TASK FORCE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

# BACKGROUND

1. The Human Rights Council Taskforce for Accessibility for persons with disabilities (hereafter referred to as the Task Force) was established to study and submit concrete recommendations on how to enhance accessibility to the Council and its mechanisms for persons with disabilities, including access to its information and communication technology, Internet resources and documents, in accordance with international standards on accessibility for persons with disabilities (paras. 58 and 61 of Council resolution 16/21)..
2. One of the recommendations of the Task Force which is yet to be implemented is the development of an accessibility plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan) by the United Nations Office at Geneva in coordination with OHCHR and persons with disabilities or their representative organizations (see recommendation 30 .b), A/HRC/DEC/19/119). The Task Force suggested that such a Plan should comprise potential financial implications to be considered for inclusion in the regular budget of the United Nations (see recommendation 34, A/HRC/DEC/19/119).
3. The Plan is drawn up in close cooperation with United Nations-wide efforts on accessibility, such as the Strategic Heritage Plan, the United Nations Interdepartmental Task Force on Accessibility, the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its focal point on accessibility. The Plan takes into account priority areas identified through a questionnaire prepared by the Task Force in December 2015 and disseminated widely to Members States, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations, United Nations staff members, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations who have participated in person or have accessed the work of the Council remotely.
4. The Plan sets out priority areas and related actions to address existing barriers preventing persons with disabilities from participating in and accessing the work of the Council and its mechanisms. The Plan also sets out to identify the resources needed, when possible, and the timeline as well as the responsible entity.
5. The Task Force will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Plan by all entities. The Task Force shall involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the monitoring process.
6. The Plan is approved by the Task Force on 15 December 2017. It will be reviewed one year after it has been approved by the Task Force.

# AREA 1: Physical accessibility to the United Nations office at Geneva

## Priority 1: Improving spaces for persons with disabilities

1. **Improving accessibility to the physical environment for persons with disabilities to ensure that they can fully participate in all meetings and events held at the Palais des Nations. . This not only includes participation in disability-specific meetings and events but also access for all permanent delegates, civil society members and UN staff with disabilities that have specific roles in all bodies and meetings at UNOG.**

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. Access to the buildings and indoor facilities is acceptable taking into consideration the age of the buildings. In terms of physical accessibility and access to the buildings, some of the improvements already made at UNOG are as follows. A map has been developed that clearly indicates accessible doors, elevators, and rest rooms. Works to ensure accessibility in compliance with international standards have been completed at doors S1, S2, C21 and A15, a lifting platform has been installed at door S2. UNOG has completed the installation of a new vestibule with automatic doors at the Bar Serpent area, ensuring that the terrace is fully accessible and compliant with international accessibility standards. UNOG has carried out similar works at the main cafeteria. New automatic doors were installed at the UN Medical Service to improve access for daily visitors. 18 elevators (out of a total of 45) in the Palais des Nations have been made accessible, 11 elevators have been equipped with braille keys, and 6 of the 11 elevators have been equipped with audio to announce floors in English and French. UNOG has implemented wheel chair access to 16 restrooms in key areas of the Palais des Nations (including the main cafeteria). UNOG has further improved signage (there are 24 signs indicating accessible restrooms and elevators) throughout the Palais des Nations.
2. In any room of the Palais that has a screen, remote captioning can be displayed, also available through URL and sign language interpreters can be provided upon request, subject to availability of funding. Conference rooms XVII and XX have the capability of providing accessible conference services, i.e., remote captioning, sign language interpretation with a picture-in-picture webcasting through URL (UN Web TV). The accessible services remain available in the room, but in addition, if there is a need for picture-in-picture webcast to film the speaker and the sign language interpreters this needs to be requested, and funds need to be provided. After the SHP implementation, all of the conference rooms will have the capability of providing accessible conference services.

### Maps of the Palais des Nations are available, both online and in the building. However, long distances are to be covered to move from one part of the building to another, and the online maps are not in an accessible format.

### Counter tops in the cafeteria and Serpent Bar, as well as display cases at the library in Palais des Nations remain too high for persons with disabilities. The counter at Bar Serpent is an original building feature that was built with solid marble stone. Technically it may be possible to modify the counter with significant resources. As part of the SHP renovation works, the counter tops of the Cafeteria will be adjusted and made accessible. Other areas will have to be adjusted step by step and when donations are received.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSAL

### Improve the physical accessibility towards the buildings and the access to the buildings by putting benches to rest upon throughout the main access entry points. UNOG will conduct a survey to identify the main entrance points where benches / sofas could be placed inside. Accessible maps should be created and made available on-line, and consider future development of a miniature 3D model with Braille inscriptions on the facilities for persons with visual impairments at Pregny Gate.

### Increase space available for wheelchair users in all conference rooms and ensure that they are being kept available even during busy session times. This will be taken care of through implementation of the SHP.

### Ensure that HRC members and delegates with disabilities can access their designated member state seat no matter where they are located in Room XX. that the short-term solution is to seat a member state with a delegate with a disability closer to the aisle or remove chairs – this should be done without disrupting the overall seating chart of the HRC members and observers. A longer-term solution would be to replace the back row of chairs with removable chairs or move the tables forward to create more space, so delegates can get to their seat with minimal disruption to others. More conference rooms in Palais des Nations need to be made accessible, by improving the layout of sitting arrangements, and by increasing the width of the passage between tables and chairs. The chairs need to be stable without armrests and should not be fixed to the floor. This is also true of room XX, as noted above. The headsets and microphones in conference rooms need to be made easier to use for persons with disabilities, including by including Braille indications on the function of each button on the panel (i.e “volume” , “language”, “microphone on/off”, and so on). This will be taken care of through implementation of the SHP.

### Improve signage in key areas of the building to ensure they are easy to see, in consultation with persons with disabilities. This includes more easily discernible signs pointing to the accessible bathrooms and clearer signs showing where the elevators are, especially when moving between floors in the area around Room XX. The implementation of the SHP will take care of improving certain aspects of the accessible signage, such as implementing indications in Braille at the bottom and top of stair handrails to indicate the floors and implementing guiding strips throughout the building. Other aspects of signage at the Palais will be improved step by step.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. The aspect of accessibility has been fully integrated in the detailed implementation plan of UNOG’s renovation project, the Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP). The project will make all attempts to include the necessary features to eliminate barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from making use of the premises to the degree possible given heritage and budgetary constraints.
2. Prioritized interventions have been integrated into the SHP baseline scope to access the buildings – accessible pathways from the Nations and Pregny gate to the accessible doors and from the existing to the new building are part of the implementation project. All other features to make the Palais even more accessible have been integrated into the voluntary donations booklet.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. The SHP will be fully implemented over the next 6 to 7 years. In the meantime, the separate voluntary donations booklet describes fundraising opportunities for the areas outside the main building, and subject to funding, this can be implemented over the next two years.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR DEPARTMENT

1. UNOG, Division of Administration and Office of the Director-General.

## Priority 2: Improving entry, exit, mobility and evacuation at the Palais de Nations

1. **Improve accessibility to Palais des Nations by public transport and make such information publicly available. Entry to the Palais des Nations should be made fully accessible. Evacuation procedures should be updated and follow accessibility standards, and made widely available for persons with disabilities. . The delegates’ gate at the entrance by the flags at Place de Nations should be accessible for delegates with disabilities at the same hours as the entrance is available for delegates without disabilities.**

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. UNOG, together with OHCHR, has revised its conference registration form to enable persons with disabilities to identify their specific requirements prior to a conference or another event, so that all respective areas of UNOG can plan for the provision of specific services. An accessible pdf UNOG registration form is available on-line in English and French, including in the Annex information for persons with disabilities who may have specific requirements and accommodation in order to fully participate in a conference or event.
2. UNOG’s Security and Safety Service has implemented a standard procedure whereby priority access is automatically provided to persons with disabilities and their accompanying assistants at Pregny Gate. The priority access is indicated by a sign at the gate and, once the access ID is issued, a security officer will direct persons with disabilities to the closest accessible entrance and will also provide them with a map, indicating the location of accessible doors, elevators and restrooms.

### The Annex of the UNOG Conference Registration Form allows persons with disabilities participating in meetings at UNOG to request from UNOG security special permission for door-to-door taxi service or a special vehicle authorisation.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSAL

### The procedure to request accommodation for persons with disabilities participating in meetings needs to be publicized and applied throughout the Secretariat.

### Any paperless admission process for delegates and visitors needs to be accessible for persons with disabilities. UNOG has a new conference registration online platform called "INDICO". INDICO is 80% accessible, with the exception of some pictures. The platform also allows Conference Secretariats to add fields and questions to conference registration forms that inquire of any possible special needs or assistance persons with disabilities might require.

1. Emergency and evacuation procedures and plans need to be updated and made clear for persons with disabilities, including by developing easy-read versions. UNOG Security has put in place an evacuation procedure for persons with disabilities. They have procured a special "Evac Chair" with which they can evacuate persons with reduced mobility. They have prepared a document describing the procedure and have briefed all Security Officers.
2. The delegates entrance/exit by the flags is virtually unusable after hours for delegates with disabilities, as they must rely on a security guard to open the non-turnstile door while non-disabled delegates who participate in late-night negotiations during an HRC session can exit without relying on a guard.
3. New tools of communication need to be developed, such as safety videos, by taking into account persons with disabilities’ requirements and to be made available in accessible formats.
4. Make available a shuttle from Pregny, Nations and Chemin de Fers Gates to door 40, or other internal transportation (such as golf carts-like vehicles that can be used for persons with reduced mobility) for meetings with a high participation of persons with disabilities. There should also be a permanent shuttle available for delegates or UN staff with disabilities that go to the Palais on a regular basis so that they are able to get to their workplace every day not just during meetings with high numbers of persons with disabilities.
5. Purchase 2 additional wheelchairs to have available in case of emergency, or if a delegate or a visitor needs to use it for the day whilst in Palais des Nations.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. No additional resources are needed to publicise the procedure to request reasonable accommodation, however, the Accessibility Focal Points need to ensure that it is applied throughout the Secretariat, and that any paperless admission process is accessible for persons with disabilities.
2. Additional resources will be necessary for producing easy-read formats of evacuation plans, an evacuation video, for making available a shuttle or other internal transportation, and for purchasing 2 additional wheelchairs.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. Timeline of implementation of procedure to request reasonable accommodation and accessibility of paperless admission process is immediately.
2. Making the delegates entrance/exit accessible should be a priority particularly if delegates’ or UN staff badges can be programmed to open the accessible gate entrance/exit. The immediate task is to ensure security guards are posted at that exit later in the evening, particularly when the HRC is in session, and to ensure that they are aware of the need to open the door when delegates with disabilities are exiting the building.
3. Discussions are already underway to update emergency and evacuation procedures and producing an evacuation video like the one shown in planes, to be shown prior to meetings in Palais des Nations, on screens around the building, and made widely available, and timeline for implementation is over the next two years.
4. As for making available a shuttle or other internal transportation and for purchasing 2 additional wheelchairs these need to be further explored.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON/DEPARTMENT

1. OHCHR and UNOG for publicizing and monitoring application of procedure to request reasonable accommodation, and accessibility of paperless admission process.
2. UNOG Security for updating emergency and evacuation procedures.
3. UNOG and OHCHR for making available a shuttle at meetings with a high participation of persons with disabilities and for purchasing 2 additional wheelchairs.

# AREA 2: Make the work of the Council and its mechanisms accessible

## Priority 1: Conduct accessibility training

### UNOG is working with OHCHR on the organization of awareness-raising sessions for staff at large to ensure that accessibility is included in the day-to-day work of the organization. Physical access of the Council for delegates and other Council participants with disabilities is addressed in the previous two sections.

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. One awareness-raising workshop for staff at UNOG and OHCHR was organised in 2015 and received excellent feedback by participants.
2. UNOG and OHCHR have explored with UNITAR whether the on-line training “The human-rights based approach to disability” can be rolled out on a wider scale. Given its delivery methodology which includes both on-line and in person training, this training can only be proposed to small groups at a time. This should also include the types of roles persons with disabilities play in the UNOG system (e.g. HRC delegates for HRC members and observers, civil society members, UN staff, etc).
3. Security personnel and staff at large are not fully trained on how to assist persons with disabilities in their daily work, and/or how to direct them to existing procedures, services and facilities. This includes permanent UN staff or delegates with disabilities who serve in more permanent roles at UNOG.
4. Staff working on documentation are not fully aware of what makes documents accessible and how documents can be made accessible. The United Nations procedure for formatting and preparing official documents (i.e. macros, etc.) is not fully accessible, as documents, even if in Word, are not indexed.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSALS

1. Develop and make mandatory for all Secretariat staff at UNOG and OHCHR, especially those who are the first point of contact for delegates or visitors (UN security, UN guides, conference officers) an online training course on accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities, in English and French, by using existing capacity for the substance of the training, including OHCHR staff working on the rights of persons with disabilities. The training course should be complemented by reinforcing the capacity of Accessibility Focal Points who are strategically placed in each Division or Department of the Secretariat. Accessibility Focal Points need be trained on accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities and to be equipped with tools and knowledge to receive feedback, and provide guidance to staff members, delegates or visitors.
2. The training should include a part on accessibility of documentation and of public websites or web platforms to ensure that information is made accessible at the initial conception and drafting stage.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. Resources are required to develop the mandatory on-line training in English and French. Although OHCHR has in-house capacity for the substance of the training, additional resources will need to be identified to hire a project manager to lead and coordinate.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. The final product, online training course, in English and French would take one year from conception to end product.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON/DEPARTMENT

1. OHCHR and UNOG.

## Priority 2: “Accessible-only” Secretariat document policy

### All documents emanating from the substantive Secretariats should be released and distributed in electronic accessible format (Word is the preferred file format) and all documents and information posted on the website or other web platforms should also be in accessible format. Each image must be accompanies with its corresponding title/description which should be short and concise. Video or audio files need to be accompanied by a transcript in Word of the sound track, or of the multimedia presentation. Videos need to include synchronized subtitles for all speech (subtitles should be in white text on black background to avoid contrast problem).

### The substantive Secretariats should ensure accessibility of Word documents by using best practices, such as tagging titles.

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. The Human Rights Council Secretariat only shares electronically attachments in word accompanying non-accessible pdf documents. Pdf conversions from Word documents are not accessible. Any videos need to be captioned and photographs need to include an explanation of what the photograph represents.
2. In the context of the policy “greening OHCHR”, many meetings have become increasingly paperless over the past few years. The Extranet of the Council provides an excellent platform not only to avoid the waste of paper, but also to promote accessibility to the work of the Council. Most documents posted on the Extranet of the Council have been made accessible, including the draft lists of speakers for NGOs and NHRIs, draft resolutions, voting information and PBIs. The Secretariat is currently looking into making all documents fully accessible.
3. Delegations are increasingly using accessible electronic versions of their statements to be put on the extranet. There is a general lack of awareness about what constitutes an “accessible” document.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSALS

1. Establish an “accessible-only” policy for the Council, its mechanisms, and all other public meetings at UNOG according to which only accessible documents will be shared electronically and posted on the website and extranet. In practical terms, delegations need to be sensitised about accessibility of documents. All delegations and stakeholders wishing to have their oral statements posted on the HRC Extranet, will need to upload or have uploaded a Word document or accessible PDF. Documents provided in hard-copy or scanned, are not accessible and therefore will not be posted.
2. Establish, monitor and implement a UNOG-wide secretariat policy to share electronically attachments in accessible word accompanying non-accessible pdf documents and to publish only accessible information/documentation on UNOG and OHCHR public websites.
3. The United Nations official documents need to be fully accessible electronically so as to be easily readable through “text to speech” software.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. Accessibility Focal Points to serve for outreach, feedback, monitoring and implementation.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. Immediately.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON/DEPARTMENT

1. OHCHR and UNOG.

# AREA 3: Accessible information and communication technology

## Priority 1: Establish an “accessibility centre” or other information and communication technology solutions that may be more relevant

1. **Establish either an accessibility centre or other information and communication technology solutions that will provide flexible features to enable persons with disabilities to move and work independently inside the Palais des Nations, e.g. additional multisensory maps, sound beacons or the development of an accessible mobile application for way finding or by easily connecting personal devices.**

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. The Accessibility Centre established at UNHQ in New York is considered an excellent resource centre for persons with disabilities who participate in meetings and conferences. The establishment of this centre is considered to be cost-effective and flexible enough to enable those who would otherwise not be able to access the technology they need, with tools that can support their participation in the work of the United Nations bodies and mechanisms. However, technology may be become obsolete and sustainable and long-term solutions need to be identified.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSALS

1. Explore the establishment of an Accessibility Centre at UNOG where, by providing it with technology tools, hardware and software for persons with disabilities can be made available. The maintenance and updating of the tools and a helpdesk support function should also be included. As an alternative, other information and communication technology solutions should also be explored.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. One-off ear-marked donation to establish the Accessibility Centre, and funds for maintenance and upgrading of hardware and software. A separate voluntary donations booklet for fund-raising purposes has been produced by UNOG. In the alternative, funds for other information and communication technology solutionsneed to be identified.
2. Trained staff, including IT staff, to be available to provide assistance when required.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. The SHP will be fully implemented over the next 6 to 7 years. In the meantime, funds for other information and communication technology solutionsneed to be identified.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR DEPARTMENT

1. UNOG, Division of Administration and Office of the Director-General.

## Priority 2: Make meetings of the Council fully accessible for all

1. **Need to have accessible registration tools for participants, capacity for IS interpretation, captioning, easy to read, and braille, so that meetings and side events can be made accessible.**

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. The meetings of the Council and its mechanisms are still not fully accessible for all. For the Council; only 1 or 2 panels per sessions are made accessible, through captioning, international sign interpretation, webcast, and possibility to print out oral statements in Braille. Making panels accessible in an ad hoc manner and based on left-over extra-budgetary resources is not cost-effective, nor predictable.
2. Currently, the Council Secretariat is proactively advising States proposing draft texts mandating panels to include in the draft language making the panel accessible, so that accessibility services are included in the PBI statements.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSALS

1. Make all meetings of the Council accessible through international sign and captioning.
2. Alternative short-term measure, captioning in English to be provided for all meetings of the Council, and the quality of the captioning must be improved.
3. UNOG to examine feasibility of developing in-house capacity to provide international sign interpretation and/or captioning as service provider with a view to reducing the current cost of such services which are outsourced. An in-depth feasibility study would need to be performed in order to determine the type and amount of training required for the development of in-house capacity to the level of being able to provide international sign language interpretation as well as captioning services on a regular basis. Cost-benefit analysis would also need to be performed to determine the overall impact of the development project and whether the project would indeed reap the benefits in the long term.
4. Need clear and consistent information or guidelines regarding the cost and requirements for organising accessible meetings or events at the Palais des Nations.

### Captioning services and sign language interpretation need to be more readily available for all public meetings and the quality of the captioning must be improved. UNOG has ensured that the level of captioning quality provided is that of a high standard by securing the services of the industry leader in providing real-time captioning and CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation) services. The currently secured captioning company only hires caption writers that are certified and recognized by the National Court Reporters Association.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. Current estimated cost is approximately USD13,200 for making a three-hour meeting accessible through international sign interpretation, captioning, webcast, and printing of oral statements in Braille.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. Subject to funding, over the next two years.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON/DEPARTMENT

1. UNOG Division of Conference Management.

# AREA 4: Funding accessibility measures

## Priority 1: Advocate for inclusion of resources for accessibility in regular UN budget

1. **The Council by decision 19/119 decided to consider, at its twenty-first session, the task force recommendations with the modalities described in the report annexed to the decision that cannot be implemented from within existing resources, in the context of the preparations for the 2014-2015 regular budget biennium, and to transmit thereafter the task force recommendations together with relevant programme budget implications to the General Assembly for its consideration. This remains to be implemented.**

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. At the moment, only the sessions of the CRPD, the interactive dialogue of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities and the annual discussion on the rights of persons with disabilities in the Council, include provisions in the UN regular budget for accessible services, such as closed captioning, sign interpretation, and access to documentation in Braille.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSALS

1. The meetings of the Council and its mechanisms must be made accessible and efforts should be deployed to achieve this. Initial steps that may be taken is to develop best practices with minimum standards of accessibility to be followed by the Council and its mechanisms and reflecting the cost of complying to those minimum standards into the UN budget. Pending dedicated resources from the UN budget on accessibility, the proposal is to seek donations to satisfy requests for reasonable accommodation to enable participants to access meetings or the work of the Council and its mechanisms.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. Donations are needed for responding positively to the requests for reasonable accommodation by participants to meetings of the Council and its mechanisms, which cannot currently be met.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. As soon as donations are received.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON/DEPARTMENT

1. UNOG and OHCHR.

## Priority 2: Include accessibility criteria and universal design in procurement and other processes

1. **Need to follow the principles of accessibility and universal design to create more inclusive and accessible environments usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines “universal design” as 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.**

### RATIONALE/WHERE WE ARE AT

1. The Task Force has been informed that the general criteria of accessibility, equality and non-discrimination, and universal design are not systematically used in procurement processes, for example the recent refurbishment of the cafeteria and the new tactile coffee machines in building E of Palais des Nations.

### WHAT’S NEEDED/PROPOSALS

1. An internal review of all OHCHR and UNOG policies and practices to ensure that they promote accessibility and are non-discriminatory towards persons with disabilities.
2. Collect and document best practices to collaborate with and support other UN agencies and organs in becoming more accessible.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

1. No new resources. It is important that resources are not spent to create more barriers for persons with disabilities.

### BY WHEN CAN THIS BE DONE?

1. Over the next 2 years.

### RESPONSIBLE PERSON/DEPARTMENT

1. UNOG and OHCHR.

### End