

# 13th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

December 1, 2020

Day 2 of the Conference was set up in a round table format with speakers representing governments, private business, non-profits, and initiatives focused on PWD (persons with disabilities), specifically on their right to work in open, inclusive and accessible environments.

## Opening Comments Day 2

**Ambassador Bogyay** - Hungary's Ambassador, Vice Chair of the Conference of Persons with Disabilities.

- The relationship between disability and business is complex and there is sufficient evidence that there are serious gaps for people with disabilities.
- Under the Convention - 184 states/countries are legally-bound to make efforts to enable the inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of everyday life.
- In response to Covid-19, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, released a policy brief highlighting the effect of the pandemic on people with disabilities, focused on addressing current issues and on recovery efforts from this pandemic

## Roundtable Speakers

**Phyllis Choo** - Director of Planning at SG Enable , Singapore - this is an organization that prepares PWD for employment. It also helps employers, by highlighting areas of opportunity, to help people with disabilities.

- Singapore is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- SG Enable is a governmental organization specifically focused on helping PWD. Their focus is empowering PWD to be socially connected to achieve their life goals.
  - Connecting PWD with opportunities in the public, private, and non-profit sectors is their main focus.
- Special education schools have been in place for decades in Singapore, specifically focused on preparing PWD for employment.
  - Students with special needs, including autism have the opportunity to participate in programs that give them real world work exposure.
  - School-to-work Programs in Singapore are 2 year programs providing training with opportunity for job placement after completion.
- SG Enable focuses on building networks to identify opportunities for students.

- Singapore has been funding programs that support people with disabilities in the workforce.
  - For example, if you are a PWD and you earn less than \$2,900/month they will give you a monthly stipend, to help with your cost to live.
  - Employers also receive funds from the government to train employees and provide needed amenities for PWD.
- **Enabling Mark** is a national level accreditation framework for businesses in hiring PWD.
  - Enabling Mark was created in response to employers lacking the competence in hiring PWD and to combat the negative messaging associated with hiring PWD. It also addresses the lack of confidence in creating inclusive workplaces.
  - Enabling Mark held an event where 900 businesses were honored for creating inclusive and accessible workplaces for PWD. This was a huge success as this was a 50% increase from 2017.

#### **Yuval Wagner** - President & Founder at Access Israel Org Accessibility

- He is an Israeli Air Force combat pilot who was injured in a helicopter crash in 1987. It left him paralysed and he was restricted to a wheelchair. He realised the lack of accessibility in Israel for people with disabilities, and started Access Israel, a non-profit organization, in 1999. It works for accessibility to people with disabilities.

#### **Current state in Israel for PWD**

- In support of the 2030 Agenda, there is legislation in Israel enforcing businesses with over 100 employees to hire at least 3% with PWD.
- There are currently some key barriers in Israeli workplaces that make it challenging for PWD, including awareness of the potential of PWD, accessible transportation, accessible workplaces, training for HR recruitment staff, and training for employees. Dealing with these barriers is very important to dealing with employment.
- There needs to be awareness in workplaces, but a special kind of awareness. This awareness needs to be communicated by the PWD themselves and by visual simulations for people without disabilities to understand what it feels like to have a disability.

**Caroline Casey** - Caroline Casey is an award-winning social entrepreneur and founder of #valuable - a catalyst for an inclusion revolution that exists to position disability equally on the global business leadership agenda.

- Her latest initiative, **The Valuable 500**, is an ambitious year-long campaign to get 500 businesses to commit to put disability inclusion on their leadership agendas.
  - The scale of issues for PWD cannot be resolved without businesses at the center.
  - Inclusive business creates inclusive societies.
  - 90% of businesses claim to be passionate about disabilities and inclusion, and only 4% support disability
  - Innovation, insight, and unique market offerings is what PWD brings to business.

- There is a lack of Senior leadership that is committed and involved - 54% of leaders have never had a conversation about PWD in their workforce.
- Leaders make choices and those choices create opportunities.
- We need to shake up and radically transform the business world. This is why the Valuable 500 began... to find 500 leaders that would commit to have conversations at the Executive level about disability inclusion.
- It began as a campaign and has grown into a true movement. They have just signed up their 364th leader/company! Salesforce just hired a Chief Accessibility Officer who reports to the Board of Directors.
- It's very simple, this is not rocket science, we need to collaborate and forge a new way forward. The rule book for diversity and inclusion is being rewritten. Disability is your business, too!

Michelle Burgess  
UN Representative, New York