Beat: Miscellaneous

REGARDING 17SDG's UNGA 81: WHY DISABILITY MUST BE PART OF THE 2030 CONVERSATION

MOROCCO'S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GETS READY

Paris, Washington DC, 12.08.2026, 23:48 Time

USPA NEWS - The 2030 Agenda is sometimes reduced to a familiar list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Yet the Moroccan document devoted to the SDGs tells a more ambitious story.
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are not designed as 17 isolated boxes. They form an interconnected framework of 17 goals, 169 targets and 244 indicators, intended to make it possible to measure progress, and failure towards 2030.
The framework covers poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, employment, infrastructure, inequalities, cities, consumption, climate, oceans, biodiversity, institutions and international partnerships.
In other words, the Agenda 2030 is simultaneously an economic, social, environmental and human-development agenda.
And Morocco has not simply adopted the vocabulary of these goals.
The country has developed its own national framework for following their implementation. The Moroccan High Commission for Planning, the HCP, has been tasked with monitoring progress, while the National Commission for Sustainable Development, created in 2019 and chaired by the Head of Government, has provided an institutional framework.

This article combines United Nations documentation, Moroccan development and institutional material, and the reporter's direct experience as a journalist and wheelchair user. Personal observations are clearly distinguished from institutional data, official commitments and international policy frameworks.

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Morocco's 2020 Voluntary National Review followed an earlier national review in 2016 and examined both achievements and perspectives towards 2030.
This makes Morocco an interesting country to observe as the United Nations prepares its 81st General Assembly. Because the question facing UNGA 81 is not simply whether countries have ambitious development plans. It is whether development actually reaches everyone. And this is where disability becomes particularly revealing.

DISABILITY IS NOT AN 18th SDG AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHY IT MATTERS
There is no separate SDG 18 for disability.
The Moroccan SDG documentation itself notes that disability did not become a standalone Sustainable Development Goal. Instead, it is addressed through different targets across the framework.
That apparently technical detail carries an important political and human implication.
Because disability crosses almost every dimension of development.
It belongs to the conversation on poverty.
To health.
To education.

To decent work.
To reduced inequalities.
To cities and public infrastructure.
To institutions.
And ultimately to partnerships.
The SDG framework itself illustrates this interconnectedness.
SDG 3 calls for healthy lives and well-being at all ages.
SDG 4 calls for equitable, inclusive and quality education.
SDG 8 addresses decent work and economic participation.
SDG 10 addresses inequalities.
SDG 11 calls for cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
And SDG 16 explicitly calls for peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and institutions that are effective, accountable and open to all.

BEFORE UNGA 81, THE REAL QUESTION IS WHAT “FOR ALL” ACTUALLY MEANS

Hence disability is not outside the 2030 Agenda.
It is woven through it.
The question is whether it is sufficiently visible when progress is measured.
When the United Nations General Assembly opens its 81st session in New York on September 8, 2026, the world will once again gather around the language of multilateralism, development and international cooperation.
The high-level week will take place from September 18 to 28, with the general debate scheduled from September 22 to 28.
The official theme of the 81st session is:
“Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All.”
Those final three words for all deserve to be taken literally.
Because fifteen years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the central question is no longer whether the international community has written sufficiently ambitious development goals.
The question is whether those goals are actually experienced by everyone.
And there may be few better ways to test that than by looking at the lives of persons with disabilities.

A country can build a new airport, a railway station, a hotel, a cultural centre, a hospital or an entirely new urban district.
But development is not fully inclusive if part of the population cannot enter, navigate, use or benefit from those spaces independently.
That is why disability should not be treated as a specialised social-policy subject sitting at the margins of the Sustainable Development Goals.
It is a test of the SDGs themselves.

THIS IS WHY MOROCCO'S DEVELOPMENT STORY DESERVES TO BE READ THROUGH THE HUMAN LENS

Morocco is undertaking a major transformation.
Infrastructure is developing.
Tourism is expanding.
Cities are changing.
Transport networks are evolving.
Digitalisation is accelerating.
The country is preparing for major international sporting and cultural events.
And its development policies increasingly place human development, social inclusion and economic transformation within the same national conversation.
That ambition is precisely what makes accessibility an important subject.
Because the larger the transformation, the greater the opportunity to build inclusion into it from the beginning.
A new railway station can be a symbol of modernisation.
But can a wheelchair user independently board the train?
A new hotel can demonstrate the sophistication of Morocco's tourism sector.
But can a disabled traveller reach the accessible room without encountering barriers?
A newly renovated public space can beautify a city.

But can everyone move through it?
A cultural festival can welcome thousands of people.

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THE 2030 TEST IS NOT HOW FAR MOROCCO CAN BUILD BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN MOVE FORWARD WITH IT
Morocco's SDG framework demonstrates an ambitious understanding of development.
The country is not working with a narrow definition of progress.
The 2030 Agenda brings together 17 interconnected goals, 169 targets and a system of indicators designed to measure economic, social, environmental and institutional transformation.
Morocco has also established mechanisms for following that transformation nationally, including the HCP's monitoring work and the national voluntary review process.
But the most interesting question may lie precisely in what the framework does not isolate as a separate objective.
Disability has no SDG of its own.
It is present across the goals.
And perhaps that is exactly how it should be understood.
Because disability is not one sector of society.
It intersects with almost every dimension of human development.
A person cannot escape poverty through development if they cannot access education.
Education cannot become truly inclusive if the school itself is inaccessible.
Employment cannot be called inclusive if the workplace remains physically or digitally inaccessible

A city cannot be fully sustainable if some citizens cannot move independently through it.
And infrastructure cannot be considered truly modern if part of the population remains unable to use it.
This is why my own experience reporting from a wheelchair in Morocco has become more than a personal observation.
It is a journalistic lens through which the promises of the 2030 Agenda can be tested against reality.
The document tells us what Morocco and the international community want to achieve by 2030.
The street tells us how close we are to achieving it.
As UNGA 81 approaches, that distinction matters.
The world will once again speak about transformation, development and a United Nations that delivers for all.
For Morocco, the opportunity is to demonstrate that its considerable development ambition can also become a model of accessible human development.
Not by creating a separate agenda for people with disabilities.
But by ensuring that the existing one all 17 SDGs, and the entire 2030 Agenda actually includes them.

Because ultimately, the measure of development is not simply how much a country builds, modernises or grows.
It is how many of its people are able to move forward with it.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-27094/regarding-17sdgs-unga-81-why-disability-must-be-part-of-the-2030-conversation.html

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): RACHDI Rahma, Jedie Foster

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619