# High Level Dialogue
## Making Empowerment a Reality – Accessibility for All

Plenary session from 9.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.
27 May 2015

**Session description:**

The high level dialogue will provide space for open consultations and encourage constructive dialogue on the thematic aspect – information accessibility – of the WSIS Action Line C3 Access to Information and Knowledge, with special focus on access to information and knowledge using accessible and inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The plenary session will build on the outcomes of the recently held consultations[1], research findings and explore ways how concrete recommendations could be incorporated within the WSIS's framework on the usage of inclusive and accessible ICTs by persons with disabilities to access information and knowledge. The high level dialogue also aims to raise awareness about disability issues in a cross-disciplinary, cross-sectorial manner and draw attention to an urgent need of mainstreaming accessibility of ICTs for persons with disabilities in the post-2015 development agenda. Furthermore, the plenary session will build synergies and contribute to the ongoing discussions of other WSIS Action Lines such as C7 E-Learning.

UNESCO, as facilitator of the WSIS Action Line C3 – Access, will bring together high level panelists who are actively engaged in the international cooperation, policy making, civil society and human rights activities, and industrial development in order to share their experiences in the area of digital inclusion and contribute to shaping the Action Line's future.

Since the adoption of the WSIS Action Plan in 2003 and Tunis Declaration in 2005, the issues of access to information and knowledge for marginalized groups were systematically addressed by various stakeholders. Numerous examples of effective usage of ICTs proved that accessible and inclusive ICTs are means to improve the life of persons with disabilities. The adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in 2006 by the UN General Assembly provided a comprehensive normative framework for disability-inclusive development.

Although the commitment of the UN and States Parties of the UN CRPD to the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion are implied in all aspects of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and articulated in other international documents, this does not automatically result in their inclusion in either general or targeted efforts to meet MDGs and integration into the national information and technology-related policies, practices and processes.

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[1] Outcome document of the international Conference "From Exclusion to Empowerment: Role of ICTs for Persons with Disabilities" organized from 24 to 26 November 2014 in New Delhi, India. http://www.unesco-ci.org/ict-pwd/

Despite technological progress, many persons with disabilities experience a variety of barriers to access information available in cyberspace, particularly websites and e-resources, use mobile phones and applications, television, personal computers, tables and others. The key challenge still remains as of how to take the situations of persons with disabilities fully into account by mainstreaming a disability perspective in all planned development actions, including legislation, policies and programmes, industrial development in all areas and at all levels of development.

**Names of the organizer(s) of the session:**

- UNESCO
- Governments
- Civil society
- IT industry

**Names and affiliations of the panelists**

Chair: Mr Indrajit Banerjee, Director, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO

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