

**OPEN-ENDED GROUP OF FRIENDS OF THE CHAIR
ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND THE POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
(CARTAGENA GROUP)**

Concept note

Background

In 1994, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development emphasized the urgent need to continue to promote effective measures for the prevention of disability, for rehabilitation and for the achievement of the goals of full participation and equality for persons with disabilities (paragraph 6.28). The objectives were: "(a) to ensure the realization of the rights of all persons with disabilities, and their participation in all aspects of social, economic and cultural life; (b) to create, improve and develop necessary conditions that will ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and the valuing of their capabilities in the process of economic and social development; (c) to ensure the dignity and promote the self-reliance of persons with disabilities" (paragraph 6.29). Among the measures established, the Programme of Action stated that governments should consider the needs of persons with disabilities in terms of ethical and human rights dimensions; eliminate discrimination regarding reproductive rights, household and family formation, and international migration; and promote the development of infrastructure and support services, mechanisms to guarantee the exercise of their rights and systems to monitor their social and economic integration (paragraphs 6.30 to 6.33).

In 2013, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development included disability in a cross-cutting manner throughout the various chapters, taking into account the important contribution of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) in incorporating disability-related issues as an integral part of national sustainable development strategies, from a rights-based perspective, with equality and without discrimination. The Montevideo Consensus called on countries to "fulfil the commitment to promote and ensure gender mainstreaming and its intersection with perspectives on race, ethnicity, age, social class and disability status in all public policies, especially those in economic and cultural policies" (priority measure 50).

In the same vein, at its fourth session in 2022, the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean requested countries to include more in-depth information on persons with disabilities in their voluntary national reports, in line with the implementation of the priority measures of the Montevideo Consensus (resolution 4(IV), paragraph 23).

At the fifth session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Cartagena, Colombia, on 3 and 4 July 2024, a panel discussion was held on persons with disabilities and the population and development agenda. Panel participants included representatives of government, civil society, academia, international cooperation agencies and other relevant actors in the fulfilment of the rights of persons with disabilities, with the aim of analysing the progress and challenges linked to observing such rights since the adoption of the PoA-ICPD and considering the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

In the framework of this session, countries reaffirmed the critical importance for the governments of the region to strengthen policy action aimed at ensuring the full exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities, since these issues are an inherent part of the population and development agenda, the implementation of related conventions and other human rights instruments, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Colombia, in its capacity as Chair of the Conference for the period 2024–2026, proposed the establishment of an *open-ended group of friends of the Chair on the rights of persons with disabilities and the population and development agenda, in the framework of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cartagena group)*. The purpose of this group is to examine and propose strategies to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities and ensure their autonomy, independent living and participation in community life.

Since the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, there have been important changes in policy approaches and actions in this area, moving from a biomedical to a social and rights-based perspective, which represents a true paradigm shift in addressing these issues. The Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean provides an ideal opportunity to analyse the strategies needed to place persons with disabilities at the centre of the population and development agenda and to find the best way to promote and increase the visibility of their rights.

Objectives

The Cartagena group is an open mechanism in which all Latin American and Caribbean governments can participate. In the framework of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, its purpose is to analyse the situation and living conditions of persons with disabilities of the region, in order to propose and evaluate strategies to increase their inclusion and thus strengthen protection of their human rights.

The group will examine the rights of persons with disabilities from a population and development perspective, with a focus on functional diversity and intersectionality, given that the intersection between disability and factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and race, area of residence (urban or rural), income level, educational attainment, health status, migratory status, sexual orientation, and sexual identity, among others, exacerbates the inequalities faced by persons with disabilities.

The group will also consider the cross-cutting nature of disability in relation to issues linked to the population and development agenda, including public policies for sustainable development, children, adolescents and young people, ageing and social protection, sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, migration, territorial development, Indigenous Peoples, Afrodescendent populations and sociodemographic information.

Operation

The Cartagena group will meet at least twice a year, either virtually, in person or in hybrid format. In addition to governments, representatives of regional civil society organizations of persons with disabilities, academia, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders may participate in meetings.

The Chair will convene meetings and submit draft programmes of work to group members for their consideration. The Chair will also report on the group's activities and their outcomes at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Population and Development and meetings of its Presiding Officers.

The group will establish contact and discuss possible synergies with the Buenos Aires Group, whose objective is to promote the harmonization of disability measurement in Latin American countries and develop methodological and conceptual tools to improve disability measurement in the region. The Buenos Aires Group is coordinated by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina, with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as technical secretariat.

The members of the Cartagena group will define their internal working methods on the basis of a proposal prepared by the Chair.

Membership

The Cartagena group will be composed of representatives of member States and associate members of ECLAC and may have more than one representative per country, in which case one of them will serve as national focal point to the group.

Representatives of regional civil society organizations of persons with disabilities or those whose work focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as representatives of academia and international organizations, may be adjunct members. Adjunct members may participate in all activities of the group, such as establishing work agendas, proposing activities and attending meetings. However, they will not have a vote in decision-making processes, which will be reserved exclusively for governments.