

I. Implementing and Improving Infrastructure Development in Cities for People with Physical Disabilities

Across the globe, approximately one billion people live with a disability that prevents them from accessing parts of the world that are built to accommodate nondisabled persons. The United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 9 is: “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.” In 1982, the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (WPA) convened and wrote resolution 37/52, which emphasizes the importance of “equalization of opportunities” for people with physical disabilities. Persons with disabilities should be given the same opportunities as individuals without them. In 1992, the WPA declared the decade of 1983-1992 as the United Nations Decade of the Disabled Persons via General Assembly resolution 37/52. In 1993, directly following the Decade of the Disabled Persons, resolution 48/96, referred to as the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities, was passed. This resolution advocated for ethical and governmental action by member states to tangibly obtain equalization within their nations for persons with disabilities. More recently, in 2006 a meeting of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was convened and was the first landmark meeting regarding the inequality of accessibility available to persons with disabilities and transitioned the argument surrounding treatment of those with disabilities from one of charity to one of human rights. In the annals of implementing and improving infrastructure development in urban areas, the United Nations’ New Urban Agenda has several key goals: promoting accessibility as a vital component in urban planning, design, development, and policies; accessible transportation, public spaces, and public services; and accessible information and communication technologies (ICT) for constructing inclusive smart cities and communities. Smart cities are the urban areas of the future, and accessibility is vital for the incorporation of disabled persons in changing, modern societies.

A smart city is defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) as, “an innovative city that uses ICTs and other means to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operation and services and competitiveness, while ensuring that it meets the needs of the present and future generations with respect to economic, social and environmental aspects.” According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Asia-Pacific region has a population of about 690 million people with some form of disability. These individuals endure many obstacles when it comes to being an active member in society, especially in regard to education, jobs, and opportunities to obtain wealth. The UN ECOSOC refers to some solutions for improving infrastructure in cities like wheelchair ramps, pavements with braille blocks, and text-to-speech software. The Asean Smart Cities Network aims to ensure that smart cities are planned and developed to be more inclusive and universally accessible. Additionally, the Asia-Pacific region was the first in the world to develop a regional version of the United Nations Decade of Persons with Disabilities in 1993 and to dedicate a second from 2013-2022.

The People's Republic of China feels that the actions taken in the Asia-Pacific region should be acknowledged by the United Nations, as there have been many strides made in favor of innovating cities to promote inclusivity of those with disabilities. The People's Republic of China would like to emphasize the UN SDG 9, and remind fellow member states the importance of inclusivity when considering innovative technology. All member states, as they strive to increase development within their nations, should incorporate the UN SDG 9 in their urban planning and policies. China has done so by enacting the 13th Five-Year Plan, which addresses physical barriers encountered by people with disabilities within their environment, including housing in rural and urban areas, transportation, media, finances, and education. Member states should create their own short-term plans regarding smart city development in rural and urban areas and should include innovative technologies that incorporate persons with physical disabilities. The People's Republic of China would like to see fellow members nations incorporate urban and rural planning guidelines to facilitate the incorporation of infrastructure aimed to grant accessibility of disabled persons within their nations by 2030. The modern era has no room for exclusion of persons possessing

disabilities, and as member states of this United Nations, it is the duty of all delegates to ensure there are protections for their people.

II. Addressing Challenges to Freedom of Expression and Information in the 21st Century

Freedom of expression and the way that information is disseminated has changed with the rise of the internet. In the 21st century the internet is the fastest and most efficient way to communicate expression and information around the globe. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted in 1966, describe the freedom of expression as including the freedom to seek and receive information thorough any media. It is easy to propagate information around the world with modern technology. In many cases, this information is false, misleading, or harmful to society and there are few consequences for those who choose to propagate such information. Because of this, it is important that individual states be allowed the right to exercise regulations on the flow of information in ways that they believe to be in the best interest of their citizens.

While the People's Republic of China recognizes the importance of States being connected through access to the internet and being part of the flow of information, it needs to be acknowledged that States are sovereign entities and need to be given the freedom to enforce their own laws and protect their own citizens. While the United Nations acknowledges instances in which freedom of expression and information should be restricted, as are listed in the ICCPR, currently and as technology continues to advance, it is essential that there be a proper balance between the availability of information and State security. The ICCPR lists the instances in which the State can legitimately limit the freedom of information as being for the protection of the rights and reputations of others, in cases pertaining to national security, to preserve public order, when there is a risk to public health, and for moral reasons. The uninhibited flow of information is unrealistic and poses a threat to State sovereignty, as well as to the safety of citizens in situations such as those involving hate speech and other threatening expressions.

The People's Republic of China is dedicated to the development of sustainable industries, innovation, and infrastructure, as included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including the spread of technological and digital infrastructure, that allows greater worldwide access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the internet. Since 2015, the People's Republic of China has invested billions of dollars in digital infrastructure across Asia and Africa. This infrastructure has enabled countries throughout Asia and Africa to advance their economies as a result of becoming incorporated into the technological world. Not only has The People's Republic of China aided in the technical development of this infrastructure, but also aided in the training of local workers to provide upkeep and security to these systems, which also results in economic growth for these regions. By developing these common technology standards, it improves efficiency and allows for stronger protection of information from hackers and data breaches. The People's Republic of China has also been a leader in the development of 5G, which it has been working to integrate into these countries, as well as others.

As the number of people around the globe who have access to the internet rises, the opportunities for hackers to take advantage of internet uses has as risen as well. This is an issue that affects all States on some level, and while countries that have had access to these technologies for a longer time have been able to develop security systems and strategies on their own, often as the need arises, it is in the interest of all United Nations Member States to provide security support for these less developed countries entering into this sphere, as they are particularly vulnerable to threats and outside influences. When information on the internet puts States and their people at risk, freedom of expression and the freedom of information are both undermined, as it robs people of their ability to feel safe and confident using these technologies.

The freedom of expression is essential to the exercise of other rights that are recognized by the United Nations. As a world leader in ICT exports, and a major investor in digital infrastructure, the People's Republic of China is committed to working with other United Nations member states to continue to develop ICT infrastructure and the international laws surrounding freedom of expression and information, as well as ensuring that the commitments to the ICCPR are upheld by the States that have ratified it. It is also a priority to ensure that all States that have access to these technologies have the tools and training to protect themselves from outside forces, hackers, and false information.

