

# World Blind Union (WBU) stakeholder remarks to the First Session of the UN-Habitat Executive Board 2020

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- I. Thank your honourable chair for allowing us as stakeholders to contribute with a few remarks and inputs during this first session of UN-Habitat Executive Board meeting this year.
  - II. Dear excellencies and all participants,
  - III. I speak to you today on behalf of World Blind Union, the global organisation representing the estimated 253 million persons who are blind and partially sighted worldwide, as well as the PCG of Persons with Disabilities in the General Assembly of Partners.
  - IV. **First**, I like to congratulate UN-Habitat for our unique, vibrant partnership, and the achievements so far on advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities considering the strategic plan. This for instance include the collaboration around WUF10 where greater emphasis was put on the matter, and multi-stakeholder commitments towards inclusive and accessible cities were captured in the *Abu Dhabi Declared Actions*. We also like to highlight one of the May 2020 Expert Group Meetings, which focused on persons with disabilities and older persons. We believe that its outcomes are actionable recommendations for UN-Habitat to take forward in translating these into practice throughout its work, including in the capacity development strategy.
- Building on this.***
- V. I like to bring the attention of the Executive Board and Executive Director to the following considerations:
  - VI. **First**: It is critical to take note of the UNSGs system-wide policy on Disability Inclusion and the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy launched in June 2019, which puts clear obligations on UN-Habitat as an UN entity.
  - VII. **Second**: To make necessary arrangements to allow for a yearly briefing on the strategy implementation to the Executive Board for its consideration.
  - VIII. **Third**: To allow for necessary steps to be taken to align policies, strategies and operations with the strategy and the UNCRPD; including accountability mechanisms, assess and improve accessibility, and safeguard meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making, programme design and delivery. Such aspects are encouraged be strengthened in the draft 2021 work plan as shared under item 4.
  - IX. **Fourth**: To be mindful in allocating sufficient and adequate budget and staffing resources towards disability inclusion; recalling that mainstreaming must avoid siloed approaches while recognising that targeted interventions are critical. It is our understanding that moving ambitions into practice require investments, and that such should not be viewed as a burden, rather as catalysts for success in fulfilling the mandate of UN Habitat.

***Your excellencies, finally.***

- X. I like to stress the importance of ensuring engagement of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and accountability to all persons with disabilities. The milestone MoU signed between World Blind Union and

UN-Habitat sets a unique example of partnerships, on how OPDs and UN agencies can work together towards disability inclusion, accessibility, and universal design in line with the CRPD.

It truly lays the foundation for such an increased engagement, recalling that more diverse participation must be sought; not only in implementation of UNDIS and around policies, but from program design through to local engagement and programme delivery so no place and no one are left behind.

XI. Once again, thank you for allowing us as partners to provide our inputs. I wish you a successful conclusion of this session.