INTRODUCTION

Despite global progress and commitments such as the CRPD, **persons with disabilities**, along with women and youth, remain systematically excluded from key sectors.

The D20 aligns with the vision of the 2025 South African G20 Presidency, which is *"Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability".*

The D20 has also strategically aligned itself with the C20 Engagement Group.

The work of the D20 is grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities during the 2025 workstream engagements, and has been guided by international and regional legal obligations.

The D20 acknowledges that the estimated 1.3 billion persons with disabilities globally, including millions in the Global South, are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, exclusion from education, systemic inequalities, and the climate crisis, yet remain powerful agents of change and innovation.

The D20 also reaffirms the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the African Disability Protocol, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the principle of *"leaving no one behind."*

1. SOLIDARITY: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE

Solidarity requires strong safety nets, inclusive social protection, and recognition of caregivers.

We therefore urge G20 members to:

1.1 **Poverty Reduction:** Ensure procurement quotas for disability-owned enterprises; create mentorship and grant schemes for disabled entrepreneurs in agriculture and beyond; and integrate inclusive agricultural training and finance models.

1.2 **Social Protection:** Extend social security and health coverage to informal workers; create accessible registration systems; strengthen labour inspectorates; and fund targeted vocational programmes.

1.3 **Health & Care:** End institutionalisation of persons with intellectual disabilities; guarantee supported decision-making; integrate mental health into primary health care; subsidise assistive technologies; and expand rehabilitation services within universal health coverage.

1.4 **Care Systems**: Recognise and support the work of caregivers, particularly women, through social grants, subsidies, and respite services.

2. EQUALITY:

This demands dismantling barriers to education, employment, digital economies, political representation, gender equity, and innovation.

We therefore urge G20 members to:

2.1 Inclusive Education:

Enact laws prohibiting exclusion of children with disabilities; revise Education White Paper 6 and its implementation strategy to transition from the "full-service school" model to one where all ordinary schools are adequately resourced and supported to become inclusive centres of learning; ensure compulsory inclusive pedagogy in teacher training; Integrate AI-powered tools in classrooms to enhance accessibility (e.g., AI-driven real-time captioning, text-to-speech, speech-to-text, sign language recognition, and personalised adaptive learning platforms); **establish a dedicated National Inclusive Education Fund** specifically to finance teacher training, accessible infrastructure upgrades, and the provision of assistive technologies and specialised resources; and establish oversight bodies led by OPDs.

2. EQUALITY:

2.2. Employment:

Fast-track disability rights legislation; revise labour codes to enforce reasonable accommodation; create youth employment funds; embed quotas for disabled workers in public schemes; and prioritise disability-owned enterprises in procurement.

2.3. Digital Inclusion:

Remove import duties on assistive technologies; establish national digital inclusion indices; mandate accessibility audits; fund digital literacy and innovation hubs; and embed disability leadership in digital innovation.

2.4. Political & Civic Representation:

Reform electoral systems to guarantee representation; establish quotas for candidates with disabilities; support OPD participation; and mandate inclusive recruitment in civil service.

2.5. Women & Gender Equity:

Embed disability in gender equality frameworks; close wage gaps; address GBV against women with disabilities; and build leadership pathways.

2.6. Trade, Science & Innovation:

Embed disability in trade agreements and value chains; fund disability-led research; apply universal design in innovation; and ensure OPDs are part of research governance structures.

3. Sustainability:
Trade and Sustainable Development, Climate, Energy, Disaster Risk Reduction, Tourism and Resilient Communities

Sustainability demands that disability inclusion be mainstreamed in climate adaptation, just transitions, resilient infrastructure, and sustainable industries.

We therefore urge G20 members to:

3.1. Tourism:

Mandate accessibility audits for all infrastructure; establish a national fund for accessibility retrofits; create tourism certification schemes; set national standards for transport accessibility; and ensure cultural and heritage sites are accessible and co-created with OPDs.

3.2. Agriculture & Food Systems:

Promote climate-smart, accessible farming; invest in inclusive technology hubs and renewable energy for agriculture; support carbon credit schemes for smallholder farmers; and scale disability-inclusive climate finance.

3. Sustainability:
Trade and Sustainable Development, Climate, Energy, Disaster Risk Reduction, Tourism and Resilient Communities

3.3. Energy Transition:
Guarantee accessibility in all energy infrastructure; ensure just transition policies are disability-inclusive; and provide financing for resilience programmes led by communities.

3.4. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):
Ensure accessible early warning systems and evacuation centres; collect disability-disaggregated data; train emergency responders; and institutionalise OPD leadership in DRR governance.

ADDITIONAL PILLARS AND COMMITMENTS:

4.   HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Health is foundational to dignity, participation, and resilience. It must be inclusive by design.

We urge G20 members to:

4.1.   Mental Health:

Integrate mental health into universal health coverage, ensuring community-based, rights-based care models.

4.2.   Intellectual Disabilities:

Replace institutional care with inclusive education, supported employment, and community living models.

4.3.   Rehabilitation & Assistive Technology:

Scale up AT access; subsidise costs; strengthen rehabilitation workforces; and establish innovation funds to drive affordable AT solutions.

4.4.   Intersectionality in Health:

Ensure health policies address the specific needs of women, youth, and rural populations with disabilities.

5. GOVERNANCE, REPRESENTATION & JUSTICE

True inclusion requires accountability, representation, and access to justice.
We urge G20 members to:

5.1. Political Representation:

Guarantee participation of persons with disabilities in parliaments, councils, and political parties; establish quotas; and finance inclusive electoral participation.

5.2. Public Administration:

Mandate recruitment and retention of civil servants with disabilities; provide reasonable accommodation; and promote leadership roles.

5.3. Access to Justice:

Train judiciary, police, and prosecutors on disability rights; ensure accessible procedures; expand legal aid; and establish independent complaints mechanisms.

5.4. National Disability Coordination:

Establish cross-departmental coordination bodies with budgetary power; ensure OPDs lead monitoring and accountability; and integrate disability into national planning frameworks.

EMERGING CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES:

1. INCONSISTENT TRAINING AND LACK OF DISABILITY AWARENESS

Problem statement: Across sectors, there's a significant lack of knowledge and consistent training on disability awareness and inclusion.

Cross-sectoral impact:

Inclusive pedagogy is not compulsory in pre-service teacher training, leaving educators underprepared and often overwhelmed and under-supported in classrooms.

Attitudinal barriers persist, with some educators still believing learners with disabilities should belong in special schools, reinforcing the systemic exclusion and a significant gap between policy intentions and daily realities.

The lack of training, combined with large class sizes, makes it impossible to attend to diverse learning needs, placing the full responsibility for inclusion on the individual educator instead of transforming the broader system.

1. INCONSISTENT TRAINING AND LACK OF DISABILITY AWARENESS

With regard to tourism, high staff turnover and a lack of disability-specific training contribute to exclusion.

In agriculture, extension services and training programmes are rarely inclusive.

In employment, graduates often enter the workforce without knowledge of how to accommodate persons with disabilities.

Employers often engage in "tick-box" diversity hiring rather than meeting skill needs.

Despite the exponential growth of digital economies, barriers experienced by persons with disabilities include inaccessible infrastructure, unaffordable assistive technology, weak enforcement of accessibility standards, and low digital literacy.

2. PHYSICAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE BARRIERS

Problem statement: Physical environments and infrastructure across various sectors are not designed with universal accessibility in mind, creating significant barriers to participation.

Cross-sectoral Impact:

School infrastructure often fails to meet universal design standards, and learners with disabilities often begin accessing education far too late because schools lack basic infrastructure and assistive devices.

Despite the South African Schools Act mandating the provision of accessible facilities, a crucial point is that there is currently "no law that prohibits exclusion of children with disabilities from schools," reinforcing the need for system-wide reform and infrastructure upgrades.

In terms of tourism, the most luxurious properties and transport systems still lack basic accessibility features such as ramps and accessible entrances.

In agriculture, basic tools and infrastructure are rarely designed for persons with disabilities.

Employment: Inaccessible workplaces and a lack of willingness to offer reasonable accommodation systematically lock qualified young people with disabilities out of the workforce.

3. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND INACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

Problem statement: Digital platforms, websites, and e-learning technologies across all sectors are often inaccessible, failing to comply with universal design standards.

Cross-sectoral Impact

Digital Barriers: Learners with disabilities face digital barriers due to inaccessible e-learning platforms and a lack of early digital support.

Inaccessible digital platforms and learning environments limit participation in increasingly technology-enabled classrooms.

In the workforce, inaccessible recruitment systems, poorly designed AI, and the absence of disability representation in technology development create significant exclusion.

Regarding tourism, digital booking barriers on sites such as Booking.com exclude persons with disabilities from the very first point of engagement, impacting the digital economy.

In Agriculture, the lack of Sign Language or accessible information excludes farmers from support systems.

4. EXCLUSION FROM DECISION-MAKING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Problem statement: Persons with disabilities are consistently excluded from the very spaces where policies and plans are developed, leading to systemic invisibility and a disconnect between rhetoric and practice.

Cross-sectoral impact:

Despite strong legal frameworks, such as the CRPD and South Africa's White Paper 6, there is a "policy-practice gap" where frameworks exist, but implementation remains weak.

A lack of disability-disaggregated data makes learners and workers invisible in planning and accountability systems.

Experts with disabilities in tourism & Agriculture are often excluded from procurement opportunities and industry design processes.

CONCLUSION:

The Disability 20 commits to continuing to work as a collaborative and critical partner to the G20 and its engagement groups, ensuring that these commitments translate into time-bound national action plans. It is envisaged that these plans will be monitored through disability-disaggregated data dashboards, overseen by multi-stakeholder bodies led by OPDs.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

The transition to an equitable, sustainable, and resilient society requires a deliberate commitment to ensure that no one is left behind. This is not just a rights-based imperative, but also a significant economic and social opportunity. Investing in inclusive education and employment is a powerful engine for progress, as it unlocks the full potential of all members of society.