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Representatives of 70 stakeholders participated in the engagement and partnership meeting for the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities at UNV headquarters. (UNV, 2017)

Leaving no one behind: UNDP/UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities

UNDP and UNV hosted an engagement and partnership meeting for the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities at UNV headquarters in Bonn, Germany. Some 70 participants took part, representing a diverse group of stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, disabled people organizations, academic institutions, foundations, private sector and UN agencies.

The meeting provided a unique opportunity to share and discuss best practices in supporting capacity development for young professionals with disabilities, to identify areas for collaboration and to exchange ideas on creating disability-sensitive and inclusive workplaces. Fruitful discussion among the 70 participants also generated practical tips to ensure the successful implementation of the UNDP/UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities.

“Inclusion of persons with disabilities is one of the biggest human rights issues of our time. Persons with disabilities experience inequalities, as well as stigma, abuse and prejudice. UNV will work in partnership with UNDP to establish a solid foundational structure for scalable engagement of youth with disabilities in the United Nations. We aspire to bring in new talents to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. —Toily Kurbanov, UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator

Yet the focus was on moving swiftly to action. “Enough talking,” emphasized Dr Heike

Kuhn of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, addressing the meeting. “We want to see results and I feel this urgency.” Dr Kuhn presented Germany’s Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, outlining insights and lessons learned, and asserted, “The issue is ‘nothing about us without us’. You have to have persons with disabilities at the table – they have different abilities and they bring all of this power, innovation, and energy.”

“ Young people with disabilities from the global South are among the most marginalized and underrepresented populations in the world. We must recognize that they can be fundamental drivers of innovation and change. —Lykke Andersen, Manager of the UNDP Junior Professional Officer Service Centre

This Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities is designed to train young persons with disabilities in a UNDP office to develop their capacities and eventually promote their inclusion into the workforce of the international development sector. This was welcomed by Rachel Kachaje of the South African Forum of the Disabled, who asserted, “People need to understand that disability is not equal to inability. Education is key to ensuring successful futures and livelihoods for young people with disabilities.” In Africa, she explained, no more than 5-10 per cent of people with disabilities attended school.

This programme also aspires to build a solid pipeline of highly qualified professionals with disabilities who can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local, national and global levels.

“From a development perspective,” explains Lykke Andersen, “building the employability of young persons with disabilities, allowing people with disabilities full access to the labour market and supporting their inclusion in the workplace can have a huge impact on poverty reduction and also on the achievement of the SDGs.”

Initially the programme will recruit young professionals with disabilities for 12-months assignments in UNDP country, regional or headquarters offices. Participants will gain hands-on experiences and grow their professional expertise in the thematic areas related to the SDGs, multilateral development cooperation, as well as programme and operations management. They will also build their leadership skills and develop capacities in their field of expertise.

“ We have come a long way on the gender front. Fifty years ago, a

“ room of people like this probably met to discuss equal opportunities for women in the workforce of the United Nations. It is now upon us to use our experiences to increase opportunities for brilliant young people who have disabilities to serve and advance in development.
—Liz Huckerby, UNDP Chief of Integrated Talent Management

With the commitment to “leave no one behind”, UNDP and UNV “walk the talk” through joint efforts to ensure the inputs and perspective of persons with disabilities and support the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 4: Quality education](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)