan-Arab League workshop related to the SDGs that will be held in Khartoum on 16-18 October.

Mr. Asghar Al-Musawi, Head of the Commission on the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs, Iraq, recounted that Iraq in 2013 had acceded to the CRPD and passed law 38 on disability. Due to economic and political hindrances, the Commission established under this law had started its work only at the end of 2015. Persons with all types of disabilities are represented in the Commission and the deputy chair is a person with a disability. It was placed under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as historically this ministry deals more closely with persons with disabilities. A committee has been formed to review and amend the disability law to make it more compatible with international standards, including revising the definition of persons with disabilities and graduating from the charity-based approach. The main tasks addressed at the moment are (i) to ensure better coordination with line ministries, (ii) develop policies to address the needs of persons with disabilities, and (iii) change public culture and perception of persons with disabilities.

Armed conflict and related difficulties likely mean that the disability rate in Iraq is very high. Mr. Al-Musawi stressed that having in place strategies and plans will not be of much use if they are not implemented, and that they must therefore be customised according to the local context. He commended the new Jordanian law as an example from which Iraq and other countries in the region can take inspiration. It was recalled that Iraq was one of the first countries to include a provision regarding persons with disabilities in its constitution.

Mr. Amin Inabi, General Director, Directorate of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Development, Palestine, commented that much of the recent work in Palestine has been focused on the census, specifically on the number, types, and needs of persons with disabilities who are part of 43,000 households receiving financial aid from the Ministry of Social Affairs. As the aid system is focused on families, persons with disabilities are addressed as members of families – not as individuals. The 1999 law is inadequate, so they are working to develop a new law in line with international standards which better accommodates the needs of persons with disabilities. They will cooperate with civil society organizations working in the field of disability during this process; these efforts are being financed by UNICEF. The ministry is also working on rolling out a disability card programme, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. The Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities is not activated yet, mainly due to the lack of pressure from entities working on disability. Discussions are ongoing as to whether the Council, which is presently headed by the Minister of Social Affairs, should be independent. The Council includes persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, including unions. A project is ongoing to activate a centre for resources for persons with visual impairments. The census being carried out now will be completed by the end of December and results should be ready by early 2018. The Palestinian context requires a mix of different standards in the census, since persons who have acquired disabilities as a result of the Israeli occupation do not always self-identify as persons with disabilities. They still fall under the general classification, but it may have some consequences for individual programmes such as the disbursement of additional

salaries from a special fund. The institution implementing the census is semi-independent, which allows it to operate in all of Palestine, including Gaza.

Ms. Alkhansa Alhusaini, Director of Planning and Research Division, Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA), Kuwait, mentioned that Kuwait passed a comprehensive disability law in 2010 which established the Supreme Council for Disability under the Ministry of Social Affairs. The law also defines the entities responsible to implement the law. It includes the Director General of PADA, three ministers (education, health, and social affairs), persons with disabilities as well as representatives from related government and civil society organizations. PADA falls under this Council; although it is not independent but nevertheless has an independent character. PADA is responsible for implementing some of the disability laws and is responsible for coordinating with other ministries to implement the other disability laws. The official disability rate soared to 48,000 persons in Kuwait following the passing of the 2010 law, which granted a number of privileges to persons with disabilities, including financial subsidies, support to families, rehabilitation, personal assistance, pensions and reduced working hours. Kuwait has three early intervention centres focusing on children with Down's syndrome and autism. There are also three centres providing vocational training for persons with disabilities. Kuwait has a specific disability law and classification system, but the latter is not very detailed. They are now working with the WHO to revise these standards. Some of these services are also extended to residents of Kuwait who are not citizens.

Dr. Ashraf Marei, Secretary General, National Council for Disability Affairs, Egypt, gave a brief overview of the Council, which was set up in 2012 and which, in addition to having representatives of DPOs, includes the ministers of health and population, education, social solidarity, planning and administrative reform, and labour. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister; it is responsible for SCO capacity building, awareness raising, cooperation with ministers and governors to carry out their responsibilities toward persons with disabilities, as well as for national policy. In April the President of Egypt declared that 2018 will be a year dedicated to persons with disabilities, so the Council will be planning activities to carry out during the year, e.g. a civil service law in the states that includes some privileges such as to be one hour late in the morning for persons with disabilities or their caretakers. A new education minister was appointed in February, and cooperation has been initiated with him to make the educational system more inclusive. The Takaful and Karama cash transfer programmes that the Ministry of Social Solidarity runs covers persons with disabilities too. The Minister of Higher Education is also going to work with the Council in order to make universities more accessible. The Council is pushing for all libraries to become electronic so that they are more accessible to all, especially students with visual impairments. A field census which followed the Washington Group standards was carried out this year, and will give a clearer picture of the disability prevalence. The results should be published in September. The Council has been collaborating with the Ministry of Social Solidarity to produce standards for disability organisations. The Council cooperates with the Ministry of Housing to develop accessible building codes, and with the Ministry of Justice to facilitate access to judiciary facilities.

Mr. Abdelaziz Ou Bahha, Head of the Mobilization and Local Support Service, Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family, and Social Development, Morocco, recalled that many changes have occurred in Morocco since the signature of the CRPD and the Optional Protocol. The national constitution clearly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability, and the new framework law in conformity with the CRPD was published in 2016, which made it possible to draw up an

integrated public policy for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in Morocco. The national work plan, approved by the Inter-Ministerial Commission on 13 July 2017, defines the responsibilities of each government sector. With resources and indicators of specific implementation, this effort was carried out with a participatory approach of all the actors concerned (government sectors, public and semi-public institutions, civil society, etc.) Morocco is going to work with other partners to have a system of assessment of disability and a disability card.

The Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development cooperates with the Office of the High Commissioner for Planning to ensure that disability-related census questions are not based solely on the medical model, but take into account environmental factors. This was done in the survey conducted in 2014 that compiled the Washington Group guidelines in the census on disability. This survey showed that persons with disabilities account for 6.8 per cent of the population and that one in four families is concerned. Stereotyped ideas about persons with disabilities are still widespread, indicating the need to increase awareness among the population. Most disabilities are the result of illness, accidents or congenital diseases. Many children with disabilities have not been able to enter the formal education system, but the National Vision for 2030 includes provisions ensuring their right to education. Work has been undertaken aiming to unify the sign language system, which is currently based on the plurality of French, English and Arabic-speaking references.

Ms. Mageda Majeed Hazza Abdullah, Director, Al-Noor Institute for the Blind, Yemen, explained that services for persons with disabilities in Yemen were historically provided by charities, but that the state has taken over much of this responsibility during recent decades. Education and health care is provided for free, and there are centres for persons with visual impairments and for persons with Down's syndrome. Persons with disabilities use the same means of transport as persons without disabilities, but unfortunately they are not accessible. 30-40 per cent of schools are accessible to persons with disabilities. A special fund was set up in 2002 to provide assistive devices to persons with disabilities, though those living in Sana'a have faced difficulties accessing the fund's facilities. Efforts were underway to open a branch in each governorate, but unfortunately, due to the current crisis this work has stalled.

Mr. Ou Bahha mentioned that the Moroccan Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality and Social Development, in partnership with civil society and in order to bring services closer to people with disabilities in remote areas, concluded a partnership agreement with the National Community Based Rehabilitation Network due to its experience in the field. Yemen could benefit from this experience. **Dr. Alazzeh** recalled that the fund in Yemen was a pioneering example, whose activities were financed through a tax on cigarettes, but now it faces difficulties of funding which affect its performance. He also noted that persons with disabilities are particularly exposed to danger in times of conflict.

Session 2: Update on ESCWA's work

The session was moderated by Ms. Nauk. It consisted of two presentations and an open discussion.

Ms. Nauk opened the session, which would give an overview of ESCWA's current work and enable participants to contribute additional information, clarifications and corrections. Presently, ESCWA

is working on two papers. One of them concerns a study on the implementation of CRPD Article 33 in the Arab region. The institutional set-up varies from country to country: for instance, some countries have disability councils, others do not, and the character and activities of councils differ. The second study relates to social protection for persons with disabilities. This subject was first discussed at the meeting in April where ESCWA took note of participants' comments, but would now like to request additional feedback.

Ms. Angela Zettler, Associate Social Affairs Officer, ISDS, ESCWA, recalled that the theme of the first IGED meeting in September centred around institutional setups regarding Article 33 of the CRPD. All countries were asked to fill out a questionnaire asking detailed questions about their institutional setups. This presentation included the summary findings and trends based on the responses to the questionnaire. Ms. Zettler asked participants for individual interviews on the side-lines of the meeting to clarify some questions and collect additional information. The findings will be presented in a technical paper of ESCWA, to be published at the end of 2017.

Mr. Anton Bjork, Individual Contractor, ISDS, ESCWA, gave an overview of the work on the new ESCWA publication on Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities in the Arab Region to be published later this year, which will also include analysis of the disability related SDGs. He noted that the 2030 Agenda consists of the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Persons with disabilities are explicitly mentioned in seven of the targets. Many of the targets also refer to population groups that include persons with disabilities, such as "those in vulnerable situations". However, it is important to remember that all goals and targets apply to persons with disabilities just as much as to everyone else. The fact that seven SDG targets explicitly mention persons with disabilities does not mean that these are the only targets that are relevant to them. There are many overlaps between the SDGs and the CRPD. For example, Goal 4 relating to education is similar to Article 25 of the CRPD. The SDGs and targets are inter-dependent. This means that, for example, Goal 4 will not be fully implemented if Goal 3, on health, is not implemented as well. This is because poor health often prevents people from benefiting from education. All of this applies to social protection. Social protection is mentioned in SDG target number 1.3, as well as in CRPD Article 28.2. This means that persons with disabilities are entitled to social protection as a matter of right. Social protection is inter-dependent with other SDGs and with other CRPD articles.

The draft paper, which had first been presented in an Expert Group Meeting in April 2017, will be sent to Government focal points with the request to verify and complement relevant information regarding their respective countries.

Mr. Hamed informed that Sudan's SIP had been established following the deregulation of trade and commodities. Within the framework of this programme, all households, regardless of their size and character, have been given the same benefits. However, the programme has now been adjusted to target individuals rather than families. Furthermore, the targeting formula of the programme includes questions related to the costs of disability. Work has been undertaken to produce data on the number of persons with disabilities covered by health insurance, since previously data has only been gathered on persons with chronic illnesses.

Mr. Inabi noted the role of the private sector in providing services and advised that ESCWA should focus more on the responsibility of the community to persons with disabilities. The needs of persons with disabilities may in some contexts exceed the means of the state, so the private sector should be encouraged to assume a greater responsibility. **Mr. Ou Bahha** raised the

question of how to incentivize the private sector and noted that the public sector should not wait for the private sector to be engaged to provide support. **Dr. Alazzeah** added that reliable cost-benefit analyses of policies to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities are rarely undertaken, for which reason the argument that governments cannot afford to implement these is not entirely credible. Furthermore, this discussion raised the question of whether the private sector should be induced to take more responsibility with the help of “the carrot or the stick”, i.e. whether it should be rewarded for obeying the law or punished for not doing so. **Ms. Alhusaini** noted that universal accessibility, for example, would have a negligible cost for the private sector – five to seven per cent of the total construction costs for new buildings, and seven to ten per cent of total costs for buildings already constructed.

Session 3: Introduction to the “implementation gap” of national disability laws

The session was moderated by Ms. Nauk. It consisted of one presentation and an open discussion.

Ms. Nauk opened the session, encouraging the representatives of civil society organisations to give their perspective on the implementation gap, since they constitute the linkage between the policy level and the policy impact on the ground.

Mr. André Gubbels, Director General for Persons with Disabilities, Federal Public Service-Social Security, Belgium, began his presentation by establishing that the CRPD imposes new wide-ranging obligations on states who become parties to it, and that a comprehensive review of the national situation under existing policies is needed. This requires the ability to assess the provisions which are not consistent with the CRPD and to adopt and implement new policies to cover areas that are not adequately covered under existing provisions. It can be useful to think of the implementation of the CRPD in terms of a policy cycle which includes policy formulation, policy implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policy results.

From a narrow perspective, implementation effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which the formal transposition and the practical application of the CRPD at national level correspond with the principles of the CRPD. From a broad perspective, implementation effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which the transposition and the practical application of the CRPD produce a positive impact on the life of persons with disabilities in a given country. Another useful distinction is the one between policy output and policy outcome: outputs tell the story of policy implementation activities, while outcomes address the impact of the policy on persons with disabilities and social change.

To illustrate this, Mr. Gubbels used the example of the implementation in Belgium of CRPD Article 27, according to which states shall “[e]nsure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace”. The actors involved in the process included the government, NGOs, and employers. Activities undertaken to implement the policy included enacting legislation and regulations; creating an enforcement infrastructure; establishing a complaints line and a response system, including prosecutions; recruiting and training enforcement staff; and disseminating information about reasonable accommodation to key stakeholders, e.g. employers. The fact that these activities were undertaken implies that the implementation process appeared satisfactory from an output perspective. However, outcomes (e.g. policies and procedures introduced in the workplace, changes in knowledge, attitudes and

beliefs) were less positive, revealing that there was a gap between the intended and the achieved. This can be called the implementation gap.

Turning to the issue of why implementing disability policy often proves so difficult, Mr. Gubbels suggested as one partial explanation the fact that such policies often are based on and promote new ideas and beliefs. Furthermore, they often concern issues which are highly complex and require a long-term view. Spanning over numerous sectoral areas and institutional levels, implementing disability policy also requires horizontal as well as vertical coordination. Implementation can be seen both as an adaptive challenge and a technical one. Adaptive issues include engaging the stakeholders; negotiating and persuading; and managing network processes. Technical issues involve analysing the problem; selecting the appropriate instruments; and planning and coordinating the operations.

Mr. Gubbels explained that the first step in any policy implementation is to identify and define the key features and sources of the problem. In various respects, problem analysis is the most critical stage of implementation, and guides other consecutive activities. Inadequate problem analysis leads to the focus being put on the effects rather than on the causes, and to unrealistic, irrelevant, and misguided interventions. Adequate problem analysis, on the other hand, facilitates the definition of objectives and priorities, as well as the selection of appropriate means to pursue these. A useful tool to guide the problem analysis is the “problem tree”, which consists of the causes of a problem (the roots), the core problem (the trunk), and the effects of the problem (the branches).

To show how the tree can be used to analyse a problem, Mr. Gubbels used the example of non-take up of social benefits in Belgium, i.e. the fact that many persons with disabilities in the country do not claim the social benefits to which they are entitled. A first-hand analysis would refer to insufficient information. A deeper analysis, however, revealed interrelated causes of this problem, which include non-transparent eligibility criteria, complex application procedures, stigma, and lack of information. The effects, meanwhile, include that persons with disabilities are at high risk of poverty and that their social rights are not respected. The diversity of reasons for non-take-up suggests that approaches to remedy it need to be similarly diverse.

Turning to the selection of policy instruments, he explained that this should be informed by the nature of the problem to be addressed, what kind of measures and processes are appropriate, and what the costs of implementation and enforcement will be. It was important to bear in mind that changing social norms usually takes a long time and that complex problems require complex solutions; enforcement is not simple and possibly costly. Administrative sanctions as a policy instrument are often better suited to prohibit undesirable forms of behaviour than at encouraging desirable ones.

Concerning planning and coordination, it is critical to bear in mind that policy initiatives must be translated into strategic and operational action plans comprising clear timeframes and targets. An action entails the articulation of an overall implementation strategy including the governance arrangements; the identification of major streams of activity; the timing of tasks, events, and major milestones; the specification of roles and responsibilities of key players; the estimation of required resources; and the monitoring and reporting requirements. Finally, Mr. Gubbels cited some best-practice examples relating to action plans. Such best practices include assigning to a lead entity the responsibility for developing action plans, supported by relevant stakeholders,

including persons with disabilities; aligning the action plan with national reporting mechanisms; taking a system-wide level; devolving responsibility to key organisations working at local levels within a national framework; and specifying actions and responsible parties for monitoring and follow-up.

Ms. Nauk emphasised the importance of the issues raised by Mr. Gubbels, noting that implementation depends on everyone in a country. For instance, whether legislation aiming to make education disability inclusive generates the desired outcomes largely depends upon teachers. She expressed her appreciation for the “problem tree”, noting its potential utility, and invited participants to share their experiences and ideas regarding problems of implementation.

Mr. Ou Bahha pointed out that law 10.03 on accessibility in Morocco was published in 2003 but the decree implementing this law was only published in 2011. This delay was due in large part to the slowness of implementing regulations and the multiplicity of standards adopted by different sectors concerned with accessibility. **Mr. Islam Zgoul, computer lab supervisor at the University of Jordan**, stressed that the problems of implementation are often the result of lacking or inadequate enforcement mechanisms. He mentioned as an example the fact that interpreters for persons with hearing impairments often are not treated respectfully in courts. **Mr. Inabi** emphasised that having in place a law which, due to implementation problems, does not generate the desired outcomes is equivalent to having no law at all, and underlined the importance of awareness raising efforts as part of implementation procedures. **Dr. Rabah Al-Majali, assistant professor at the Mutah University, Jordan**, seconded the call for awareness raising, and mentioned, among other things, that such efforts could include informing people about the fact that not only persons with disabilities benefit from disability laws being successfully implemented. **Ms. Rawan Al-Qudah, manager of Campus Master Plan, Royal Scientific Society, Jordan**, mentioned the importance of implementers having the relevant expertise. For example, if legislation requiring that buildings be fitted with ramps is not implemented by knowledgeable persons, the ramps may be built too steep, with the result that many persons with disabilities still cannot access the buildings.

Further remarks were made by participants concerning various aspects related to implementation, including the need for accommodation; the importance of changing perceptions and mentalities, via continued awareness, especially as disability is an evolving concept, and the role media can play in attaining this end; the need to educate persons with disabilities themselves as well as other stakeholders during the implementation process; how to develop standards and indicators that can be used to monitor implementation, and the shortage of relevant data to utilise for this purpose; the importance of paying attention not only to major pieces of legislation, such as national disability laws, but also to thematic human rights laws and bylaws, regulations, directives, etc. used to implement those laws; whether laws can be piloted in some locations before being implemented at a wider scale; cooperation with national planning and institutions; and the importance of working with parliaments.

Session 4: Presentation on recent achievements in Jordan

Dr. Alazze began the forth session of the meeting with a presentation on Jordan’s new disability law. Reflecting on the political will that pushed for the development of the new law, he noted two important events which took place in 2012. The first was a report which contained a comprehensive analysis comparing the existing laws and policies for persons with disabilities with

the CRPD. The second was a documentary programme about violations of the rights of persons with disabilities living in care centres and group homes. It was clear that Jordan's existing disability law enacted in 2008 was not in conformity with the CRPD, thus His Royal Highness Prince Ra'ad Bin Zein, former head of the HCD, requested the law be amended.

Drafting the new law was a highly participatory process which included consultations with stakeholders across all government ministries, as well as doctors, experts, persons with disabilities (including children) and the private sector. The law contained new elements regarding the prosecution of crimes against persons with disabilities, informed consent, employment, accessibility, reasonable accommodation (including for persons with temporary disabilities), and a new comprehensive definition of disability. The law also explains the role of each government ministry with clear time frames for implementation. The disability card, while it is not obligatory to obtain, provides a number of privileges for persons with disabilities. Once obtained the card becomes official documentation and recipients no longer have to obtain medical reports to receive benefits.

Another important change with the new law is the role of the HCD, first established in 2007. While as before it was a service provision entity, it will now shift its service provision responsibilities to other ministries and become solely a monitoring entity as stipulated in Article 33 of the CRPD. The HCD will monitor to enhance implementation and ministries' performance and compliance with the law. The new HCD will be composed primarily of persons with disabilities representing different sectors and geographic locations, as well as persons without disabilities who have at least three years of experience working on disability issues. The HCD will issue annual reports on challenges, achievements and recommendations which will be submitted to Parliament. The new law will take effect in September 2017.

Ms. Nauk thanked Dr. Alazzeah for his presentation and suggested that a working group could be formed among the focal points on legislative developments. Another working group could be formed around the responsibilities of disability councils versus government ministries regarding service provision. For example, in countries like Iraq and Sudan, the disability councils are also service providers.

Responding to questions from participants, **Dr. Alazzeah** advised that when going through this process, it was best not to bring too many government entities to the table at the same time because they can make the process too political. Instead, as the HCD revised the law, they met separately with each ministry, taking their ideas, feedback and adjusting the law as needed. Extra funding was gathered from some highly-motivated individuals, but overall the process was not very costly. The HCD received support from USAID and went to the U.S. to gain additional knowledge from experts and government entities there. Now it is necessary to hold a fundraising campaign to help ministries with implementation of the law.

The new law clearly states that government entities have to accept oversight from the HCD. The HCD is an independent government entity separate from all other ministries, with its own independent budget coming from the national budget. Its employees are government employees. The board members are consulting experts, not government employees, who set standards for the Council and follow up on their work. In its early days, the HCD had government ministers on the board, which was a good practice for them, but over time this created some difficulties and so the composition of the board was changed. The most important element to consider is what

makes the council most effective. The political momentum of ministers on the board could be useful, but only if their participation is satisfactory.

In relation to whether the HCD falls in line with the Paris Principles, Dr. Alazzeah noted that the HCD is not an institution based on the Paris Principles – there is already a human rights council in Jordan based on them. The HCD monitors the technical and administrative provisions of the law, though some areas of this work may overlap with the work of the national human rights institutions established under the Paris Principles. There are provisions in the law which might have had more difficulty getting passed by the members of parliament, but they focused on the more controversial aspects of the law and thus it passed with these other important provisions still intact.

Dr. Marei commented that Egypt's disability council is independent, but there is an ongoing debate regarding whether government ministers should be on the board, as it could interfere with the council's independence. However, having them on the board makes it easier to hold them accountable and resolve problems directly with those ministries, and also provides political support for the council's work.

Mr. Hamed noted that Sudan's recent experience revising its law was similar to that of Jordan's. Under the new law, the Secretary-General is the chair of the disability council and is appointed by the cabinet. The Council meets three times per year and oversees the execution of disability-related functions. It has both government ministry representatives and persons with disabilities on its board. After having experienced difficulties in adequate participation from some ministries, their level of representation was elevated to the ministerial level. The board is responsible for approving programs and policies, which are actually developed by technical committees that meet monthly and recommend them to the Council for adoption. Thus, the ministers are not actually responsible for coming up with programs and policies, avoiding the politicization of the Council's work. Sudan now has a designated fund for projects of persons with disabilities. The law also contains provisions on punishments for those who have violated the law, particularly regarding forgery of documents. The Council receives complaints and submits them to the cabinet for the Prime Minister's review of violations of the law.

Mr. Inabi reflected that in Palestine there was an employment fund established by a number of ministries but because ministers headed it, personal agendas got in the way, so it failed. If disability councils have ministers participating in their work, the work of the councils will not progress.

Mr. Bel'azi raised the issue of informed consent, important in Arab societies which have certain traditions, making it a social issue as much as legislative. While new laws give persons with disabilities the right to express their will, older laws contradict these rights. He noted that in Jordan's new law there was no specific mention of women and girls with disabilities. **Dr. Alazzeah** replied that with informed consent, it is important to always find out what are the person's wishes; there are experts who can help them express these wishes if they have difficulty themselves. Jordan's new disability law prevails over older laws which might say something else. The reason the new law does not mention women and girls with disabilities specifically is to ensure that there is no misinterpretation that only the articles in which they are specifically mentioned apply to them. The articles on women and children in the CRPD are legally weak and they wanted to avoid this.

Regarding the way forward, the HCD is still holding meetings with ministries and has started setting priorities for the year 2018. They are also preparing various plans, such as those related to education and accessibility. In parallel they have set up committees made up of HCD members and each ministry to help them in setting plans and issuing regulations. The HCD does not have a professional media department for marketing the new law, but they are working on increasing the media team and preparing a marketing video.

Mr. Ou Bahha noted that in Morocco, despite being capable, many persons with mental disabilities face obstacles related to their legal fitness, such as working or buying property. Legislators do not explore mechanisms for understanding the will or capability of persons with disabilities and legally they are not allowed to make their own decisions. In addition, some rare types of disabilities are not classified in the ICF and are not mentioned in the CRPD. **Dr. Alazze** replied that legal fitness is one of the most complicated topics related to disability and coincides with other very sensitive issues such as civil law. It is important to work on enhancing the capacities of persons with disabilities to communicate and better understand how to express their desires, including through the use of experts and by building capacities. Jordan's new law contains an article which states that associations of persons with disabilities should be consulted every time legal fitness is adjusted.

Session 5: How to effectively translate disability laws into administrative practice

Mr. Emanuel Darmanin, Manager of the Focal Point Office, Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Malta, began his presentation with challenges to implementing the CRPD, which not only the Maltese face: the need for training, capacity building, awareness raising, good practices and knowledge management. There is also a need to mainstream disability in all development activities, implement the CRPD principles in the internal operations of organizations, and include persons with disabilities in all stages of implementation, including through building their capacity. According to Article 33, implementation is the responsibility of the focal point. The coordination mechanism should facilitate related actions in different sectors and at different levels, while the independent framework should promote and monitor implementation of the Convention. The focal point should not act in isolation but have a leading role in coordinating implementation and should be at the highest possible level in government.

In Malta's government, the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Ministers have the ultimate decision-making power for implementing the Convention. The focal point is responsible for presenting the state report to the CRPD Committee. Malta's disability strategy and policy are built on the state report, which was used to better understand the situation of persons with disabilities in the country. A new structure will be launched shortly in Malta whereby the Focal Point Office shall oversee the National Coordination Mechanism. This oversight will enable the focal point to maintain ongoing consultations and improve communication with all stakeholders, which will result in a more coordinated method for implementing the CRPD.

The National Coordination Mechanism is made up of an inter-ministerial committee, government departments and agencies, and a civil society consultative committee made up of 11 working groups. They use a bottom-up approach whereby the working groups, made up of five to six individuals with disabilities or other stakeholders in that area of interest, meet and discuss ideas, which are then proposed to the inter-ministerial committee. The working groups, chosen on the basis of the national disability policy, cover the following themes: equality and non-

discrimination; awareness raising; accessibility; law and justice; independent living and inclusion; home and family; education; health; work and employment; quality of life; and research and statistics.

All ministries have a working level representative in the inter-ministerial committee, which is chaired by the Focal Point, who is the representative of the Parliamentary Secretary (Junior Minister) for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing. Each committee member advises his/her respective minister, and the final decisions are ratified by the Cabinet. The Minister of Finance is part of the Coordination Mechanism so that when the time comes for implementation, he/she can make suggestions on the best approach for obtaining financing for non-budget-neutral measures.

Malta launched its national disability policy in 2014. The policy was designed by the Committee for a Fair Society, composed of persons with disability, relatives, representatives of persons with disability and other experts. The National Policy is based on 15 objectives guided by the CRPD. Before finalizing it, the draft of the policy was presented for a national consultation in order to have the feedback of all interested parties. The subsequent National Disability Strategy, which is based on the human rights perspective and social model, targets the areas of accessibility, participation in education, training and employment, and dealing with social exclusion and discrimination. Its main principles include equality, inclusion, promoting and constructing social cohesion, and community development. Each of the disability policy's 15 objectives has around 20 strategies with an action plan guiding how each strategy should be implemented. Each ministry was involved throughout the drafting process, so they cannot shy away from implementation. The most challenging aspects of implementing the strategy will be the financial and human resource requirements.

Ms. Nauk noted Malta's unique setup having a Junior Minister for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing. This corresponds with the models in Jordan and Sudan which have disability councils at the ministerial level. However, having the inter-ministerial committee at the working level gives the advantage of having every ministry on the commission but not necessarily at the ministers' level, thus avoiding political complications.

Mr. Ou Bahha noted that this is similar to the setup in Morocco, where they have ministries present at the working level rather than the ministerial level. The Ministry of Solidarity coordinates programmes and the ministerial committee for disabilities follows up on the implementation of the CRPD. They have focal points which make up a technical committee who also work with persons with disabilities. Morocco's first report will be discussed in front of the CRPD Committee in August. They created standards to use to follow up on CRPD implementation, which ESCWA helped with, which oblige all ministries to fulfil their part of implementing the convention.

Mr. Darmanin commented that Malta bases its implementation on the model of the Danish Institute for Human Rights Gold Indicators, which include ten statistical outcome indicators that compare the situation of persons with and without disabilities in relation to 10 key thematic areas in the CRPD. The Danish model gives a good indication of how data should be collected. Malta consults with the national statistics office on how best to collect this data, and based on the results they can better assess and address the needs of persons with disabilities. The more difficult population to gain statistics on is the refugee population. Like Italy and Cyprus, Malta is

one of the countries that receives the most number of refugees and it is likely that many have developed disabilities during their journeys, but collecting data about them remains a challenge.

Ms. Nauk noted that ESCWA will be preparing a regional study on persons with disabilities in crisis situations as well as a study on social protection for refugees. Most of the data is collected from UNHCR, since national statistics offices do not usually collect statistics on refugee populations. They should also collect data on internally displaced persons (IDPs), but it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate data about them. **Mr. Al-Musawi** commented that these statistics are easier to obtain in Iraq because UNHCR collects statistics on refugees and IDPs, so it is important to coordinate with them to obtain statistics about persons with disabilities. It is difficult to reach IDPs in areas of conflict, especially groups that are particularly vulnerable, like women, children and those with disabilities. They often do not stay in one place and are constantly moving.

Article 32 of Iraq's constitution directs the state to provide care for persons with disabilities, rehabilitate them and integrate them into society. Iraq's Law 38 of 2013 which created the Commission on the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs is based on the constitutional reference to unify the laws and entities that work with persons with disabilities in order to provide them with better services, though it can be criticised for not taking their independence into consideration. One of its main responsibilities includes rehabilitation. The Commission contains (i) Head of Commission; (ii) Administrative Deputy; (iii) Technical Deputy; (iv) Director General of Administrative, Financial and Legal Department; (v) Director General of Planning and Following up Department; (vi) Director General of Medical, Community, Educational and Occupational Rehabilitation Department, as well as persons with disabilities, experts and doctors specialized in disability and its role is to set policies. The head of the commission has an executive and coordinating role, following up on ministries and other relevant authorities to implement the law no. 38 of 2013. The ministries are represented on the board of the commission. Overall, there are positive aspects of the law and others that the commission will try to amend, such as making the commission independent and directly responsible to the cabinet. The law also stipulates that persons with disabilities should be assigned a guardian.

Ms. Nauk emphasised that the concept of disability is a moving target and still evolving. A disability law is a snapshot at a certain point in time but it needs to be amended to develop with society.

Dr. Marei noted that Egypt is collecting quantitative data – for example 200 schools were adapted for students with disabilities last year and 400 were adapted this year, but there are no statistics which evaluate the quality of these services. In addition, statistics do not give an indication about whether clients are satisfied with services provided, so it is important to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative data. He added that the National Council for Disability Affairs in Egypt is on the same level with other ministries.

Ms. Alia Zureikat, Adviser to the President, Director of International Relations and Co-operation, Jordan, commented that Malta has both a national disability policy and strategy, where the policy is the umbrella and its objectives are broken down into strategies. She inquired how Malta prioritises and keeps track of these tasks and what role persons with disabilities play. She further inquired how Malta separates “active aging” from disability work in its ministry. She reaffirmed **Ms. Nauk's** comment that disability is an evolving concept that has not reached its maturity and never will because this global concept can never be put under one set of criteria. Further, how the term is used today may be different in 20 years' time.

Mr. Darmanin responded that Malta also gathers qualitative data through seminars and consultations with persons with disabilities and/or their families. Malta's disability strategy includes focusing one of its working groups on improving research and data collection. Aside from implementing the CRPD, the Junior Minister must implement a political manifesto which includes various points on disability. It was the Prime Minister who decided to combine disability and aging together under one ministry with the aim of empowering both populations to be included in society, but each has a different directorate responsible for each population group. Malta's disability strategy is from 2017-2023. Having working groups and improving understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities will help Malta prioritize the issues. The initial actions to take place will be budget neutral, such as implementing or amending laws. Improving service provision is another priority, based on better qualitative and quantitative data.

Mr. Inabi commented on the need for strong, equitable laws, but to also consider this with the capacity of the state in charge of enforcing laws. There is a need to harmonize between the laws and the government's capacities, because if the government is not capable of fulfilling the rights established in the laws there will be a gap. On the issue of censuses, he questioned how much persons with disabilities are actually accounted for, especially if they are hidden by their own households. Societal norms highly impact the data collected.

Ms. Nauk responded that gaps in implementation are separate from laws. Laws establish rights and sometimes time frames, and oblige states to improve their capabilities. For censuses, one problem with household surveys is that they only survey families, not institutions or prisons. Survey questionnaires should have a question on whether there is a member of the household living outside the residence. ESCWA's Statistics Division is currently formulating guidelines for statistical offices which will be issued soon. ESCWA hopes to organize a workshop later this year or early next year to bring together the focal points and statistical experts from each country to facilitate improved communication on disability statistics. She further noted that Malta's method of using working groups with outreach capacity allows for broad consultations, but since only the heads of each group are part of the main consultative council, this makes the process lighter and smoother.

Mr. Ou Bahha emphasized that prior to the development of integrated public policy to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, Morocco organized regional thematic workshops with civil society organizations working in the field of disability. These workshops helped to determine policies and priorities before their adoption by the Inter-ministerial Commission on Disability on 24 November 2015. Morocco is now working to incorporate these policies in the National Action Plan.

Mr. Hamed remarked that all approaches have the goal of enabling and empowering persons with disabilities to be on an equal level and have equal opportunities in society. However, there is no definition for enabling persons with disabilities; the focus should be on empowering them within their communities. The capabilities of the state should not be of concern, as the CRPD highlights inalienable civil and political rights. The capabilities of the state should come into consideration for short and long-term strategy planning, as should improving data collection methods from households. Sudan has a strategic plan with 13 objectives, but they are focusing on the five most important ones: health (focusing on prevention, early detection and early intervention), inclusive education, accessibility and friendly environment, expanding opportunities for earning and decent work, and statistics.

Mr. Darmanin commented that Malta's working groups allow for wide consultation not just with persons with disabilities and their families but with experts and academics. This allows for more tailored discussions about specific issues. A member of the consultative committee is part of each working group to ensure that feedback moves from the working level up to higher levels. The ideas from the working groups were discussed and incorporated into the design and drafting of the national disability policy.

Session 6: Vertical and horizontal coordination and implementation across government ministries

Mr. Alistair De Gaetano, Legal Advisor, Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Malta, began his presentation referring to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goals 1, 3 and 10. For Goal 1, ending poverty in all its forms, Malta has set out specific measures in its national anti-poverty strategies with specific references to persons with disabilities. The national reform programme includes disability-specific provisions related to minimum wage and entitlements to disability pensions. For Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives, persons with disabilities benefit from the Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan (2015-2020) and the National Sexual Health Policy for Maltese Islands (2010). For both Goal 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries, and Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, there are national strategies and action plans either in place or being developed that include with persons with disabilities. In relation to overseas development assistance (ODA), Malta has a policy and framework for humanitarian assistance which includes persons with disabilities.

In 2000 Malta passed the Equal Opportunities Act, which dealt with discrimination against persons with disabilities. It was recently amended again in order to comply with Article 33(2) and the Paris Principles. A new focal point office was established and separated from the Maltese National Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NCRPD), and service provision was relocated to a national service provision agency. The Commission, headed by a commissioner, retained only the responsibilities of monitoring and evaluation, thus becoming the country's independent mechanism. While the government finances it, it takes independent decisions. It coordinates with the NHRI, has an enforcement role, and can carry out specific investigations into complaints as requested by civil society. For example, Malta's guardianship laws are currently not in line with the CRPD and thus the Commission is monitoring all guardianship orders. The Commission also has an advisory council with representatives of DPOs, persons with disabilities, their families and professionals. The Commission works with police on criminal proceedings related to disability discrimination, and ensures compliance of public procurement with anti-discrimination laws covering disability.

Malta has a general ombudsman system as well as specific ombudsmen, such as the education ombudsman, who works on inclusive education among other issues, but they are perceived as being a powerless. The Commission has more enforcement authority and thus is more effective than a disability ombudsman would be. However, persons with disabilities in Malta still face challenges getting their rights recognized in courts because of ignorance of judges and law enforcement officials. Trainings for judges and police officers have been held but more awareness is needed. There was a draft bill put forward in 2015 to make the CRPD directly applicable in Maltese law but it has not been adopted yet because national policies are still not in line with the convention.

Mr. Gubbels remarked on the importance of judges when implementing disability law. The European Commission held a training for national judges to sensitize them to disability discrimination. As a result, many changed the interpretation of disability discrimination in their own countries. **Mr. Al-Musawi** commented on his own experience as a judge, that given the nature of the job judges do not like innovation and change because they are used to a certain context and consider the law to be sacred. Judges know that their decisions become case law so they confer with other judges and make very careful decisions. Judges need to be fully educated on the rights of persons with disabilities. In Iraq, some courts lack interpreters, which can have a negative impact on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Commission, through direct coordination with the Supreme Judicial Council, succeeded in arranging interpreters for the deaf and dumb when reviewing this category to the Iraqi courts.

Concluding session

Ms. Nauk opened the final session by asking the participants to brainstorm activities which Egypt could carry out during its “year for persons with disabilities” in 2018. One idea could be to ask the national statistics office to produce better data. Another idea is to improve accessibility, perhaps starting in a pilot town or district, as well as develop accessibility standards. National awareness campaigns could also be an important method of raising awareness about disability. Finally, another important idea for future work is the unification of definitions of disability across ministries and institutions.

Ms. Tashkandi suggested the idea of producing a video with testimonials from persons with disabilities on various subjects. Videos are important because they convey a stronger message and are a more effective educational tool.

Mr. Al-Musawi proposed that the disability focal points form a group on social media or WhatsApp messenger to present, discuss, and exchange ideas on services to persons with disabilities in their countries. If a video is produced, perhaps it could be shared and disseminated in other countries as it would be a useful communication tool.

Mr. Ababutin noted that awareness about disability is not up to the expected level. He suggested that ESCWA design a set of messages and materials which can be used in national educational curricula. The education curricula and materials used in the Arab world are often criticized, so messages could be incorporated into national education systems which define and highlight the rights of persons with disabilities and raise awareness among children. It is important to focus on educating children at an early age. He further suggested that IGED meetings be held on a quarterly basis and address well-defined topics of discussion that the focal points can prepare for ahead of time. This will keep meetings more focused.

Regarding the next IGED meeting, **Ms. Nauk** noted that the group was created at the request of one of ESCWA’s governing bodies, the Committee on Social Development (CSD). The next meeting of the CSD will take place in September. Ms. Nauk will make a presentation to the CSD at the meeting about the work carried out thus far with the IGED, and they will make a decision as to whether the group should continue and how often it should meet. In order to empower the delegates from each country, she requested that the focal points speak with their CSD representatives and express their views on the continuation of the group. ESCWA will share the names of the delegates as soon as the list is compiled. Assuming that the group will continue

after the CSD, volunteers are needed to host the next meeting. The group has now experienced the hospitality of Jordan, and Beirut is always the fallback location should there be no volunteers.

Mr. Darmanin suggested the idea of holding a group meeting in Malta with the European Commission's High Level Group on Disability. **Ms. Nauk** agreed to check with ESCWA colleagues on the procedures of holding a meeting outside of the member States. **Ms. Tashkandi** noted that she would consult with senior officials on hosting the meeting in KSA and send a response soon. **Mr. Bel'azi** responded that the upcoming meeting could possibly be hosted in Tunisia. ESCWA should inform what would be required of them and he would respond quickly. **Dr. Marei** confirmed he would respond shortly about hosting the meeting in Egypt.

Ms. Nauk informed that the meeting would be held in 2018, though this is an issue which will be decided by the CSD in September. Originally they had suggested the IGED meet in between CSD meetings, so every other year. But as a result of the good experiences of the past meetings, the group decided to meet at least once a year. However, this is also an issue of funding.

Regarding the work of ESCWA, she requested all participants to review the social protection paper, specifically references to their countries, and send their feedback as soon as possible.

On the topic of the next meeting, various issues have been raised: data and statistics; census and survey assessments; definitions of disability and how to unify them; and evaluating disability assessment processes. This last issue is complex because many countries follow the medical model of disability, so the question of how to adapt disability assessments to the social model and the ICF could be discussed. Other possible topics include the question of mental health and legal capacity; issues surrounding independent mechanisms for monitoring the CRPD; how to raise awareness through advocacy, public information and education campaigns; how to work with parliamentarians to support disability rights; and training judges and the judiciary on disability rights. ESCWA can make a list of these various suggestions and give the next host government the chance to choose and present on one of the topics, with assistance from ESCWA as needed. ESCWA's role is to find additional expertise to bring to the meetings and share with the focal points.

Dr. Alazzeh thanked everyone for their presence, valuable participation and sharing of expertise and the meeting was closed.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Disability Focal Points / Government Officials

1. Egypt: Dr. Ashraf Marei, Secretary General, National Council for Disability Affairs
2. Iraq: Mr. Asghar Al-Musawi, Head of the Commission on the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs
3. Kuwait: Ms. Alkhansa Alhusaini, Director of Planning and Research Division, Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA)
4. Morocco: Mr. Abdelaziz Ou Bahha, Head of the Local Mobilization and Accompanying Department, Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development
5. Palestine: Mr. Amin Inabi, General Director, Directorate of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Development
6. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Mr. Walid Ababutin, General Supervisor of Medical Services and National Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour and Social Development
7. Dr. Mervat A. Tashkandi, Advisor to the Minister, Disability and Gender Diversity Expert, Ministry of Economy and Planning
8. Sudan: Mr. Bdraldeem Hamed, General Secretary, National Council for Persons with Disabilities
9. Tunisia: Mr. Ahmed Bel'azi, Director of Solidarity and Social Development, General Directorate for Social Advancement
10. Yemen: Ms. Mageda Majeed Hazza Abdullah, Director, Al-Noor Institute for the Blind

Jordan Higher Council for Affairs of Persons with Disabilities (HCD)

11. Dr. Muhannad Alazzeh, General Secretary
12. Ms. Alia Zureikat, Adviser to the President, Director of International Relations and Co-operation
13. Ms. Ghadeer Al-Haris, Director of Policy and Planning, Media Spokesperson
14. Ms. Tasneem Shahin, Media Officer
15. Ms. Hala Hamad, Head of Early Intervention Department

ESCWA

16. Ms. Gisela Nauk, Chief, Inclusive Social Development Section (ISDS), Social Development Division (SDD)
17. Ms. Angela Zettler, Associate Social Affairs Officer, ISDS/SDD
18. Mr. Anton Bjork, Individual Contractor, ISDS/SDD

International Experts

19. Mr. André Gubbels, Director General for Persons with Disabilities, Federal Public Service-Social Security, Belgium
20. Mr. Emanuel Darmanin, Manager of the Focal Point Office, Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Malta
21. Mr. Alistair De Gaetano, Legal Advisor, Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Malta

Other officials / DPOs / Civil society (Session 3 only)

- 22. Mr. Islam Zgoul, Computer Lab Supervisor, University of Jordan
- 23. Dr. Rabah Al-Majali, Assistant Professor, Mutah University, Jordan
- 24. Mr. Raafat Alzetawi, Teacher, Ministry of Education, Jordan
- 25. Ms. Maha Al-Nahas, Administration, Ministry of Health, Jordan
- 26. Ms. Rawan Al-Qudah, Manager of Campus Master Plan, Royal Scientific Society, Jordan
- 27. Ms. Amira El Jamal, Head, Step Association, Jordan
- 28. Sana Association, Jordan
- 29. Mr. Ahmed Hehawi, Program Director, Palestinian Consultative Staff for Developing NGOs, West Bank, Palestine

Annex 2: Meeting Agenda

DAY 1	
9:00 - 9:30	<i>Welcome reception and registration</i>
09:30 – 10:00	Opening of the meeting: Welcoming remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening and introduction by Dr. Muhannad Alazzezh, Secretary-General of the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, Jordan - Welcoming remarks by Ms. Gisela Nauk, Chief of the Inclusive Social Development Section, Social Development Division, ESCWA - Introduction of participants
10:00 – 12:00	Session 1: Updates from Member States on national disability policies <p>The session will consist of a tour de table so that Member States can provide updates on their national disability policies. Updates could include issues related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New disability legislation or policies • Progress on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and disability-related goals and targets under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development • Advancements related to data collection on persons with disabilities • New national programmes in support of persons with disabilities <p>Moderator: Dr. Muhannad Alazzezh (Jordan)</p>
12:00 – 13:00	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:00 – 14:30	Session 2: Update on ESCWA’s work <p>In this session, ESCWA will provide an update on its disability-related work, including the results of the questionnaire on the implementation of CRPD Article 33 in the Arab region and ESCWA’s work assisting member States to implement the CRPD and 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA)</p> <p>Presenter(s): Ms. Angela Zettler (Associate Social Affairs Officer, ESCWA), Mr. Anton Bjork (Individual Contractor, ESCWA)</p>
14:30 – 15:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:00 – 17:00	Session 3: Introduction to the “implementation gap” of national disability laws <p>The session will provide an introduction into the meeting’s thematic discussion on the “implementation gap” related to national disability laws. This session will set the stage by reviewing the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is there an implementation gap? • What are the essential elements of “effective” legislation? • What are the main obstacles to implementation? • What policy instruments can improve implementation? <p>Moderator: Ms. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA)</p>

	Presenter(s): Mr. André Gubbels (Director General for Persons with Disabilities, Federal Public Service Social Security, Belgium), presentations by countries and other participants
DAY 2	
09:30 – 11:00	<p>Session 4: Presentation on recent achievements in Jordan</p> <p>The session will consist of a presentation by the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities(HCD) of Jordan regarding Jordan’s new disability legislation passed in 2017. The HCD will discuss its experiences and share lessons learned during the process of drafting and finalizing the law. The presentation and subsequent discussion are expected to revolve around the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the important changes in the new law? • What was the consultation process like? • What are the implementation mechanisms in the law? • What was the role of the HCD throughout the process? • How does the new law facilitate the translation of law into administrative practice? <p>Moderator: Ms. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA) Presenter(s): Dr. Muhannad Alazzeah (Jordan)</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:30 – 12:30	<p>Session 5: How to effectively translate disability laws into administrative practice</p> <p>The session will discuss what methods countries can use effectively translate their national disability laws into administrative practice. Some of the following questions will be examined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of institutional changes may be required to enact legislation? • What normative tools and standards can Governments use to guide them? • What kind of financial resources may be required? • What kind of enforcement mechanisms are needed to implement laws? <p>Moderator: Dr. Muhannad Alazzeah (Jordan) Presenter(s): Mr. Emanuel Darmanin (Manager Focal Point Office, Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, Malta)</p>
12:30 – 13:30	<i>Lunch</i>
13:30 – 15:00	<p>Session 6: Vertical and horizontal coordination and implementation across government ministries</p> <p>The session will discuss various types of implementation methods of administrative practices for disability laws, including both vertical and horizontal coordination. Some of the following questions will be examined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of coordination is required for implementing national disability laws, the CRPD and disability-related goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda? • Who is responsible for implementation and how should their actions be coordinated?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of systems are used in different countries to improve inter-governmental coordination? <p>Moderator: Ms. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA) Presenter(s): Mr. Emanuel Darmanin (Malta)</p>
15:00 – 16:00	<p>Session 7: Closure of the meeting</p> <p>The closing session will include discussions on the following issues, followed by closing remarks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible establishment of working groups - Future activities - Next meeting of the IGED <p>Closing remarks by Ms. Gisela Nauk (ESCWA) Closing remarks by Dr. Muhannad Alazzeah (Jordan)</p>

تنظيم الأعمال

اليوم الأول	
الترحيب والتسجيل	9:30-9:00
<p>افتتاح الاجتماع: كلمات ترحيبية</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - افتتاح ومقدمة من الدكتور مهند العزة، أمين عام، المجلس الأعلى لشؤون الأشخاص المعوقين في الأردن - كلمة ترحيبية من السيدة جيزيلا نوك، رئيسة، قسم التنمية الاجتماعية الشاملة في شعبة التنمية الاجتماعية، الإسكوا - تقديم المشاركين 	9:30-10:00
<p>الجلسة الأولى: تحديث من الدول الأعضاء حول السياسات الوطنية المتعلقة بالإعاقة</p> <p>ستتضمن هذه الجلسة إعطاء الفرصة لجميع المشاركين لعرض المستجدات حول سياساتهم الوطنية المتعلقة بالإعاقة. وتشمل هذه المستجدات القضايا التالية:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - تشريعات أو سياسات جديدة حول الإعاقة؛ - التقدم المحرز في تنفيذ اتفاقية حقوق الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة والأهداف والغايات المتعلقة بالإعاقة في إطار خطة التنمية المستدامة لعام 2030؛ - التطور في جمع البيانات عن الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة؛ - برامج وطنية جديدة لدعم الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة. <p>إدارة الجلسة: الدكتور مهند العزة (الأردن)</p>	12:00-10:00
استراحة غداء	13:00-12:00
<p>الجلسة الثانية: مستجدات حول عمل الإسكوا</p> <p>في هذه الجلسة ستعرض الإسكوا أحدث أنشطتها المتعلقة بالإعاقة، والتي تتضمن نتائج الاستبيان حول تنفيذ المادة 33 من اتفاقية حقوق الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة المنطقة العربية، وأنشطة الإسكوا المتعلقة بمساعدة الدول الأعضاء في تنفيذ اتفاقية حقوق الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة وخطة التنمية المستدامة لعام 2030.</p> <p>إدارة الجلسة: السيدة جيزيلا نوك (الإسكوا)</p> <p>تقديم العرض/العروض: السيدة أنجيلا زيتلز، مسؤول تنمية اجتماعية (الإسكوا)، السيد أنطون بيورك، متعاقد (الإسكوا)</p>	14:30-13:00

استراحة/قهوة	15:00-14:30
<p>الجلسة الثالثة: مقدمة حول "فجوة التنفيذ" للقوانين الوطنية المتعلقة بالإعاقة</p> <p>ستوفر هذه الجلسة مقدمة حول "فجوة التنفيذ" المتعلقة بقوانين الإعاقة الوطنية من خلال استعراض الأسئلة التالية:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • لماذا يوجد فجوة في التنفيذ؟ • ما هي العناصر الأساسية للتشريعات "الفعالة"؟ • ما هي العقوبات الرئيسية للتنفيذ؟ • ما هي أدوات السياسة التي يمكن أن تُحسن التنفيذ؟ <p>إدارة الجلسة: السيدة جيزيلا نوك (الإسكوا)</p> <p>تقديم العرض/العروض: السيد أندريه غوبلز، المدير العام للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة، الخدمة العامة الاتحادية للضمان الاجتماعي، بلجيكا؛ عروض الدول وغيرهم من المشاركين.</p>	17:00-15:00
اليوم الثاني	
<p>الجلسة الرابعة: عرض حول آخر الإنجازات في الأردن</p> <p>ستتألف الجلسة من عرض يقدمه المجلس الأعلى لشؤون المعوقين في الأردن بشأن التشريع الجديد المتعلق بالإعاقة الذي تم إقراره في الأردن في عام 2017. وسيناقش المجلس خبراته والدروس المستفادة خلال عملية صياغة القانون ووضعه في صيغته النهائية. ومن المتوقع أن يدور العرض والمناقشة حول التالي:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ما هي التغييرات الهامة في القانون الجديد؟ - كيف كانت عملية التشاور؟ - ما هي آليات التنفيذ في القانون؟ - ما هو الدور الذي أضطلع به المجلس الأعلى لشؤون المعوقين في جميع المراحل؟ - كيف يُسهّل القانون الجديد ترجمته الى ممارسات إدارية؟ <p>إدارة الجلسة: السيدة جيزيلا نوك (الإسكوا)</p> <p>تقديم العرض/العروض: الدكتور مهند العزة (الأردن)</p>	11:00-9:30
استراحة/قهوة	11:30-11:00
<p>الجلسة الخامسة: كيفية ترجمة قوانين الإعاقة بفعالية الى ممارسات إدارية</p>	12:30-11:30

<p>ستناقش الجلسة الطرق الأكثر فعالية التي يمكن للدول استخدامها في ترجمة قوانينها الوطنية المتعلقة بالإعاقة بفعالية إلى ممارسة إدارية. وسيتم مناقشة عدد من الأسئلة التالية:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ما هو نوع التغييرات المؤسسية المطلوبة لسن التشريعات؟ - ما هي الأدوات والمعايير التي يمكن للحكومات استخدامها لتوجيهها؟ - ما هو نوع الموارد المالية المطلوبة؟ - ما هو نوع آليات التنفيذ المطلوبة لتطبيق القوانين؟ <p>إدارة الجلسة: الدكتور مهند العزة (الأردن) تقديم العرض/العروض: السيد إيمانويل دارمانين (مدير مكتب نقطة الاتصال، والأمانة البرلمانية لحقوق الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة والشيخوخة النشطة، مالطا)</p>	
<p>استراحة غداء</p>	<p>13:30-12:30</p>
<p>الجلسة السادسة: التنسيق والتنفيذ العمودي والأفقي عبر الوزارات الحكومية</p> <p>ستناقش الجلسة مختلف أساليب تنفيذ الممارسات الإدارية للقوانين المتعلقة بالإعاقة، بما في ذلك التنسيق العمودي والأفقي. وسيتم مناقشة عدد من الأسئلة التالية:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ما هو نوع التنسيق المطلوب لتنفيذ القوانين الوطنية المتعلقة بالإعاقة، واتفاقية حقوق الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة والأهداف والغايات المتعلقة بالإعاقة في خطة عام 2030؟ - من هم المسؤولون عن التنفيذ وكيف ينبغي تنسيق أعمالهم؟ - ما هي أنواع الأنظمة المستخدمة في مختلف البلدان لتحسين التنسيق الحكومي؟ <p>إدارة الجلسة: السيدة جيزيلا نوك (الإسكوا) تقديم العرض/العروض: السيد إيمانويل دارمانين (مالطا)</p>	<p>15:00-13:30</p>
<p>الجلسة السابعة: اختتام الاجتماع</p> <p>ستشمل الجلسة الختامية مناقشات بشأن القضايا التالية، تعقبها الملاحظات الختامية.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - إمكانية إنشاء فرق عمل؛ - النشاطات المستقبلية؛ - الاجتماع القادم لفريق الخبراء العامل بين الدورات المعني بالإعاقة. 	<p>16:00-15:00</p>

<p>الكلمة الختامية: السيدة جيزيلا نوك (الإسكوا)</p> <p>الكلمة الختامية: الدكتور مهند العزة (الأردن)</p>	
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