

ESCAP INTERNAL GUIDELINE ON ACCESSIBLE CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS



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ACRONYMS

ARL	Airport Rail Link
BTS	Bangkok Mass Transit System
CART	Communication Access Real-time Translation
CDSS	Conference and Documentation Services Section
CMU	Conference Management Unit
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EPUB	Electronic Publication
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FMU	Facilities Management Unit
HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
ICT	information and communications technology
IMCTS	Information Management, Communications and Technology Section
IS	International Sign
JAWS	Job Access with Speech (Screen Reader)
MOH	Ministry of Health
MRT	Metropolitan Rapid Transit
NVDA	Non-visual Desktop Access (Screen Reader)
PDF	portable document format
PPT	PowerPoint
SDD	Social Development Division
SL	sign language
SMP	seismic mitigation project
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SSS	Security and Safety Section
UN	United Nations
UNCC	United Nations Conference Centre
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
WASLI	World Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Introduction

“Last year, I launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy to ensure the UN system is doing its part. The Strategy represents the UN’s commitment to achieve transformative and lasting change. When we secure the rights of people with disabilities, we are investing in our common future.”

Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, 2019

Access to the physical environment, information and communication, transportation and services is central to ensuring opportunities for full and equal participation for persons with disabilities.

International and regional mandates support this concept and encourage member States to take actions to translate it into reality at the community levels.

At the international level, both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015–2030 are disability-inclusive. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has an independent article 9 on accessibility urging States parties to “take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas”.¹

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has been the regional engine promoting disability rights and disability-inclusive development since 1993 through instituting region-specific disability decade. ESCAP has always been regarding ensuring accessibility as a precondition to realize any rights of persons with disabilities. The Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (also known as the Incheon Strategy) guides the third and current Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, providing the world’s first disability-specific time-bound development goals. The Strategy contains a stand-alone goal 3 focusing on accessibility resonating the same spirit as article 9 of the CRPD. Supplementing the Incheon Strategy, the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (also known as the Beijing Declaration) supports the remainder of the current Decade until 2022 by providing recommended action for Governments, civil society and ESCAP. Paragraph 21 (e) of the

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html#:~:text=To%20enable%20persons%20with%20disabilities,transportation%2C%20to%20information%20and%20communications%2C>

Declaration requests the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to support the system-wide efforts of the United Nations (UN) to improve the accessibility of facilities, information and services.²

Within the United Nations, the landmark advancement in disability inclusion is the Secretary General's launch of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) in 2019. The Strategy aims at disability mainstreaming in all UN entities, and urges them to report its progress to Headquarters on an annual basis regarding 16 indicators. Each entity was requested to formulate their own disability inclusion policy and an action plan. One of the UNDIS indicators is on ensuring accessible conferences and meetings, encouraging each entity to assess the situation of accessibility, and to develop and implement accessibility guidelines and targets. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP launched ESCAP Disability Inclusion Policy and its Implementation Plan in August 2020, encouraging a whole-of-house approach to disability inclusion. The Implementation Plan contains an action to complete an accessible conference Guideline.

ESCAP, because of its commitment to disability-inclusive development since 1993, has also been active in improving its own accessibility. In 2011, ESCAP adopted resolution 67/6 of 25 May 2011 'Enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities at ESCAP.' Paragraph 2 (f) of the resolution requests the Executive Secretary to support efforts to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities at ESCAP, by implementing standards and guidelines to guide accessibility of facilities and services of the UN. In 2015, the ESCAP Accessibility Centre was established to raise disability awareness and promote accessible participation of persons with disabilities in conferences held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC). In 2017, the General Assembly mandated that ESCAP conduct an accessibility assessment as a part of the seismic mitigation project (SMP). In the same year, the ESCAP Accessibility Working Group was established to help inform the process. The Working Group conducted the accessibility assessment as a joint effort by the Division of Administration and the Social Development Division. The assessment resulted in an implementation plan with 98 action points, covering: (a) the built environment (facilities, security), (b) information and communications technology (ICT) (hardware, software, integrated IT in the built environment); and (c) services (human resources, medical, conferences, awareness training). These actions function as a de facto strategy for enhancing accessibility across various dimensions at ESCAP. In 2020, ESCAP is equipped with a group of disability inclusion focal points and their alternates designated in each division, subregional office and regional institution to promote disability inclusion.

In order to enhance accessibility at conferences and meetings, "ESCAP Internal Guideline on Accessible Conferences and Meetings" provides step-by-step support for the organization, preparation and delivery of accessible conferences and meetings.

² The Beijing Declaration was endorsed in ESCAP Resolution 74/7 of 18 May 2018.

I. Why this Guideline?

The **ESCAP Internal Guideline on Accessible Conferences and Meetings** provides practical support to ESCAP staff in the preparation and delivery of disability-inclusive conferences and meetings.

The Guideline builds particularly on the Incheon Strategy's second and third goals. The second goal promotes the participation of persons with disabilities in political processes and decision-making. The third goal, meanwhile, emphasizes the need to enhance the accessibility of the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, and information and communication systems.³

II. What does this Guideline provide readers with?

The Guideline aims to support ESCAP staff in all divisions, offices and regional institutes to plan, deliver and evaluate disability-inclusive and accessible conferences and meetings held within ESCAP premises, particularly at UNCC, and provides details on how to procure and provide various accessibility services. The Guideline consists of three parts:

Part 1. Key preliminary requirements;

Part 2. Planning and conducting accessible conferences and meetings;

Part 3. Evaluating accessibility of conferences and meetings.

Part 1 details the key requirements organizers should consider at the on-set of planning accessible conferences and meetings. These include allocating accessibility focal point(s), confirming budgetary allocation for the delivery of accessible meetings and conferences, and determining registration processes. Part 2 is structured in accordance with the four CRPD accessibility domains (detailed below). This section provides comprehensive information to support ESCAP staff enhance accessibility in conferences and meetings. Part 3 discusses suggested evaluation processes following the conclusion of a conference or meeting and includes a sample evaluation form. A sample registration form, a guide on communicating with and referring to persons with disabilities, and an accessibility timeline are included at the end of the Guideline.

This Guideline uses the ESCAP premises and facilities in Bangkok as the reference point. Some of the accessibility services such as International Sign interpretation and real-time captioning are

³ The full text of the Incheon Strategy is available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/incheon-strategy-%E2%80%9Cmake-right-real%E2%80%9D-persons-disabilities-asia-and-pacific>.

available for virtual meetings. Subregional offices and regional institutions can customize their needs against their own specific contexts.⁴

There are a series of checklists provided in annex III to the Guideline. These checklists provide point-by-point actions that should be taken in order to effectively plan and conduct accessible meetings. It is hoped that throughout the course of planning meetings, organizers will be able to continually refer to the Guideline and fulfil each action point, thereby filling each empty box with a tick.

III. Core concepts of disability inclusion

Accessibility can be defined as the degree to which both the built environment and information can be used or accessed by as wide a group of people as possible. CRPD⁵ identifies four domains where the concept of accessibility is vital:

- Physical environment
- Transportation
- Information and communications
- Services

Accessibility needs to be considered when organizing ESCAP conferences and meetings. Accessibility is often wrongly confined to the realm of disability, with the false perception that persons with disabilities are the only ones who benefit from accessibility products and services. In fact, accessible products and services support everyone in navigating and interacting with their environment, as everyone has different needs and abilities.

In this connection, the concept of **universal design** addresses the “design of products, environments, programmes, and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”.⁶

⁴ There have been increasing demands to organize online meetings and conferences due to mobility restrictions caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As ESCAP is working on enhancing inclusive accessibility in various aspects of digital meetings, there will be a separate guideline to be issued soon.

⁵ The full text of the CRPD is available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>.

⁶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2, available at www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-2-definitions.html.



Applying this concept to the built environment and information products used in conferences and meetings can support stronger outcomes by engaging participants more effectively. The recent upgrades to the ESCAP garden area are an example of incorporating universal design into the built environment. The ramp access and flat walkway provide barrier-free access for all conference and meeting participants travelling throughout the ESCAP premises, reflecting the concept of **inclusivity**.

[The image, above, shows ramp access in the ESCAP garden area]

Similarly, as conveyed in the CRPD, ESCAP has a responsibility to provide **reasonable accommodation**, which refers to the “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

It should be noted that as the concept of accessibility develops alongside technology, and as each individual has different needs, it is important to review this document regularly to ensure that ESCAP is providing the most up-to-date accessibility support possible, to ensure the full and effective participation of all persons in the decision-making process.

Moreover, disability exists on a spectrum and is not homogenous. Rather, there is a **diversity of disability** that must be considered when organizing a disability-inclusive conference or meeting. For example, a participant at a conference or meeting held at ESCAP may be a person with hearing disability, psychosocial disability, physical disability, or visual disabilities. Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it demonstrates that there is no singular representation of disability, and it is best to consider disability as existing on a spectrum.

Part 1. Key preliminary requirements

I. Accessibility focal point

Why is it important?

An accessibility focal point is a central person whose actions contribute to the success of accessible conferences and meetings.

It is important to determine early in the pre-meeting preparation which staff members will be the accessibility focal points. The focal point's key responsibility is to be the point of contact in the division or unit regarding accessibility for the conference or meeting it organizes. The disability inclusion focal point or its alternate can be an accessibility focal point. The accessibility focal point first needs to help meeting organizers decide which accessibility services a planned meeting will provide regardless of specific requests to be received from prospective participants with disabilities, and which specific accessibility services or reasonable accommodations will be provided in response to specific requests by prospective participants with disabilities.

Providing accessibility services might have cost implications, therefore, the accessibility focal point needs to verify what accessibility features and services are already available at a conference venue or an online conference platform without incurring any additional costs for the meeting organizer. After gathering all relevant information, the focal point needs to identify whether there are any participants with disabilities and identify their specific accessibility needs.

Then, the accessibility focal point needs to create a list of accessibility services and reasonable accommodations to be provided through identifying costs, consulting with a meeting organizer.

After the list is confirmed, the accessibility focal point needs to coordinate with other relevant divisions and units, or external service providers to ensure those services are provided.

During a period of time when a meeting is held, the accessibility focal point needs to closely monitor the quality of services provided to participants with disabilities, and as necessary to liaise with technical personnel in an organization to maintain the desired quality of services.

As UNDIS implementation at each UN entity is encouraged worldwide, and online conferences open to the public are becoming prevalent, it is noteworthy that a higher number of UN conferences and meetings provide International Sign interpretation and real-time captioning regardless of requests to provide such services.

II. Budgetary allocation

Why is it important?

Accessibility services support the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities. Budgetary allocation secures the delivery of accessible services. The provision of reasonable accommodation could include International Sign interpretation, accessible digital and print information and real-time captioning.

Until disability-inclusive practices are mainstreamed across all ESCAP divisions, subregional offices and regional institutions, individual organizers of relevant conferences/meetings within ESCAP are encouraged to allocate resources to ensure at the greatest extent possible that accessibility measures and reasonable accommodations are included for participants with disabilities.

The table below shows an indicative cost that a meeting organizer may consider for services and reasonable accommodations. Each service will be explained later in this Guideline.

Accessibility service	Estimated cost
International Sign interpretation⁷	USD 600 / day / person (2-3 interpreters) + flights and accommodation, if no International Sign interpreter is available locally
On-site real-time captioning⁸	USD 1,800-2,600 / day / person (2 real-time captioners for on-site meeting)
Remote real-time captioning with AI⁹	USD 200 / day

⁷ Please find details of International Sign interpretation in a Word document on sign language interpreters under a “File” tab in the [MS team ESCAP Disability Inclusion Focal Point Network](#).

⁸ Please find details of companies providing on-site captioning in a Word document on captioning under a “File” tab in the [MS team ESCAP Disability Inclusion Focal Point Network](#).

⁹ Please contact IMCTS (<mailto:escap-vc-service@un.org>) to arrange remote real-time captioning.

<p>Conversion of Word document into electronic publication (EPUB)¹⁰</p>	<p>USD 1 per page with image descriptions provided by the author</p> <p>Cost of image description: Simple images @ USD 1 for 5 images</p> <p>Complex images involving subject experts @ USD 1 for every 3 images.¹¹</p> <p>Estimated 3 to 4 days to convert a 20-to-30-page document. Time depends on the complexity of the document, i.e images, tables and charts would affect the amount of time for conversion.</p>
<p>Accessible van¹²</p>	<p>THB 3,500 / day (10 - 12 hrs) including driver, fuel, and expressway tolls.</p>
<p>Personal assistants / communication assistants</p>	<p>The same travel costs for other participants.</p>

III. Registration of participants

The recommendations below should be considered when preparing registration for attendees to conferences and meetings at ESCAP:

Why is it important?

Registration forms provide the opportunity for participants to share information on types of accessibility support and reasonable accommodation required. This information can be used by the organizer to determine the specific accessible services to organize. A sample registration form can be found in annex I.

¹⁰ Please find detailed information on creating EPUB in a word document on the subject uploaded under "File" tab created for the [ESCAP Disability Inclusion Focal Point Network at MS teams](#).

¹¹ Please note that these figures are only indicative from one vendor.

¹² Please note that the price is just indicative made available in mid 2020. An organizer of a meeting is encouraged to confirm the price.

Registration forms

- a) It is advised that registration forms be sent to participants and that the ESCAP online registration portal is opened well in advance of (preferably three months before) the conference or meeting to provide sufficient time for:
 - i. Participants to notify organizers of accessibility requirements;
 - ii. Organizers to ensure that such requirements can be delivered.
- b) Registration forms should outline which accessibility services will be provided by a meeting organizer regardless of individual requests and which services and accommodations could be provided responding to individual requests;
- c) When meetings/conferences are held at UNCC, the registration form should contain information on the ESCAP Accessibility Centre;
- d) In case of large-scale intergovernmental conferences and meetings where participants register through the ESCAP online registration portal link on the ESCAP website, requested accessibility requirements can be conveyed directly to the Conference Management Unit (CMU) and the accessibility focal point of a meeting;
- e) In the case where registration is conducted through the substantive division, the accessibility focal point should coordinate with relevant offices (Social Development Division (SDD), Information Management, Communications and Technology Section (IMCTS) or CMU in line with budgetary allocations in previous pages 11-12) on accessibility requirements. In case any equipment needs to be borrowed from the ESCAP Accessibility Centre, a duly filled [ESCAP Accessibility Centre Rental Request and Waiver of Liability Form](#) should be submitted to CMU;
- f) Registration must take into account support personnel who might assist participants in sessions, such as sign language (SL) interpreters other than those provided by ESCAP organizers, individual captioners, interpreter-guides and communication assistants, as well as personal assistants. The organizer may wish to consider covering the cost of those as much as possible as part of reasonable accommodation provision;
- g) The accessibility focal point of a meeting should make it clear in the registration process whether support personnel who will assist participation should be registered as meeting participants, or if there is a different method for registration;
- h) The organizer should establish and convey a clear registration method for support personnel accompanying participants.

Part 2. Planning and conducting accessible conferences and meetings

The following section provides detailed information on perspectives of accessibility features on the planning and delivery of accessible conferences and meetings in line with the CRPD four key domains of accessibility – the built environment, transportation, information and communication and services. Examples are drawn from UNCC, Bangkok.

Due to the high demand for accessible service providers in Thailand and across Asia, organizers/ Accessibility focal points are advised to book accessibility services well in advance of the conference or meeting to ensure their availability.

I. The built environment

i. Wayfinding and signage

Clear wayfinding and signage are important for all participants at conferences and meetings for easy navigation throughout the UNCC.

Before the conference or meeting

- The organizer should provide detailed accessibility information of the conference and meeting location well in advance.
- The Organizer should conduct a walkthrough of key areas that will be used by participants. Consider if additional signage is required to indicate location of conference or meeting venue, facilities (i.e., toilets, health centre and food vendors), and emergency escape routes. If so, discuss with CMU, Facilities Management Unit (FMU) and Security and Safety Section (SSS) whether signage can be temporarily displayed for the duration of the conference or meeting.

On the day

- The accessibility focal point ensures smooth wayfinding for participants with disabilities.

ii. Accessible facilities

Accessible bathrooms:



The UNCC has unisex wheelchair accessible bathrooms on the ground floor, first floor and second floor. Bathrooms are installed with hand railings to assist persons with physical disabilities.

[The above image is of the unisex accessible bathroom on ground floor of UNCC]

Ramp and lift access:

There is ramp access at both the public entrance to UNCC and the staff and visitor entrance, on Rajadamnern Nok Avenue. There is a ramp connecting the stage in ESCAP Hall. Lifts are available in the UNCC connecting all levels.

The public access to UNCC is available for wheelchair users through the Flagpole Gate. It is important to be aware, however, that the entranceway is not completely smooth and there are some areas that are slightly raised. This might be unsafe for wheelchair users and persons who are blind or those with visual impairment. Therefore, it is advised that participants with disabilities are notified of this by the event organizers prior to the conference or meeting through information note of the meeting and other viable means. If required by a participant, alternative arrangements to enter the staff and visitor entrance must be facilitated by event organizers.

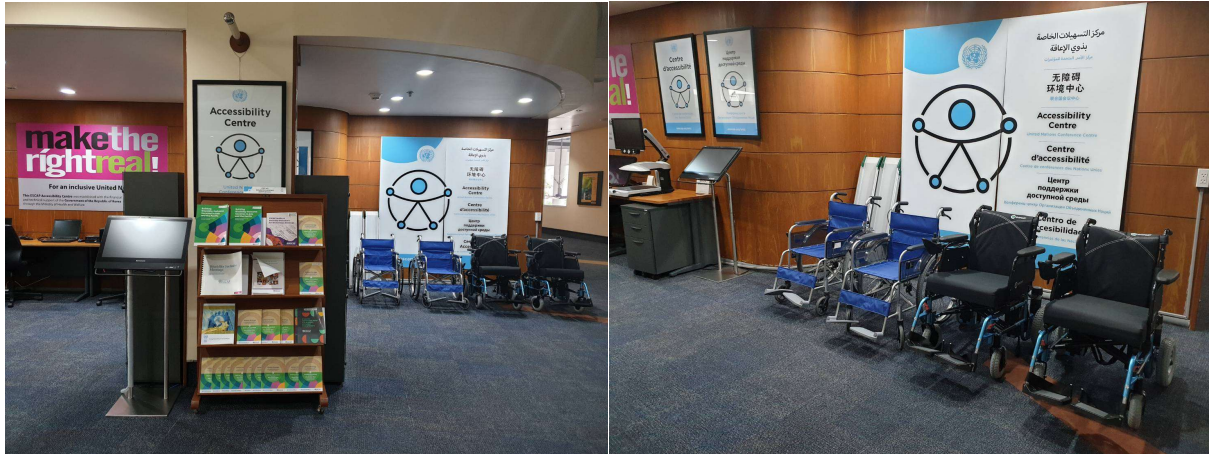
There is also ramp access between the UNCC building and the ground floor garden seating.



[The image, above, shows ramp access at the United Nations Conference Centre]

iii. ESCAP Accessibility Centre

The ESCAP Accessibility Centre provides a variety of assistive devices for meeting participants with disabilities to support accessibility within the UNCC. Assistive devices are available from the Accessibility Centre, Level 1, UNCC, upon request (preferably through the organizer).



[The images, above, show the Accessibility Centre, located on the first floor of UNCC, Bangkok]

Before the conference or meeting

- Organizers are advised to look at the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of the Accessibility Centre first, and contact CMU two weeks in advance to secure required assistive devices for conference and meeting participants. Organizers should provide participants with information of devices and equipment available at the [Accessibility Centre](#), in line with the information note for participants. The [ESCAP Accessibility Centre Rental Request and Waiver of Liability Form](#) should be filled out and shared with participants.

On the day

- In case of any unknown or emergency requests, the substantive division should notify the CMU accessibility centre focal point immediately.

II. Accessible transportation

Introduction to accessible transportation

Accessible transportation supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities at ESCAP conferences and meetings by reducing barriers of non-accessible transportation particularly for wheelchair users. Please note that ESCAP is neither responsible for making any arrangements for the transportation between airports and the UNCC, nor liable for services provided by public and private transportation and their accessibility. The below information is provided to enhance the reader's understanding on available options in Bangkok. Also, when hotels provide transportation for their guests to the UNCC venue, accessible vans are preferable for participants who are wheelchair users.

i. At the airport and from the airport

Airport link

Suvarnabhumi Airport provides car parks and elevators that are particularly spacious for wheelchair users. Within the elevators, Braille buttons and voice announcements are available to indicate the floor for persons who are blind and those with visual impairments.

The Airport Rail Link (ARL), provides service to Suvarnabhumi International Airport (BKK). While all stations of the ARL are wheelchair accessible, the level of accessibility at each station varies. According to observation made by local wheelchair users, power/motorized wheelchairs are not encouraged to use the ARL to or from its Phaya Thai station as a gap in space between the platform and train at this station could cause power wheelchairs to be damaged or stuck. Manual wheelchair users can clear this gap with the assistance of station personnel.

Furthermore, manual wheelchair users are not encouraged to transfer from the Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS) to the ARL at the Phaya Thai station as there is no elevator from the BTS platform to mezzanine. The only wheelchair accessible connection point from another transit line to the ARL is at the Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT) Phetchaburi station which connects to the ARL Makkasan station through a long corridor.¹³

ii. Public transportation

Mass rapid transit systems (BTS and MRT) are available in Bangkok. Many stations are accessible for wheelchair users, and blind passengers can get assistance. Participants are encouraged to contact these operators.¹⁴

¹³ This information was given by local wheelchair users. Organizers should update their knowledge by checking with local groups of wheelchair users and transportation providers.

¹⁴ BTS: www.bts.co.th/eng/faq/faq-howto.html;

MRT: www.mrta.co.th/en/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

iii. Wheelchair accessible vans

Wheelchair accessible van rentals are available in Bangkok.

Before the conference or meeting

- Accessibility focal points are encouraged to find out on availability of wheelchair accessible vans at hotels that provide transportation to participants to and from the UNCC.
- If there is a need to book an accessible van, it is encouraged to do so at least one month in advance of the conference or meeting to ensure availability.¹⁵
- For participants who will be requiring on-site accessible parking, a request for on-site parking allocation will need to be made to ESCAP Visitors and Security services. Correspondence should include conference or meeting information (location, date and time), in addition to the participants information and car specifications (car plate number and colour).

On the day

- If required, an ESCAP organizer or meeting guide can meet participants and show participants the accessible route to the conference or meeting room.

III. Information and communication

Introduction to accessible information and communications technology

Information and communications technology (ICT) accessibility refers to the application and integration of enhanced and technology facilitated processes to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities. This is reflected in the increasing number of activities conducted over internet, computers, mobile phones and applications. ICT products and services are invaluable to those who face additional barriers to inclusion. For instance, accessible ICT products and services are particularly helpful for those with hearing and visual disabilities, or those on the autism spectrum, as these groups tend to face additional barriers when interacting face-to-face with others. Given the importance of ICT developments in facilitating the daily activities of persons with disabilities, it is abundantly clear that any barriers of access to ICT products and

¹⁵ Details of the private companies providing accessible vans is shared under "File" tag of [ESCAP Disability Inclusion Focal Point Network at MS Teams](#) .

services have strongly adverse impacts on the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society.

Screen readers

Screen readers allow persons with print disabilities – especially blind and partially sighted persons and persons with learning disabilities – to interact with on-screen, mixed media content with a comparable level of user-freedom and functionality as other users. Screen readers use an audio system that renders on-screen text into a computer-generated voice. Having a pre-recorded audio-voiceover is not equivalent to having content that can be read by a screen reader, as where a pre-recorded, linear voiceover must be listened to effectively only from start to finish, text-to-speech technology allows a user to navigate back and forth across pages, and within them. Examples of common screen reader software include Job Access with Speech (JAWS) and Non-visual Desktop Access (NVDA).¹⁶

Speech-to-text applications

There are many voice recognition applications that are available to download and use on smartphones, which can convert speech to text that is presented on the screen of a smartphone. Examples of speech-to-text software include TextHear and Ava.

Easy-to-understand content

Easy-to-understand versions of written materials are presented in clear and simple ways in order to make them accessible to persons with intellectual/learning disabilities. Easy-to-understand versions focus on making sure the main points in a document are understandable to persons with intellectual difficulties, to ensure that they understand and are able to make decisions if necessary.¹⁷ Easy-to-understand content may include visual representations, as well as glossaries of technical terms and acronyms.

Electronic Publication

Electronic Publication (EPUB) is an accessible file format that supports the use of text-to-speech function. EPUB can be used by persons with print disabilities on devices such as screen readers as well as smart phones and computers with compatible software. EPUB is also the file used commonly in e-books. Word and portable document format (PDF) documents can be converted to EPUB files by using software such as Sigil or Caliber ePub editors. For documents with graphs and images it is advised that documents are converted to EPUB by a professional graphic designer. The extension “.epub” is used for all EPUB files. For more information, please see <https://daisy.org/news-events/articles/wordtoepub-extended-tutorial-w/>.

¹⁶ More information on screen reading software is available from:

<https://webaim.org/techniques/screenreader/>

¹⁷ UK Department of Health, (2010), “Making written information easier to understand for people with learning disabilities” available at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215923/dh_121927.pdf

i. Digital and print documents¹⁸

Not all digital and print documents are accessible to some persons with print disabilities (visual, physical, perceptual, developmental, cognitive and learning disabilities that render someone unable to effectively read print). For example, digital and print documents with photographs without alternative text, non-highlightable text are not fully accessible for participants using screen readers and other assistive technologies. Therefore, it is necessary to provide versions of documents in different accessible formats such as Microsoft Word, accessible PDF, Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and EPUB.

It is important to consider the needs of persons with diverse abilities when developing the structure, design, and content of digital and print documents for meetings while at the same time adhering to the [United Nations Editorial Manual Online](#).

Some persons with print disabilities require certain design elements to be considered in both digital and print documents. Furthermore, as many persons with visual disabilities use screen readers to access information, a Word document must be compatible with screen reading software, such as NVDA or JAWS. Persons with perceptual, developmental, cognitive or learning disabilities may also benefit from certain stylistic and structure features; however, they also require the information to be presented in a clear, concise and easy to follow manner.

In accordance with the *Editorial Manual Online*, technical terminology and acronyms should be avoided; only acronyms set out at <http://dd.dgacm.org/editorialmanual/ed-guidelines/style/abbreviations.htm> should be used.

For additional information regarding Microsoft accessibility features, staff may refer to <https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/sites/Committee-CSD-ESCAP/Shared%20Documents/Focal%20Point%20Network/Disability%20inclusion%20tool?> under a “Folder” of ESCAP Disability Inclusion Focal Point.

Before the conference or meeting

- The below recommendations should be considered during the creation of digital and print documents. Conference and Documentation Services Section (CDSS) could be consulted.

¹⁸ Content informed by: Queen’s University Accessible Word documents:
<http://www.queensu.ca/accessibility/how-info/accessible-documents/creating-accessible-word-documents-using-word-windows>
WebAIM: <http://webaim.org/techniques/word/>
Accessible PDF documents for Assistive Technology:
<http://www.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/accessibility/pdfs/accessing-pdf-sr.pdf>

When using Microsoft Word

Text structure

- a) Create a consistent heading structure by assigning ordered levels of headings and subheadings to each section of the content.
- b) Assign the heading structure using the Styles tool in Word to ensure assistive technology users, such as screen reader users, can navigate the document by identifying the headings. View the heading structure by clicking on “View” and checking the “Navigation Pane” box.
- c) Keep in mind that while changing the font style of the text, such as changing text to bold or italics, may be useful for identifying headings visually, but it will not be helpful for screen reader users.

Text formatting

- a) Text should be highlightable:
 - i. For screen readers to function, text must be readable as text rather than images. Text must be ‘selectable’ and ‘highlightable’. Large-scale text and images of large-scale text have a contrast ratio of at least 3:1
- b) Font size should be at least 10pt.
- c) Use standard fonts with easily recognizable upper- and lower-case characters. Examples of simple, clear fonts include Times, Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana.
- d) Use black and white font or high contrast.
- e) Ensure that blocks of text over one sentence in length:
 - i. Are no more than 80 characters wide;
 - ii. Are not fully justified (aligned to both the left and the right margins);
 - iii. Have adequate line spacing (at least 1/2 the height of the text) and paragraph spacing (1.5 times line spacing).
- f) All caps should be avoided (for screen reader purposes).
- g) Paragraph formatting and document structure should not include blank lines and spaces with no content, as these will be read with screen readers as blank and may lead the user to believe there is no more content.

Hyperlinks

- a) Hyperlinks in documents should be embedded in the text, and clearly distinguishable (not instructing to 'Click here: ___')
- b) When embedding the hyperlink, add a description by clicking "ScreenTip" in the top-left corner of the box. This text will display when a user hovers over the hyperlink.

Formatting tables

<i>Header 1</i>	<i>Header 2</i>	<i>Header 3</i>	<i>Header 4</i>

- a) Ensure that there are header rows so that screen readers can convey what the table contents are.
- b) If the table spans multiple pages, ensure the header row is repeated on subsequent pages.
- c) Tables should have header rows to allow screen readers to interact with the content in a logical and sequential manner.

As different screen readers have different capabilities, it is important to avoid spanned cells and multiple levels of header cells when possible. For example, changing the number of rows and columns in between data in the table could cause screen readers to provide confusing information.

Visual formatting

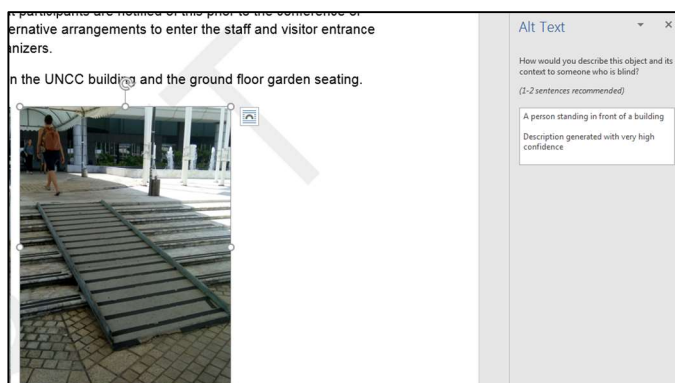
- a) Alternative text / Alt text should be added to graphic representations that convey information. Alt text should be comprised of:
 - i. The text displayed in the graphic;
 - ii. A description of the image, so that screen readers can convey the purpose of the image to users with visual impairments.
- b) Use high contrast to differentiate information from other information, and with the background. This will facilitate access to the information for persons with partial vision, colour blindness, and other print disabilities and visual disabilities. Colour contrast, in general, refers to the differentiation between the content and the background, including hue and saturation, and persons with low vision may have difficulty reading/seeing

information where the hue and saturation are not easily distinguishable from other content.

- c) Images that do not convey content, are decorative, or contain content that is already conveyed in text should be left with no Alt text (as PowerPoint does not offer a 'null' option as is available in web design):
 - i. Using textures in graphs instead of colours can help persons with visual disabilities to more clearly interact with different data sets.
- d) In accordance with the *Editorial Manual Online*, documents should be greyscale, although exceptions can be made, particularly for documents that are not printed.
- e) Alternative text / Alt text should be added to graphic representations that convey information. Alt text should be comprised of:
 - i. the text displayed in the graphic;
 - ii. a description of the image, so that screen readers to convey they purpose to users with visual impairments.
- f) Images that do not convey content, are decorative, or contain content that is already conveyed in text should be left with no Alt text (as PowerPoint does not offer a 'null' option as is available in web design).

How to include Alternative text / Alt text:

- a) **Right click** the directly on the object or image > **select** Edit Alt Text. Note: Alt text can be added to SmartArt graphics or chart. To do so, **click** the border of the SmartArt graphic or chart > **select** Edit Alt Text;
- b) Write a description of the object or image in the text box that appears in the Alt text.



[The image, left, shows the Alt pane where Alt text can be added to provide descriptions to accompany images in Microsoft Word documents]

Easy-to-understand content

The below checklist provides considerations for making content easy-to-understand.¹⁹

- Write in short sentences of 15-20 words
- Write as if you are speaking
- Use active verbs as much as possible
- Keep the language personal e.g. you, we, I
- Use Arial font – at least size 10
- Do not underline, use bold to emphasize a word
- Each sentence has one idea
- Use drop down bullet points to list
- Do not use jargon or acronyms or italics
- Do not write in upper case
- Do not use contractions
- Use figures – don't write out numbers
- Use full names e.g. road, not Rd or Ministry of Health not MoH
- Reduce punctuation as much as you can
- Use boxes to help information stand out
- Make sure the layout is the same throughout the document

Saving documents in accessible formats

- a) Save and distribute files as Word document, accessible in PDF, HTML or EPUB formats
 - i. To save in .doc, accessible PDF or HTML using Microsoft Word 2010, click: **File > Save As > [select .doc, .pdf or .html]**
 - ii. To create EPUB documents, Word and PDF documents can be converted to EPUB files by using software such as Sigil or Caliber ePub editors. For documents with graphs and images it is advised that documents are converted to EPUB by a professional graphic designer.
- b) Print documents with consideration for persons with visual impairments.
- c) Provide accessibly formatted documents online.

¹⁹ More information on this is available on website of the Office of Disability Issues, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand, available at <https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/a-guide-to-making-easy-read-information/>

On the day

Distributing & presenting

- a) PowerPoint presentations should be distributed in PPT, accessible in PDF or HTML formats to enable screen reader users to access the information.
- b) Presentations should be accompanied by notes with important points, captions of video and transcripts of audio.

ii. PowerPoint presentations

The structure, design and content of PowerPoint (PPT) presentations are important to consider when ensuring accessibility of PPT for persons with diverse disabilities.

Those with print disabilities (visual, physical, perceptual, developmental, cognitive and learning disabilities that render someone unable to effectively read print) require certain design elements to be considered in PPT presentations. Furthermore, as many persons with visual disabilities use screen readers to access information, a PPT presentation must be compatible with screen reading software, such as NVDA or JAWS. Persons with perceptual, developmental, cognitive, or learning disabilities may also benefit from certain stylistic and structure features, however, also require the information to be presented in a clear, concise and easy to follow manner.

Microsoft 365 has templates for slides. Use of such templates is encouraged to ensure accessibility of the content. Some versions of PPT offer an option to check the accessibility. For Microsoft PowerPoint 2010, click: **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**

Before the conference or meeting

The below recommendations should be considered during the creation of PPT Presentations:²⁰

Text structure

- a) Slides should have descriptive and informative title

²⁰ Content informed by:

Microsoft Office's PowerPoint Accessibility Support: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Make-your-PowerPoint-presentations-accessible-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US#_toc286131978,

WebAIM's WebAIM PowerPoint: <https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/>

Further information on this topic compiled by the World Blind Union is available from:

<http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Documents/wbu-visual-presentations-guidelines.pdf>

- b) Content on a slide will be read by a screen reader in the order it was created, not the order in which it appears. Use the 'Selection Pane' window to ensure that the content is ordered as it should be read. Items can be relabelled in the 'Selection Pane' to match the content:
 - i. Example: any additional textboxes not in the pre-set template will be read in the order they are created rather than the order placed on the screen

Text formatting

- a) Any hyperlinks should be embedded in the text, and clearly distinguishable (not instructing to 'Click here: __')
- b) Text should be highlightable:
 - i. For screen readers to function, text must be readable as text rather than images. Text must be 'selectable' and 'highlightable'. Large-scale text and images of large-scale text have a contrast ratio of at least 3:1
- c) Font size should be at least 10pt.
- d) Recommended fonts: Times, Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana
- e) Blocks of text over one sentence in length:
 - i. Are no more than 80 characters wide;
 - ii. Are not fully justified (aligned to both the left and the right margins);
 - iii. Have adequate line spacing (at least 1/2 the height of the text) and paragraph spacing (1.5 times line spacing).
- f) All caps should be avoided (for screen reader purposes).

Tables

- a) Tables should have header rows to allow screen readers to interact with the content in a logical and sequential manner.
- b) As different screen readers have different capabilities, it is important to avoid spanned cells and multiple levels of header cells when possible. For example, changing the number of rows and columns in between data in the table could cause screen readers to provide confusing information.

Visual formatting

- a) Use high contrast to differentiate information, and the background to facilitate access to the information for persons with partial vision, colour blindness, and other print disabilities and visual disabilities. Colour contrast general refers to the differentiation between the content and the background, including hue and saturation, and persons

with low vision may have difficulty reading/seeing information where the hue and saturation are not easily distinguishable from other content:

- i. Some versions of PPT allow the use of “Greyscale” viewing to see the contrast;
 - ii. Using textures in graphs instead of colours can help persons with visual disabilities to interact with different data sets more clearly.
- b) Avoid using orange, red and green to compare information, as these tend to be difficult for persons with colour blindness to differentiate between.
- c) Alternative text / Alt text should be added to graphic representations that convey information. Alt text should be comprised of:
- i. The text displayed in the graphic;
 - ii. A description of the image, so that screen readers to convey they purpose to users with visual impairments.
- d) Images that do not convey content, are decorative, or contain content that is already conveyed in text should be left with no Alt text (as PowerPoint does not offer a ‘null’ option as is available in web design).

Multimedia & animation

- a) Embedded videos should be captioned, and the controls for the video should be made accessible.
- b) Embedded audio files should be accompanied by a transcript.
- c) Slide transitions should not be automatic and should be made simple.
- d) If animations are included, they should be brief, simple, and not detract from the information:
 - i. In some cases, brief animation can be helpful for highlighting information in lieu of a laser pointer, which can be difficult for persons with colour blindness to see.

On the day

Distributing & presenting

- a) PowerPoint presentations should be distributed in PPT, accessible PDF, or HTML format to enable screen reader users to access the information.
- b) Presentations should be accompanied by notes with important points, captions of video and transcripts of audio.

IV. Accessible service providers

Introduction to accessible services

Accessible service providers assist in the delivery of accessible conferences and meetings by providing on-site or remote real-time captioning and interpretation (International Sign or local sign language).

When online conference platforms are used, the organizers should consider providing International Sign interpretation and real-time captioning as much as possible.

i. Real-time captioning²¹

Real-time captioning provides all participants, not only those with disabilities, a live transcript of proceedings. It helps everyone better understand content (with particular benefits for those who are working in their second, third or fourth language), and additionally provides a reference tool to find specific content after a conference/meeting has finished.

Real-time captioning is done by a stenographer or captioner, which is professionally trained. UN Secretariat approved digital platforms such as MS Teams used for online meetings have built-in real-time captioning function. Additionally, ESCAP has developed its own AI-based captioning system to fulfil the need for affordable online and on-premise captioning requirements. This service provides customization options to improve the accuracy of UN terminology.



[The image, left, shows a presentation with captioning included]

²¹ This section is informed by the Described and Captioned Media Program available at <https://www.dcmp.org/caai/nadh28.pdf>, the University of Washington available at <http://www.washington.edu/doit/what-real-time-captioning>, and inputs from participants at ESCAP meetings and conferences.

Before the conference or meeting

Captioning can be done by person(s) in the conference/meeting room, or remotely. The below recommendations could be considered:

Selection of captioners

- a) Real-time captioning, or Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) captioning, is a method of converting spoken language into visual text onto a laptop computer screen. Specialized software and stenography equipment are used in this conversion process.²²
- b) Alternatively, ESCAP's AI-based captioning services can be utilized. An accessibility focal point should contact IMCTS, escap-vc-service@un.org.
- c) An accessibility focal point should inform relevant participants of the final arrangement well in advance.

Provision of captioning service

When booking a captioning service provider, the following information should be provided (often in electronic format):

Details	Suggested document to provide
Date and time of the event	<i>Tentative programme</i>
Full address of where the event is to take place including directions/map	<i>Information note</i>
Contact name, telephone number and/or email address of the person making the booking as well as the contact person at the event	Accessible focal point's details in information note
The nature of the event	Copy of <i>invitation letter</i> to participant <i>tentative programme</i>
The numbers of deaf and hearing participants and their language preferences	provisional list of participants
The date and time of testing of captioning in advance of the meeting	Email communications

²² the meeting organizer should initiate contractual arrangements at least two months in advance after referring to information available at [ESCAP Disability Inclusion Focal Points Network](#) .

Background information for captioners

All background documents, information documents, draft working documents, presentations and any other substantive materials that will be discussed at the meeting should be provided to the captioners by an accessibility focal point in advance.

The quality of service can be improved by providing the captioners with adequate preparation in advance, including:

- a) Copies of any relevant paperwork – including minutes, agenda and speeches (PowerPoint presentations/illustrations, etc.);
- b) Slides or video presentations (allowing time for the captioner to view the materials before they are presented to the audience). It is strongly recommended for video presentations to be subtitled in English to ensure accessibility to a wider audience;
- c) The name of the person in charge of the event on arrival;
- d) Contact details of technical contact person (in CMU/IMCTS).

Technical requirements

Captioning requires the following equipment software as well as outsourced technician, however it is important to check with the service provider on what equipment will be needed:

- Stenographic keyboard
- Computer
- Modem
- Captioning software
- Two screens
- Headphones
- Encoder
- Video sources

An accessibility focal point should coordinate with the service provider to discuss with CMU, regarding any arrangements for seating and other required support. Reserved seating is advised for participant(s) and personal captioner (working on portable screen).

On the day

Visibility

To service as many participants as possible, captioning is generally projected on a screen. However, in some cases participants may wish to have a personal captioner sitting next to them.

As captioning supports the understanding of participants by providing a live transcript of the proceedings, it is important that the captioning is visible to all persons in the room, and that it is done in the same line of sight as any other projections, presentations or videos that are involved in the proceedings. Considerations of screen resolution and font size are also important in this regard. Likewise, it is important for the captioner to be positioned so that he/she can see the proceedings clearly, along with the live captioning.

Changes to the programme

Any changes to the programme, presentations or proceedings over the course of the meeting should be conveyed to the captioners by the accessibility focal point as soon as possible in order to facilitate their planning.

ii. Interpretation (International Sign language, and other)²³

Interpretation allows persons with hearing disabilities, speech disabilities, visual disabilities, and other disabilities to effectively communicate alongside others. It is an important means of supporting persons with disabilities to convey their thoughts and ideas and participate in the decision-making process.

Deaf persons and persons with hearing disabilities who attend United Nations meetings often have a working knowledge of written English, though it may be their third, fourth, or fifth language. Sign language is recognized as a language by the CRPD. Countries and areas have their own sign languages, while there is the International Sign (IS) which is used universally and understood by those who use sign languages. The World Federation of the Deaf recommends the use of International Sign interpretation for intergovernmental meetings. The choice of whether a national sign language (SL) interpreter or IS interpreter should be provided for a given meeting should be decided by the participants; the organizer should not determine which SL is to be made available. In general, when intergovernmental meetings are held, provision of IS is preferred.

In addition to SL interpretation, tactile SL and other forms of interpretation may be required for certain meeting participants. Persons with deafblindness, for instance, may use an interpreter-guide to support their communication and participation. Any considerations for such services that do not match those for SL interpretation will be noted by accessibility focal points.

²³ Information in this section is informed by the World Federation of the Deaf, and inputs from participants at ESCAP meetings. Available at <http://2tdzpf2t7hxmggghq3njno1y-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Interpreter-Guidelines-for-UN-24-Updated-June-2015.pdf>

Before the conference or meeting

Participants should be asked by an accessibility focal point for their support preferences of their national SL, international SL, and/or real-time captioning services in English on the screen as a supplement to interpreting. Deafblind participants may require a personal interpreter-guide.

Selection of interpreters

There is a general shortage of SL interpreters worldwide, which means that qualified interpreters are likely to be fully booked well in advance, generally two months before the meeting (also taking into account the contract processing time).

It is important to make sure the interpreter meets the needs of the user. The national Deaf Association in the country of the meeting, national Sign Language Interpreter Association, or World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)²⁴ may be contacted by an accessibility focal point for requesting interpreters who may be experienced in international conferences.

For national SL interpreters, the interpreter should have certification/accreditation from the country of the SL, if that is possible.

For IS interpreters, in principle, SL interpreters should be from the region in which they are serving, to better support the proceedings.

Hiring an interpreter

Accredited International Sign interpreters can be found here: <http://wfdeaf.org/our-work/wfd-wasli-international-sign-interpreter-accreditation/wfd-wasli-accredited-is-interpreter/>

As with spoken language interpreters, national SL and IS interpreters work in teams to reduce the potential for inaccuracies from mental or physical fatigue. Each interpreter may work for 20-30-minute periods of time in order to maximize the accuracy and the effectiveness of the interpretation. Interpreters need regular breaks during the event.

For full day conferences, the interpreting team should include interpreters who can work during the conference breaks so that deaf delegates and participants may network and conduct short meetings outside of the conference proceedings. This will sometimes mean teams of 3 or 4

²⁴ The WASLI website www.wasli.org contains a list of countries and their associations of sign language interpreters. You can also contact the WASLI regional representative on the "WASLI Board" section of the website and they can refer you to appropriate services in the country in which the event is being held, if services are available, or the country nearest if there are no qualified interpreters available in the host country.

interpreters working a single conference in a day to cover not only the formal conference, but also networking during breaks and covering side events before and after the agenda of the conference.

Provision of materials

When booking an interpreter, the following information should be provided:

Details	Suggested document to provide
Date and time of the event, including start and finish	Tentative programme
Full address of where the event is to take place including directions/map	Information note
Contact name, telephone number and/or email address of the accessibility focal point and technical focal point	Communication via email
The nature of the event	Copy of the participant's invitation letter Tentative programme
The numbers of deaf and hearing participants and their language preferences.	--
Date and time of testing of interpretation	Email communication

The quality of the interpreting service can be improved by providing the interpreters with adequate advance preparation. An accessibility focal point should provide:

- a) Copies of any relevant paperwork – including minutes, agendas and speeches (PowerPoint presentations/illustrations, etc.);
- b) Slides or video presentation (allowing time for the interpreters to watch the items before they are presented to the audience). It is strongly recommended that video presentations include subtitles in English to ensure accessibility to a wider audience, including deaf people who do not use a signed language and hearing delegates for whom English is a third or fourth language;
- c) The name of the person in charge of the event on arrival;
- d) Contact details of co-workers (interpreters), if any.

It is advised that prior to any deaf participant's participation in a meeting, an appropriate amount of time is allocated for the deaf presenter to meet with the SL interpreters to prepare.

For larger and complicated events, an accessible focal point should provide adequate time for the deaf presenter/chair to meet with the person responsible for interpreting arrangements. Considerations regarding seating and standing positions in line with prepared lighting, screens, camera, and general visibility should be made.

The environment needs to be conducive for effective communication. This means sufficient lighting and sound systems (i.e., provision of wireless microphones and portable headsets if necessary), as well as an appropriate background against which the interpreter will work that is free of visual distractions.

Especially at the United Nations, where protocol often determines where Chairs, panelists, delegates, and observers may sit, a screen with all three images containing the speaker, the presentation material and the interpreter will be necessary for any deaf participant to follow the proceedings.

A meeting between the deaf participant(s), CMU and the substantive division should be set up by an accessibility focal point in advance to visit the meeting venue and discuss relevant aspects of the programme.

For virtual meetings, testing of SL interpretation should be conducted as part of the test run. An accessible focal point should liaise with CMU and interpreters to test SL interpreters' access to virtual conference platforms as well as deaf persons' access to images of the SL interpreters.

Any changes to the programme, presentations or proceedings over the course of the meeting should be conveyed to the deaf participants and the SL interpreters by an accessible focal point as soon as possible in order to facilitate their planning.

On the day

Lighting, audio, projection and placement²⁵

Key considerations:

- a) During face-to-face meetings/conferences, the screen, the speaker and/or PPT or video presentations, the SL interpreter and captioning should all be visible to all attendees;
- b) When the interpreter will be on-screen, the background should be plain so that the interpreter's hands are visible;

²⁵ For more information visit: <https://aiic.net/page/7821/guidelines-for-positioning-of-sign-language-interpreters-in-conferences-including-web-streaming/lang/1>

- c) When lights are dimmed for a screen to be seen, a separate light should be directed at the interpreter so that he/she can be easily seen;
- d) Ensure that the wireless microphones are available to the SL interpreter (interpreting from SL to English) for the delegate signing at his or her seat.

Effective communication requires that deaf people and interpreters are able to see each other. Special consideration should be given to ensuring that the space between the deaf person and the interpreter is not an area in which there is frequent activity/movement (i.e. a walkway). Generally, interpreters will stand toward the front of the room, so that the deaf participants can see them alongside the proceedings of the meeting.

Some participants may engage two interpreters at one time; the first placed in their line of sight with the screen, and the second in the line of sight of the first to explain/clarify any of the proceedings.

About making interventions, deaf participant(s) should be consulted about whether they prefer to stand in front of their audience, as deaf signers are accustomed to visual contact with their interlocutors in their culture. This could have ramifications for the cameras tracking speakers for the screen.

At an online meeting, technical support should ensure that projection of SL interpretation is done properly. An accessibility focal point should also monitor the situation.

Location of sign language interpreters

During face-to-face meeting/conference, SL interpreters should be present in the conference room, not in a booth, in clear and unobstructed visible proximity to deaf participants(s). The appropriate lighting and elevation of the SL interpreter should be taken into account.

Key considerations:

- a) Interpreters should be provided with the screens that mirror the content on the main screen, and possible live captioning (if provided);
- b) If more than one interpreter is present, ensure there is seating for him/her, and clear and unobstructed visible proximity to the on-duty interpreter;
- c) Interpreters should be given portable audio sets with comfortable earphones to hear the proceedings of the meeting, including interpretation to English from other languages;
- d) In addition to the interpreter, the deaf participant(s) should be able to see the presenters, whether in person or through screen or monitor projections;
- e) Consult with deaf participants on where they wish to make their interventions, when possible.

Proceedings

As the official delegate, the deaf participant should be addressed directly in all proceedings, not the interpreters.

As with spoken language interpreters, there will be a short lag time when a SL interpreter is working between a SL and a spoken language.

Key considerations:

- a) When a deaf participant makes an intervention, the Chair should give the floor to the participant, not the interpreter;
- b) Allow adequate time for interpretation during interventions made by deaf participants;
- c) While the deaf participant is the official participant, acknowledgement of the sign language interpreter should be made in documentation following the meeting;
- d) Should the event be recorded (audio and/or video), interpreters should be notified beforehand in order to discuss relevant acknowledgements and copyright of their work product;
- e) Key organizers are advised to learn a few key phrases and words in IS or localized sign languages.²⁶

iii. Communication assistants and personal assistants

A participant with intellectual and or learning disabilities may require assistance in the conference or meeting to comprehend any relevant information or material. The participants themselves might already have an assistant to bring to a planned meeting or the meeting organizer may assign a communication assistant who may provide assistance to the participant for example, by paraphrasing presentations or discussions into simpler language, or asking questions on behalf of the participant to clarify any information presented or discussed by other participants.¹ The meeting organizer, through an accessibility focal point, needs to agree with participants with intellectual disabilities in this regard. An issue on coverage of their cost has to be discussed prior to the planned meeting.

A personal assistant assists persons with physical or sensory disabilities in mobility and self-care at a conference venue. The meeting organizer, through an accessibility focal point, is encouraged to communicate in advance of the planned meeting to find about their plan in this regard and reach an agreement on costs.

²⁶ See International Sign training video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xld8cP7rXg>

If participants with disabilities who need those assistants are funded participants, the meeting organizers are encouraged to also fund the assistants.

Before the conference or meeting

- An accessibility focal point of a meeting should check if participants with intellectual/cognitive disabilities need a communication assistant. If needed, examine if the cost of the communication assistant's travel will be covered by a meeting organizer as part of reasonable accommodation.
-

On the day

- When a meeting assistant makes an intervention on behalf of a participant, the Chair should give the floor to the participant, not the communication assistant.

Part 3. Evaluating accessibility

i. Evaluation forms

An evaluation process provides the opportunity to assess any successes or challenges faced in providing accessibility to ESCAP conferences or meetings. It is advised that accessible online evaluation forms are made available to participants directly following the end the conference or meeting.

Sample accessibility evaluation: satisfaction with accessibility facilities and services at ESCAP
(please tick)

1. To what extent did ESCAP facilities and services satisfy your accessibility needs?	(1) Fully	(2) To a great extent	(3) Somewhat	(4) To a lesser extent	(5) Not at all
a) Venue accessibility Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Website Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Digital and print documents Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Accessible service providers (organizer might want to specify SL interpretation, and real-time captioning, and create two separate questions) Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide any additional comments and feedback on the accessibility of the [conference or meeting]:					

Annex I: Sample registration form

This sample form can be embedded into the online registration in the ESCAP Meeting portal. Contact IMCTS for assistance.

Reasonable accommodation request form for persons with disabilities

This form should be completed by participants with disabilities and submitted by [DD/ MM/ YYYY](#).

Notes by the meeting organizer

A. The following services will be provided to all participants whether or not a request for such services has been made through this form. However, you are kindly requested to indicate a need for these services, as the meeting organizer needs to know in advance how many participants have requested for individual services:

- 1) English real-time captioning.
- 2) International Sign interpretation.
- 3) Wheelchair accessible vans to transport participants between airport, hotels and the United Nations Conference Centre.

B. Please be informed that real-time captioning other than English language and sign language interpretation other than in International Sign will not be sponsored by the organizer due to limited resources.

1. NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

2. GOVERNMENT/ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED:

3. COUNTRY (IF APPLICABLE):

4. Please indicate if phone calls or text messaging is the preferred communication method

Contact number Phone / Mobile # text only YES []

SCREENING ON DISABILITY TYPE

5. Please describe what type of disability you have and how it will create barriers to your participation in this meeting:

- Walking
- Seeing
- Hearing
- Speech
- Other

MOBILITY REQUIREMENTS

6. Do you require a wheelchair-accessible vehicle from the airport to your hotel, from hotel to the conference centre, and vice versa?

YES / NO

LANGUAGE AND MEDIA REQUIREMENTS

7. Do you require International Sign interpretation?

YES / NO

8. Do you require English real-time captioning service?

YES / NO

9. Do you require meeting documents in digital files (.doc/.rtf)?

YES / NO

10. Do you require English braille documents?

YES / NO

11. Do you plan to bring with you any assistive devices that the meeting organizer needs to be aware of? If so, please describe in detail in this box.

12. Do you have any other needs, not specified above, that the meeting organizer needs to be aware of? If so, please describe in detail in this box. Please note that we might not be able to satisfy your need to the fullest extent, but we will do our best.

**Thank you for your cooperation.
Submit**

Annex II: Guide on communicating with, and referring to, persons with disabilities

Concept of persons with disabilities

- Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Impairment refers to problems of functions or structure.

Guide on terminology and description of persons with disabilities

- Stress the “personhood”; avoid identifying a person solely in terms of his/her disability.
- Do **not** view or refer to persons with disabilities as victims, “cripples to be pitied”, objects of charity or medical cases.
- Do **not** refer to persons with disabilities in any way that:
 - a) Could be interpreted as dehumanizing, degrading and stigmatizing – this includes conveying a view that disability is a tragedy/disaster/the end of meaningful life and treating **all** adults with disabilities like small children or persons unable to make decisions;
 - b) Focuses on what the person cannot do;
 - c) Describes the person as deformed/ defective/ useless/ somehow not a full human being, somehow “less” than others/ devoid of sexuality;
 - d) Describes them as being a burden on society.
- Do not make gross generalization of persons with disabilities:
 - a) Describe a person with disabilities as an individual, and not as part of a group;
 - b) Just because they have the same impairment, it does not mean that they have exactly same needs and behavioural patterns.

Guide for interaction with persons with disabilities

- When conversing with a wheelchair-user, especially for an extended period of time, it may be advisable to do so from a similar height (that is, to avoid “talking down” to the wheelchair-user).
- When talking with a person who is deaf or a person with hearing impairment, look directly at the person you are conversing with. Do not focus attention on the sign language interpreter.

- When first meeting a blind or visually impaired person it is appropriate to take that person's hand in order to shake it. Furthermore, when walking with a blind or visually impaired person, it is acceptable to offer your elbow for guiding the person. When approaching differences in ground level, it is good to verbalize this, for example: "We will now take two steps down/up". The blind person will sense the change, but it is safe practice to caution verbally as well.

Referring to persons with disabilities

Preferred terminology	Avoid phrases like
Persons with disabilities/ a person with a disability/ (term used in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) A woman/ man with a disability/ disabilities	The disabled/ disabled people or disabled person/ handicapped/ handicapped person/ invalid And acronym "PWD."
Person born with a disability Person with a disability from birth	Birth defects/ deformity
Disability community	Disabled community
Person who is blind (blindness refers to total loss of sight) Person with visual impairment (visual impairment refers to partial loss of sight within a range from slight to severe)	The blind/ the visually impaired
A deaf person / deaf community (deafness refers to total loss of hearing) Person with hearing impairment (hearing impairment refers to partial loss of hearing within a range from slight to severe)	The deaf/ deafmute/ deaf and dumb
Person with a physical disability /person with a mobility impairment / crutch user /person who uses a walker	Cripple/ crippled
Wheelchair user	Confined to a wheelchair/ Wheelchair-bound
Person with cerebral palsy (cerebral palsy may be replaced with the name of another	Afflicted by multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, etc.

Preferred terminology	Avoid phrases like
condition, such as for instance, spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, etc.) Person with multiple disabilities	Suffers from multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, etc.
Seizure	Attack, spells, fits
Person with muscle spasms	Spastic
A person of short stature Little person / little people	Dwarf/ dwarves/ midget(s)
Person with an intellectual disability Persons with learning disabilities Persons with developmental disabilities	Mentally retarded/ slow A retard
Person with a mental health problem Person with schizophrenia	Crazy/ demented/ psychotic/ schizophrenic
Person with Down Syndrome	Mongoloid, mongolism
Accessible seating, parking, washrooms	Handicapped seating, parking, washrooms
Person without a disability Non-disabled person	Normal/ able-bodied (implies that persons with disabilities are abnormal and not able) Healthy (when used for comparing with the "disabled" - Healthy implies that the person with a disability is unhealthy. Many persons with disabilities are in excellent health.)

Annex III: Checklists for ESCAP organizer/division

Please refer to resources and detailed information shared under the MS Team Network for Disability Inclusion Focal Point Network.

1. Key preliminary requirements

Accessibility focal points

- Point of contact for participants with disabilities before, during and after the conference or meeting.
- A meeting organizer has to designate the accessibility focal point at the onset of planning of a meeting. Disability inclusion focal point or its alternate can be the accessibility focal point.
- Be familiar with what accessibility features, services are already available at a conference venue or an online conference set up without incurring any extra costs.
- When sending invitation letters/notices, verify that a request form for accessibility services/reasonable accommodations is included at least three months before the planned meeting.
- Be encouraged to provide International Sign interpretation and real-time captioning.
- Decide on which accessibility services and reasonable accommodations will be provided at the planned meeting based on available budget, pre-existing accessibility features/services, and requests received by prospective participants with disabilities.
- Liaise with the relevant ESCAP division or units regarding the provision of accessibility services and reasonable accommodations.
- Undertake any necessary testing of technologies, equipment and online services.
- Ensure high quality services are provided during the meeting by closely communicating with participants with disabilities in person or through online communication.
- Ensure feedback is received from participants with disabilities after the meeting, in the form of evaluation forms and individual dialogue, to improve on overall quality of accessibility services and reasonable accommodation at meetings.

Budget

- Project possible expenditure for providing accessible services and reasonable accommodation with updated information on available service providers and prices.
- Once decision is made on a package of accessibility services and reasonable accommodation, confirm budget and its sources.

Registration of participants

- Registration forms to be sent to participants and online registration opened well in advance of the conference or meeting.
- Include information on accessibility services to be provided at a meeting regardless of any specific request from prospective participants with disabilities.
- Include option for participants to notify organizers of accessibility requirements.

2. The built environment

Wayfinding and signage

- Provide detailed information of conference and meeting location well in advance.
- Conduct a walkthrough of key areas that will be used by participants with disabilities before sending any invitation to a meeting.
- Consider if additional signage is required.
- Provide wayfinding information and guidance regarding accessibility services and devices available at the Accessibility Centre.

Accessible facilities

- Confirm if any participants require access via the staff and visitor entrance.

Accessibility Centre

- Notify CMU if participants require access to accessible devices from the Accessibility Centre.
- At registration area, provide participants with information of devices and equipment available at the Accessibility Centre.
- [ESCAP Accessibility Centre Rental Request and Waiver of Liability Form](#) should be filled out and shared with participants.

3. Accessible transportation

Wheelchair accessible vans

- Book accessible transportation at least one month in advance of the conference or meeting to ensure availability of the service.
- An accessibility focal point can check with hotels where participants with disabilities are staying to see an accessible van is provided or not, as appropriate.
- If required, send a request for on-site parking allocation to ESCAP Visitors and Security services.
- If required, an accessibility focal point can meet participants at the entrance and show participants the accessible route to the conference or meeting room.

4. Information and communication

Digital and print documents

- Use 'Styles' in Word to create headings and subheadings outlining the text structure.
- Ensure text is a suitable size, font, in mixed-case, and in short and concise phrases.
- Embed hyperlinks directly into text and add a meaningful description.
- Add header rows to tables, and avoid spanned cells and multiple levels of header cells.
- Add Alt (alternative) text to graphics that display information visually
- Write document content that is easier for readers with diverse learning abilities to understand.
- Save and distribute files in Word document, accessible PDF, HTML, and EPUB formats.

PowerPoint

- Use 'Selection Pane' in PowerPoint to order slide content, and provide descriptive and informative titles for all slides.
- Ensure text is a suitable size, font, in mixed-case, and in short and concise phrases.

- All text should be selectable and highlightable and hyperlinks should be embedded in the text.
- Add header rows to tables, and avoid spanned cells and multiple levels of header cells.
- Use high contrast colour and textures to differentiate information.
- Add 'Alt text' to graphics that display information visually
- Captioning and audio transcripts should be included for all video and audio content.
- Animations and transitions on slides should be simple, brief, and manual.
- Save and distribute files in .ppt and ask participants if an alternative format is required.

5. Accessible service providers

Real-time captioning: (human captioners)

- Contact and book captioners at least one month in advance, if possible.
- Real-time captioning should be done by qualified and professional stenographers/captioners.
- When booking a captioning service provider, all relevant information should be provided (often in electronic format). Updated information should be sent to the captioning service provider as soon as possible.
- On the screen, speaker and/or PowerPoint or DVD presentations, the SL interpreter, and captioning should all be visible to the entire audience.
- Captioning team should be positioned to view the proceedings and the screen on which the real-time captioning is being projected.

Real-time captioning: (AI-based)

- Contact IMCTS (<mailto:escap-vc-service@un.org>) for AI-based captioning service at least one month in advance.

Interpretation

- Participants should be asked for their support preferences of their national SL, international SL, and/or real-time captioning services in English on the screen as a supplement to interpreting. Deafblind participants may require a personal interpreter-guide.

- Contact and book interpreters at least one month in advance, if possible.
- Liaise with participant(s), and other relevant deaf organizations/federations to ensure the interpreter meets the needs of the participant(s).
- Ensure that qualified and accredited interpreters are hired.
- Qualified SL interpreters from the Asia-Pacific region should be considered where there are interpreters with international experience.
- Engage the appropriate number of interpreters, taking into consideration the duration of the meeting, side events, and the number of deaf participants.
- All background documents, information documents, draft working documents, presentations and any other substantive materials that will be discussed at the meeting should be provided to the SL interpreters in advance.
- A meeting between the deaf participant(s) and the SL interpreters should be set up in advance.
- Arrange that IS interpreters are invited to a test-run session for online meetings.