



## **The Role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Empowering Persons with Disabilities**

An International Telecommunication Union (ITU) event  
3 December 2018, 1:15-2:30 pm, UN Headquarters, NY, Conference Room 4  
(enter at 46<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave)

Fifteen percent of the world's population lives with some form of disability, representing more than one billion people globally and constituting the world's largest minority (WHO). This percentage is growing through population growth, medical advances, the rise in chronic conditions and ageing of populations (WHO). Eighty percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries (UNDP). Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play an increasingly active role in shaping the latest trends in assistive technologies and specially-developed technologies for persons with disabilities. Among other things, ICTs help break through barriers to communication and access to information and are also enhancing mobility and fostering independent living, thereby contributing to greater social, cultural, political and economic integration and inclusion. Some examples of ICTs that are being put to innovative uses by and for persons with disabilities include voice and facial recognition, virtual keyboards, and mobile applications that mimic Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices. The advancement of ICTs is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes that "the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress."

Throughout the world, while some persons with disabilities are already benefiting from the advantages of ICT-enabled services, much more needs to be done to increase access, affordability and skills and to further develop technologies to their full potential for maximum positive impact for all persons with disabilities everywhere. This is especially important because persons with disabilities are overrepresented among those living in poverty, disability being both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Twenty percent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged (World Bank).

This session will include speakers from governments, the private sector, inter-governmental organizations, academia and civil society and will explore innovative uses of ICTs for the empowerment of persons with disabilities. It will seek to enhance awareness of what is already possible as well as what is coming down the pipeline and inspire us to further action and cross-sector collaboration to realize the potential of ICTs in this context. It will also explore what is

needed from a policy standpoint to accelerate progress towards a more inclusive ICT-enabled future through and with the full participation of persons with disabilities.

## **Programme**

- Opening remarks by Ms. Daniela Bas, Director of the Division Inclusive Social Development at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
- Remarks by speakers:
  - KR Liu, Award-winning Accessibility Advisor
  - Francesca Cesa Bianchi, Vice President of Institutional Relations at G3ict
  - Hale Pulsifer, Customer Accessibility Lead at Fidelity Investments and Enable National Co-Chair
  - Monica Desai, Head of Global Connectivity Policy at Facebook
  - Alexandra Cooke, Director of Membership at ACT | The App Association
- Q&A Session

Moderated by Ursula Wynhoven, ITU Representative to the United Nations, New York

## **Speaker Biographies and Photos**

### **Daniela Bas**

*Director of the Division Inclusive Social Development at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)*



Daniela Bas, of Italian nationality, is the Director of the Division Inclusive Social Development at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Scientist in politics with a major in International Politics, she graduated magna cum laude with a dissertation on “The elimination of architectural barriers and the employment of people with physical disabilities.” Her interest has always been people-centered in the various activities, associations, and professional roles she has held.

In addition to her work at the UN from 1986 to 1995, Ms. Bas held managerial roles from 1996 until 2011 in the private sector in Italy and was, inter alia, adviser for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for the Presidency of the Council of Ministers on human rights and social affairs. Designated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, she was a member of the Board of Directors of the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights; Special Adviser to the Vice President of the European Commission (On. Frattini); at the European Union, she was representative on the topic “Tourism for All” on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of her country.

## **KR Liu**

*Award-winning Accessibility Advisor*



Diagnosed with severe hearing loss at the age of three, KR Liu has spent the last two decades as a technology marketing executive and a strong advocate championing accessibility in technology and corporate culture. Ms. Liu was recently the Vice President at Doppler Labs and lobbied with Senator Warren's team on new legislation called the OTC Hearing Aid Act of 2017, which was signed into law on Aug, 18<sup>th</sup> 2017. These days, she is a full-time advisor and speaker, with a rising reputation in technology, regulatory and diversity management circles. Currently, she has been advising for several major companies like Uber, Salesforce, Oath, Capital One, and Google about how to be inclusive of the disability communities in product design and culture. Ms. Liu is on the board of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Deaf Kids Code, the Consumer Technology Association Foundation, and World Wide Hearing Foundation International. She has been awarded a U.S. Congressional award; Silicon Valley's Top 40 Under 40 and 2017 Women of Influence; and 2015 Women on the Move by Women's Business Journal for her advocacy work in hearing health and technology.

## **Francesca Cesa Bianchi**

*Vice President, Institutional Relations at G3ict*



Francesca Cesa Bianchi oversees G3ict's cooperation programs and institutional relations with the United Nations and other international agencies, advocacy organizations, governments, and academia since the organization's inception in 2006. Francesca has previously served as a freelance writer for CNN, as well as an accredited election observer for the Carter Center's Americas Program. A native of Milan, Italy, she holds master's degrees in political science and communication/media studies from the Università degli Studi of Milan and Georgia State University, respectively.

## **Hale Pulsifer**

*Customer Accessibility Lead at Fidelity Investments and Enable National Co-Chair*



Hale Pulsifer has been focusing his career on improving accessibility for customers with disabilities. Currently the Customer Accessibility Lead at the newly formed Office of Customer Accessibility (OCA) at Fidelity Investments, Mr. Pulsifer has spent 15 years in the company's finance and strategy roles in multiple channels. He is also one of the Founders and a National Co-Chair of Enable, an Employee Resource Group for people impacted by disability. Mr. Pulsifer holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University, as well as an MBA from Babson's F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business. Before business school and Fidelity, he was a 10-year professional musician. Mr. Pulsifer has been married for 14 years with two daughters aged seven and nine.

## **Monica Desai**

*Head, Global Connectivity Policy at Facebook*



Monica Desai is the interim head of the global Connectivity policy team at Facebook. She and her team take the lead on issues involving accessibility, online communications providers, video, infrastructure, net neutrality and news. Prior to joining Facebook, Ms. Desai spent over a decade in senior positions at the Federal Communications Commission, including service as Chief of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, which develops all policies and rules in connection with accessibility issues, and as chief of the FCC's Media Bureau, which has oversight over broadcasters and cable companies, and which oversees captioning policies. She also served as deputy chief to the Wireless Bureau, as an advisor to a Commissioner on spectrum issues, and as a special advisor to the General Counsel at the FCC. Ms.

Desai was previously a partner at the law firm of Squire Patton Boggs, where her practice included counseling clients on accessibility issues. Ms. Desai graduated from the Georgetown University Law Center cum laude, and has an undergraduate degree in Finance from the George Washington University, where she was a National Merit Scholar and graduated magna cum laude.

## **Alexandra Cooke**

*Director of Membership, ACT | The App Association*



Alexandra Cooke is Director of Membership at ACT | The App Association. She engages directly with App Association members to keep them informed of global regulatory and legislative issues impacting their business. Her subject matter expertise includes connected health, privacy, cybersecurity, intellectual property, and disability access. In addition to assisting members with understanding and complying with these issues, Ms. Cooke facilitates opportunities for members to directly participate in advocacy and promotion of their mobile products.

## **Moderator Biography and Photo:**

### **Ursula Wynhoven**

*ITU Representative to the United Nations*



Ursula Wynhoven is an international lawyer with 22 years' experience. She joined the ITU in September 2017 as its Representative to the UN in New York. Previously, Ms. Wynhoven spent 14 years with the UN Global Compact, the UN's corporate sustainability initiative, where her last position was Chief, Social Sustainability, Governance & Legal and member of the Executive Committee. Ms. Wynhoven led the UN Global Compact's platforms and workstreams on human rights and decent work, gender equality, poverty and inequality, peace, anti-corruption and the rule of law. Ms. Wynhoven also led legal affairs and oversaw policy development and implementation of the UN Global Compact's integrity measures. Ms. Wynhoven's tenure with the Global Compact also included a six-month loan as Senior Advisor, Business and Human Rights to the UN's Human Rights Office. Prior to joining the UN, Ms. Wynhoven worked in law firms and government human rights agencies in Australia and the US and for the OECD on the Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

Ms. Wynhoven has Masters of Law degrees from Columbia Law School, where she was a Human Rights Fellow, and Monash Law School, and Bachelor's degrees in Law (Hons), Economics, and Letters. Since 2007, Ms. Wynhoven has been an Adjunct Professor in Corporate Sustainability, Business and Human Rights at Fordham Law School and previously taught at the Reykjavik University School of Law.