H.E. Mr. Ekitela   Lokaale and H.E. Ms. Suela Janina
WSIS +20 Co-Facilitators

Dear Your Excellencies,

The IGF Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability would like to commend you for producing a Zero Draft that addresses some of our concerns in our last comment in the open consultation. In particular, we are pleased to note that you propose that the IGF "shall be made a permanent forum of the United Nations" (Paragraph 115).

The position of IGF-DCAD on the Zero Draft is that despite decades of advocacy, the digital divide facing persons with disabilities needs to have more of a focus in this draft than it currently has. While we are grateful for the increased emphasis in this draft on persons with disabilities, along with the insertion of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, we had hoped for a stronger, explicit commitment to digital accessibility woven into every thematic area, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals. We feel that much more work and also explicit commitments needs to be made. Accessibility for persons with disabilities needs to be a non-negotiable component of people-centred development, and currently that is not the case. Much more work needs to be done to ensure that people with lived experience of disability can bring their essential insights and expertise to the leadership of WSIS and Internet Governance events.

The WSIS+20 review presents a historic opportunity to move beyond tokenism and enshrine digital accessibility at the heart of a truly inclusive Information Society. Accessibility improvements need to be back up with explicit commitments and concrete actions for persons with disabilities and cannot just be checked boxes. This is why we reiterate that without the active leadership of people with lived experience of disability, the vision of universal, meaningful, and affordable access cannot be realized.

As the Coordinators of the IGF Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability, we urge co-facilitators and all stakeholders to ensure that accessibility and the inclusion of people with lived experience of disability are not afterthoughts, but core priorities reflected throughout the WSIS+20 outcome documents and in the future mandate of the IGF. Only by doing so can we build a multistakeholder, inclusive governance model that serves the needs of all people and sets a precedent for equitable global digital policymaking.

In this context, we have outlined below a set of specific comments highlighting key areas where the Zero Draft could better address the needs of persons with disabilities. As requested, in several places we have added suggested text to be added to the document. Our additions to the text in the Zero Draft are in Red.

We have also added other additions to the document that we hope will be in future versions of the draft.

Bridging Digital Divides—Paragraphs 21-32

Persistent digital divides cannot be effectively bridged without addressing accessibility barriers as a core cause of exclusion for persons with disabilities. As such, we think that the next draft should call for the following:

    A. Adoption of international accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG 2.1/2.2).
    B. Requirements for public and private digital service providers to implement accessibility by design, informed by the perspectives of people with lived experience of disability.

Paragraph 28--We are determined to ensure the achievement of universal meaningful and affordable access to the Internet and digital services……the extent to which these are multilingual, and accessible for persons with disabilities and the capabilities and ……

Paragraph 30--…… We commend the work that has been done since the World Summit to extend the multilingual nature of the Internet, including the introduction of Internationalised Domain Names, and urge all stakeholders to ensure that the Internet and digital services become fully accessible to all, including Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and speakers of minority languages.

Capacity Building—Paragraphs 66-70

We are reiterating what we had said in our comments on the Elements Paper in this response to the Zero Draft since we feel strongly that it needs to be addressed within this section. While the document emphasizes capacity building for developing countries, it overlooks targeted programs for persons with disabilities, who often face compounded barriers due to inaccessible education, training, and digital tools. We wanted to emphasize the importance of leveraging existing resources within specialized agencies, funds, programmes, other entities, bodies and offices, and related organizations of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and resources, to improve capacity building efforts for persons with disabilities.

It is essential to:
    A. Fund and develop accessible training materials co-created with people with lived experience of disability.
    B. Support organizations of persons with disabilities to deliver digital skills programs.
    C. Set diversity targets for disability representation in leadership, including in the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group.
    D. Create mentorship pathways for persons with disabilities, leveraging the lived experience of disability to inform leadership development and participation in Internet governance.
    E. Integrate disability indicators into capacity-building monitoring frameworks.

Paragraph 67---
We reaffirm our commitment to the international cooperation of all stakeholders to promote human resource development and training ….., with a view to enhancing the capacity of

developing countries to innovate and participate fully in building an accessible, people-centred and development-oriented Information Society.

Paragraph 69 ---
We call on all stakeholders to promote digital literacy and awareness-raising efforts to empower individuals, especially those in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities …..

Paragraph 72---We recognise that harnessing ICTs for development and bridging digital divides will require further sustained investment in infrastructure and services, capacity-building, promotion of joint research and development, funding of programs and accessible training material for persons with disabilities …..

Human Rights—Paragraphs 77-93

The strong emphasis on protecting human rights online in the Zero Draft is commendable but here again we take the opportunity to reiterate what we had said before that the next version should recognize the intersectionality of digital rights for persons with disabilities, including:

A. The right to accessible information and communication as foundational to freedom of expression.
B. The heightened risks posed by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, which can exclude persons with disabilities through biased datasets or inaccessible design.
C. The prevalence of technology-enabled abuse specifically targeting persons with disabilities, including cyberbullying and exploitation.
D. The necessity of involving people with lived experience of disability in designing ethical safeguards to ensure new technologies respect and promote human rights.

Paragraph 79---
……We are committed to fostering an accessible, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promotes human rights.

Internet Governance—Paragraphs 103-118

Paragraph 105--…..Measures are needed to ensure more effective participation by stakeholders from developing countries and under-represented groups, particularly persons with disabilities, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

Paragraph 106….. To fully benefit all, it must be open, global, interoperable, accessible, stable and secure.

Paragraph 111—
…. We call on Member States and other stakeholders, in their respective roles and responsibilities, to cooperate in order to achieve the vision of a people-centred, accessible, and development-oriented Information Society.

Paragraph 118---
We call for the strengthening of the Secretariat of the Internet Governance Forum, to enable it to continue its development, implement further improvements and support the work of National and Regional Internet Governance Forums and intersessional activities, such as the Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Forums, and Policy Networks…..

The Development of the WSIS Framework Paragraphs 119-131

Paragraph 121---We believe that the equitable participation of governments and stakeholders from all countries is crucial to achieving the goals established at the Summit and to ensuring that no country or community is left behind in the pursuit of a people-centred, accessible, and development-oriented Information Society.

Monitoring and Measurement Paragraphs 132-138

Paragraph 135---
We are committed to the further development and strengthening of internationally agreed targets, indicators and metrics for universal meaningful and affordable connectivity, including gender-disaggregated targets, indicators and metrics, disability indicators and metrics into capacity-building monitoring frameworks.

Thank you for allowing DCAD to contribute and comment on the published Zero draft of the WSIS +20 resolution and for all your efforts to reach out to the multi-stakeholder community for suggestions. We look forward to reading the next version.

Submitted by:
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