



**To:**

Ms Helga Maria Schmid, Secretary-General  
European External Action Service (EEAS)

**CC**

Lotte Knudsen  
Managing Director, Human Rights, Global & Multilateral Issues (EEAS)

Helela Dalli,  
Commissioner for Equality

Josep Borrell  
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy and Security Policy/Vice-President of the  
European Commission

**Brussels, Wednesday 04<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

Ref. EDF-020-23

**RE: Joint letter calling for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the next EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024**

Dear Ms Helga Maria Schmid,

We would like to acknowledge the strong commitment by the European Union (EU) to promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law worldwide. We recognise human rights are at the heart of EU relations with other countries and regions around the world. For this reason, the European Disability Forum (EDF), the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) welcome the commitment of the EU to uphold these values in the next EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024.

The EU and its Member States have ratified the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD). In accordance with Article 4 of the CRPD, the EU and the Member States have an obligation “to adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the CRPD”, including in relation to Article 11 (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies) and Article 32 (International cooperation).

The EU has a responsibility to ensure a systematic approach to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in all EU external action, policies and programmes. This was recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities in the 2015

review of EU's implementation of the CRPD. This includes the EU's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both within the EU through internal policies and worldwide through EU's external policies. It also includes the responsibility to mainstream of the rights of persons with disabilities in all the priorities of the new Commission and in the key related documents and actions (EU-Africa Strategy, the new Green Deal, Equality strategy, the next Gender Action Plan...).

In the upcoming EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, we would like to recommend:

- **A strong collaboration** with organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) worldwide. Persons with disabilities should be seen as experts and partners, not solely as beneficiaries of international cooperation programmes;
- **Specific measures**, aiming to defend, protect, and promote the rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the CRPD, along with disability-related measures under each of the topics covered by the action plan – a twin-track approach;
- The introduction of a **comprehensive accountability** and monitoring system which includes a disability perspective;
- **Quality disaggregated data** with the use of the Washington Group set of questions;
- The use of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) disability inclusion marker** to ensure human rights programming is inclusive;
- Investment in **strengthening the technical capacity of EU staff** – both at headquarters and in the EU Delegations;
- The development of a **network of disability focal points** across EU institutions and throughout EU Delegations;
- **Coherence** between the upcoming European Disability Strategy and the internal and external aspects of the next EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy as well as the next EU Gender Action Plan.
- Attention to opportunities of **accessibility when embracing new technologies**

- Full **inclusion of most-marginalised and under-represented groups**, including women and girls with disabilities and persons with intellectual disabilities
- Recognition of the need for **accessibility and reasonable accommodation** when planning budget and funding priorities

We look forward to our future collaboration and your continued support in promoting the human rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Europe and in the world

With our thanks in advance,

Yours sincerely,



Yannis Vardakastanis  
President  
**European Disability Forum (EDF)**



Ana Lucía Arellano  
Chair  
**International Disability Alliance (IDA)**



Dominic Haslam  
Chair  
**International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)**