



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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Agenda Item: 8

**Summary of the Draft Report - Advancing  
Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Internet  
Economy in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Purpose: Information

Submitted by: China



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## Summary

Advancing Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Internet Economy in the Asia-Pacific Region

### Background

According to the 2011 World Report on Disability jointly issued by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, the population of persons with disabilities worldwide exceeded 1 billion, accounting for 15% of the world population. Around 650 million persons with disabilities lived in the Asia-Pacific region. The number of people suffering from disabilities will keep rising, along with the population aging and the growing number of patients with chronic diseases worldwide. Compared with the able-bodied population, persons with disabilities are usually confronted with various internal and external constraints, including relatively harsh living conditions, lower education levels and difficulties in finding jobs or starting businesses.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit was held at UN's headquarters in New York on September 25, 2015. The summit officially adopted the outcome document ratified by 193 member states - *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereinafter, the "Development Agenda"). The Development Agenda, which involves disability issues for the first time, has become one of the primary references in the affairs concerning disability issues in the international community. The Development Agenda places emphasis on ensuring the rights and enhancing the abilities of vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities, pledges to provide inclusive and equal education for those who live in difficult conditions, including persons with disabilities, and facilitates their integration into social, economic and political life. The Development Agenda also points out that, with regards the goals of the development, by 2030 equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, will be ensured, full and productive employment with decent work conditions as well as equal pay for equal work for persons with disabilities will be effected, and accessible public transport with safe, inclusive and barrier-free green and public spaces for all, including persons with disabilities, will be provided.

As the top-level organization for regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, APEC has made sustained and positive contributions to the development of persons with disabilities to integrate themselves into the economic society. In November 2014, the event on the theme of "Equal Access, Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities" was sponsored by the China Disabled Persons' Federation in Beijing during the APEC Economic Leaders' Week. Representatives from 21 APEC economies attended the event. During the event, the APEC economies published the "Joint Initiative on Equal Access and Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities." In May 2015, China, US, Australia, Peru, Malaysia and other economies jointly submitted the proposal entitled "Promoting the Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region" to the conference of APEC SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation ("SCE"). This showed that the inclusive development for persons with disabilities had been officially incorporated in APEC's framework, and it would greatly enhance the attention of the APEC economies to the regional cooperation on disability issues. The conference decided to set up an "APEC Group of Friends on

Disability Issues” (“GOFD”) as the official leader and coordinator of the APEC regional cooperation on disability issues.

In the new round of global technology-industry revolution, advanced Internet technology, extensive information interconnection, and brand-new economic operation models have created fresh opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate equally in social and economic activities and share fully the achievements of economic growth. For example, a close link between Internet innovations and medical services for persons with disabilities has not only improved technology progress and production efficiency but also accelerated the transformation of industry mode.

In order to help persons with disabilities in various regions share fully the benefits of Internet economy, APEC Group of Friends on Disability Issues formulated and started a series of specific action plans in 2016, in a bid to build up an efficient cooperation platform to facilitate persons with disabilities’ participation in Internet economy. *Advancing Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Internet Economy in the Asia-Pacific Region* is one of the concrete actions mentioned above.

## **PURPOSES OF THE REPORT**

The purposes of the report are:

- to review and evaluate the latest practice and experience of APEC and its member economies in facilitating persons with disabilities’ participation in Internet economy;
- to analyze the current challenges and potential opportunities brought about by Internet for persons with disabilities in the aspects of education, employment and social welfare protection; and
- to propose feasible policy recommendations on facilitating persons with disabilities’ participation in Internet economy.

## **SCOPE OF THE REPORT**

This Report mainly includes seven parts.

The introduction summarizes the background, goal, structure, and main conclusions of the report. Chapter I introduces first of all the overall development situation of both the global and Asia-Pacific Internet economy and gives a detailed evaluation of the actual development of cross-border e-commerce, the Internet of Things and Internet finance, thus showing how the Internet lays a solid foundation for the Asia-Pacific region to facilitate persons with disabilities’ understanding of and participation in the regional cooperation of Internet economy. Chapter II briefly reviews the process of the Asia-Pacific regional cooperation on disability issues, then elaborates on the contents of cooperation at various levels, and finally summarizes the achievements that have been made in this regard. Chapter III evaluates the basic situation and real constraint conditions for the employment of persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. It also analyzes the convenient conditions brought by the Internet economy to persons with disabilities’ employment and entrepreneurship. By introducing successful examples of each economy, the last part of this chapter proposes policy suggestions on how to encourage active entrepreneurship and full employment of persons with disabilities in the future.

Chapter IV outlines the potential market demands for assistive devices and service provision modes for persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, and then, in view of the predicament confronted by the current service system of assistive devices for persons with disabilities, this chapter also studies the new opportunities brought by Internet economy to the development of the industry of assistive devices for persons with disabilities. The last part of this chapter proposes specific and feasible measures for the economies in the Asia-Pacific region with regards the promotion of the development of the industry of assistive devices for persons with disabilities with the help of Internet economy. Chapter V analyzes the basic information on education for persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region and factors restricting its development, and then clarifies the benefits brought by the Internet technology to the improvement of the educational attainments. By taking into account the successful experience of economies in the Asia-Pacific region, this chapter also puts forward future feasible encouragement policies respectively for governmental departments, educational institutions for persons with disabilities, non-governmental organizations for persons with disabilities, and educated persons with disabilities as well. The last part, Chapter VI, evaluates the real constraints faced by persons with disabilities in participating in Internet economy in the Asia-Pacific region and offers comprehensive and pertinent suggestions on cooperation.

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

Main findings of the report include the following.

1. The Asia-Pacific economies have made preliminary cooperation results in promoting the undertaking of persons with disabilities.

Over the past thirty years or so, extensive and in-depth cooperation has been launched among economies in the Asia-Pacific region for the purpose of promoting equal participation of persons with disabilities in economic activities and their full sharing of the achievements of economic growth. As the top-level organization for regional economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, APEC has made sustained contributions to the promotion of the inclusive development of persons with disabilities, especially with respect to persons with disabilities' integration into the economic society.

In 2014, APEC members released the "Joint Initiative on Equal Access and Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities" to promote the inclusive development of persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, in a bid to explore new mechanisms and means for regional cooperation on disability issues. The establishment of the "Group of Friends on Disability Issues" marked the official integration of disability issues into APEC's cooperation framework. As a result, a new era has come in regional cooperation on disability issues.

Economies in the Asia-Pacific region have made encouraging achievements in regional cooperation on disability issues, including: reaching a high degree of consensus on the significance of such regional cooperation; designing and developing a strategic framework for cooperation; and establishing preliminarily a fixed mechanism and platform for such cooperation.

2. Internet economy brings new opportunities for the employment and entrepreneurship to persons

with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are an integral part of the society. Therefore, creating more extensive and convenient employment and entrepreneurship conditions for them and allowing them to integrate themselves into society and share the benefits of economic growth is the truly inclusive path of economic development.

The rise and boom of the Internet economy has brought opportunities of employment and entrepreneurship to persons with disabilities. In addition to the creation of more jobs and entrepreneurial platforms, web-based distance education has provided technical support for persons with disabilities to have vocational trainings; customized assistive devices based on “Internet plus” have greatly boosted their labor competitiveness; and Internet finance has offered them new financing channels for starting businesses.

Therefore, APEC should actively establish big data on the employment conditions of persons with disabilities in relevant economies, release incentive policies and measures for them to seek jobs or start businesses through e-commerce platforms as soon as possible, increase their labor competitiveness with customized assistive devices provided by the Internet, and improve the mode of cooperation among governments, industries and institutions of higher education to support the employment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities.

### 3. Internet economy has boosted development of the assistive devices industry for persons with disabilities

The market supply of assistive devices falls short of persons with disabilities' actual demand although inconveniences and misfortunes to them can be avoided through the use of assistive devices. Thanks to the new technologies, new services and new modes that have come along with the development of Internet economy, new opportunities have been created for the production and allocation of assistive devices for persons with disabilities. The use of the big data technology may customize the assistive devices according to the different needs of persons with disabilities; the e-commerce mode may greatly improve the operation efficiency of both the cross-border and domestic assistive device markets; the Internet finance system may effectively ease the difficulty in fundraising for the production and sale of assistive devices; and the Internet technology can help create assistive devices of new types.

To promote the development of the industry of assistive devices for persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, the following measures should be taken: (1) formulating and improving the regulations and policies on the provision of services by governments of the economies in relation to assistive devices; (2) enhancing the development of the Internet infrastructure; (3) promoting projects of information accessibility. (4) building a comprehensive online platform for assistive device trading and consulting; (5) establishing and improving the system of electronic health records for persons with disabilities; (6) training assistive device service professionals with good mastery of Internet knowledge and technology; and (7) facilitating the implementation of the *APEC List of Assistive Devices and Services Eligible for Tax Exemption*.

4. Internet economy has brought material conditions to the development of educational cause for persons with disabilities.

In the era of Internet economy, the evolution of information transmission technology and knowledge dissemination modes have brought about radical reform onto the conventional educational system, which benefits the improvement of the educational levels of persons with disabilities. For example, they have helped to eliminate physical obstacles faced by students with disabilities in communicating with others, reduce their educational cost, promote the conversion of segregated education to inclusive education, and assist students with disabilities in achieving customized education according to their personal needs. By far, some Asia-Pacific economies have accumulated useful experience in facilitating education for persons with disabilities using the Internet technology. As a result, all governmental authorities of the Asia-Pacific economies should continue to increase their investment in educational infrastructure for persons with disabilities; educational institutions for persons with disabilities should focus on the elimination of learning and communication obstacles for persons with disabilities; non-governmental organizations for persons with disabilities should fully play their role in supplementing and promoting the education for persons with disabilities; and persons with disabilities should be more active in learning.

5. APEC should take all-round actions to help persons with disabilities participate in Internet economy.

APEC economies have reached a consensus on the strategic significance of promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in Internet economy, and regarded it as one of the key areas where notable achievements have been made in advancing the strategy for inclusive economic growth. But cooperation in this area has just started, and is still confronted with restraints like weak basic conditions, absence of an efficient organization and coordination system, and unstable funding sources. Therefore, for the purpose of promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Internet economy, APEC members should adhere to the basic principles of ensuring mutual respect and benefit and reaching concrete results and consensus through consultation in future cooperation. They should also adopt flexible means of collaboration, make plans for priority projects as a whole in persons with disabilities' future integration into Internet economy, make full use of the "Early Harvest Program" under which positive results have been achieved from some projects to set a model for future cooperation, and promote actively the application of the "Pathfinder Approach" in the area. In the process of the cooperation, both the developed and developing members must share and exchange successful experience and conduct cooperative projects of different levels in different forms on promoting participation of persons with disabilities in Internet economy that benefit all parties. Last but not the least, close cooperation with international organizations outside APEC, especially those related to persons with disabilities, is another essential foundation for APEC to achieve fruitful results in promoting participation of persons with disabilities in Internet economy.

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