

Thank you, chair, for this opportunity.

At the World Blind Union, we firmly believe that inclusion begins at the local level, where governments, civil society, and communities must join forces to create accessible, inclusive, and resilient environments.

With that in mind, the World Blind Union and United Cities and Local Governments jointly developed a policy brief to highlight the critical importance of localization to solve the accessibility crisis. Accessibility is an internationally recognized human right and a precondition for inclusion and participation in society. In the present context of rapid urbanization and the climate crisis, the proliferation of accessibility barriers has become a pressing concern.

The policy brief includes several recommendations to address this concern.

First, meaningful participation and coordination are crucial. Local and regional governments must be engaged as key stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Organizations of Persons with Disabilities must be actively involved as they are essential in shaping inclusive urban development strategies, policies, and practices.

Second, for effective multilevel governance, policies and standards must be harmonized and aligned. Compliance with the CRPD, including Article 9 on accessibility, should be ensured across all levels. This means harmonizing with accessibility standards and placing accessibility at the heart of urban policies, local action plans, procurement and reporting mechanisms.

Lastly, data plays a vital role. Unfortunately, data on inclusion and accessibility is lacking. Empowering local and regional governments with the necessary resources and competencies to collect disaggregated data and identify accessibility barriers is critical to inform policymaking.

By taking these steps, we can unleash the power of localization, fulfill our obligations under the CRPD, build back better following the COVID-19 pandemic, and achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda.