

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2014**  
**“Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology”**

**Panel Discussion: “Mental well-being and disability: toward accessible and inclusive Sustainable Development Goals”**

**2 December, 2013. Conference Room 4**  
**1.15 to 2.30 p.m.**  
**United Nations Headquarters, New York**

**Background**

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is celebrated annually on 3 December around the world to promote awareness and mobilize support on critical issues pertaining to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

The theme for this year’s International Day is: **“Sustainable Development: The Promise of Technology”**.

This year’s events will be co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), by Permanent Missions to the United Nations, and co-sponsored by civil society organizations.

As part of the IDPD programme at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, a panel discussion will be held under the theme “Mental well-being and disability: toward accessible and inclusive Sustainable Development Goals”. The panel is co-organized by the World Bank, the United Nations University and several academic institutions and NGOs.

**Panel Discussion: “Mental well-being and disability: toward accessible and inclusive SDGs”**

Globally, an estimated one in four people will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. Annually, approximately one million people die due to suicide which is higher than the number of deaths related to war or murder which highlights their particularly vulnerable position. Economic loss due to problems related to mental well-being is vast: a recent study estimated that the cumulative global impact of mental disorders in terms of lost economic output will amount to US\$16.3 trillion between 2011 and 2030, while reasonable investment in mental well-being could contribute to better mental well-being. Additionally, there are strong stigma and discriminations against persons with mental and intellectual disabilities. In particular in disaster settings,

protection of persons with mental and intellectual disabilities is often neglected and not recognized.

The genuine achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals requires the inclusion of the rights, well-being, and the perspective of persons with disabilities including persons with mental and intellectual disabilities in development efforts at all levels. The recently proposed SDGs also focus in Goal 3: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” on mental health by proposing to “by 2030 reduce by one-third pre-mature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing”.

The economic, social and health impact of poor mental well-being is pervasive and far reaching, leading to poverty, high unemployment rates, poor educational and health outcomes. Mental well-being represents a critical indicator and a key determinant of well-being, quality of life, hope, and sustainable development. However, despite this close link between mental well-being and disability with development, the mental aspects have long been neglected in development discourse. Successful and sustainable development policies and programmes require a renewed prioritization of mental well-being and disability.

The panel discussion aims to bring attention to this often complex and neglected topic of mental well-being, disability and development with a particular focus on the role of the SDGs. The panel will identify key issues and trends on mental well-being as well as its relevance in promoting an inclusive path to development. The panellists will focus on practical strategies and actions points for mainstreaming mental well-being and disability in development priorities.

### **Questions to guide the presentations and discussions**

1. What are the main challenges and gaps in the inclusion of mental well-being and disability as part of inclusive development? How could mental well-being of persons with disabilities be better addressed as an integral part of their rights and inclusive development?
2. What specific action could be taken to reflect the needs of persons with mental and intellectual disabilities in the efforts to implement the SDGs?
3. How can the inclusion of mental well-being and disability in development be monitored and evaluated at national level and global level?
4. What are some of the good practice examples at the local, national, regional levels that have been successful in promoting mental well-being and the inclusion of persons with mental and intellectual disabilities in development?

5. What concrete measures and actions should be taken by Member States, the United Nations, development agencies and civil society to implement the outcome of the High-level Meeting and follow up in furthering the inclusion of mental well-being and disability development in all processes, at all levels?