Charter of Accessibility of the World Social Forum 2016

Preamble

The World Social Forum is based on the pooling of initiatives led by citizens wishing to build another world. As more than a billion people around the world are disabled\(^1\), creating another world needs to necessarily recognize and abolish behavioural, language, financial, architectural, structural, societal, etc. barriers leading to the exclusion of these people. Disabled people are those who meet such physical or social obstacles to their social participation, whatever their functional limits are.

The barriers that completely limit the participation of disabled citizens exist in all countries. In Canada, sign languages are not always recognized as official languages; the blind need to constantly battle to access public spaces with their service dogs, people with reduced mobility encounter too many inaccessible places limiting their access to a job, to studies and to a social life, people with intellectual disabilities or an autism spectrum disorder are kept out of regular school and are not able to get a diploma easily.

In 2013, during a convergence assembly organized at the WSF in Tunis, some organizations that promote the rights of the disabled were present and noticed important shortcomings when it came to the accessibility of the event, although some efforts were done\(^2\). This exclusion of people with disabilities participating in several social movements thus limits their ability to participate just like other citizens in the creation of an inclusive society.

The World Social Forum 2016 recognizes that in Montreal and in other cities where parallel activities will be held, numerous obstacles limit the participation of the disabled. For the purposes of creating another world where disabled persons are not oppressed, denigrated and excluded by these barriers, and in order to promote the participation of everyone in the pooling of our forces and our ideas, the World Social Forum 2016 commits itself to:

1. Recognize the Quebec Sign Language and the American Sign Language as official languages used in Canada.

   1.1. For this purpose, the World Social Forum will offer a service of interpretation in the Quebec and American sign languages, as well as interpreters for the other languages.

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2. Promote the World Social Forum's accessibility during community life and mobilization events to encourage the disabled to participate in the event.

3. Promote accessibility all along groups and people presenting activities at the World Social Forum by publishing a practical guide in order to make the activities more accessible.

4. Integrate the disabled in the different roles of the World Social Forum: animation, conferences, artistic activities, etc.

5. Take appropriate measures so that the Forum is as accessible as possible for the disabled, particularly:

   Before the World Social Forum

   5.1. By holding mobilization activities in spaces that are accessible to people with disabilities.

   5.2. By including information on the accessibility (access without threshold, accessible washrooms, accompaniment if necessary, accessible water fountains, automatic doors, etc.) of the activities and by encouraging the self-managed activities to adopt this practice.

   5.3. By promoting access to all on the website (i.e. accessibility to the screen readers, locket in the Quebec sign language on the welcome page, etc.).

   5.4. By subtitling the promotional videos and, if possible, by adding a locket in the Quebec sign language.

   5.5. By offering to the disabled the possibility of identifying their needs during registration to plan their accommodation and their services.

   5.6. By recognizing the free entry of those who are accompanying the disabled who need them to fully participate in the World Social Forum.

   5.7. By facilitating the access to the documents in alternative formats (braille, large letters, simplified language, etc.) to those who need it.

   5.8. By including accessibility criteria in the form destined to solidarity accommodation.

   5.9. By offering information on the accessible services available near the World Social Forum territory (restaurants, bars, transports, etc.) and on the accessible accommodation on a page of the website dedicated to accessibility.

   During the World Social Forum

   5.10. By identifying the locations of any access, the washrooms, the water fountains, the automatic doors and the routes that are accessible to the disabled on the World Social Forum territory in the documentation and on the website of the World Social Forum.

   5.11. By assuring a simple and readable signalling or with the help of pictograms to facilitate the orientation of the participants.
5.12. By identifying lecture halls, classrooms and theaters with amplification systems on the World Social Forum website for those who have difficulty hearing.

5.13. By making sure to have ramps so that those with reduced mobility would be able to go on stage whenever they present in a lecture hall or a theater.

5.14. By identifying landing stages, of which there is the adapted transport of the STM, that may be found near accessible entries, shelters, benches and parkings of the World Social Forum territory.

5.15. By taking measures to facilitate the travels of the disabled on the World Social Forum territory when considering the inaccessibility of public transport (i.e. by providing accessible shuttles and their schedules and/or taking into consideration the proximity of spaces when assigning activity rooms destined to the disabled and deaf culture to reduce their travels).

5.16. By training the volunteers to accompany the disabled.

5.17. By taking into consideration the needs of the people with disabilities or with invisible health issues, like the sensibility to smells, the need to have a quiet room to rest, allergies, etc.

6. Promote the accessibility permanently, particularly with the International Council and the future world social forums.