

Session Transcript: 03-12-2020 United Nations - Disability Roundtable WebEx

SPEAKER:

There is an option to put on your closed captioning. You can enable your multimedia viewer. That's the way to get your closed captioning on if you want to follow that way. Other housekeeping issues we will be recording this session and it will be posted in our regular channels and the HR portal afterwards. So there's an opportunity to refer to this afterwards as well. If you're using WebEx for the first time and are not so familiar, when you go to the top above the pictures or images of the panelists, you see options for the view. You can enable grid view where you can see all the panelists together in one grid or you can use the active speaker view where you see the person who's speaking. And there is a chat, so we welcome any comments. We might not have time for Q&A in the end because we want to give our panel to speak as much as the panel allows us but we will take note of everything. We can take notes off-line. If there's reactions, questions and comments from the audience, we will take note. Catherine, over to you.

SPEAKER:

Good morning, good afternoon everyone. Can you hear me? Great. Good day to everyone. Dear colleagues and distinguished guests. I'm pleased to welcome you all today to join the international persons with disabilities. Last year we gathered on the UN premises in New York. For obvious reasons, this won't be possible this year, but thanks to technology we are able to connect virtually and can therefore reach many of you who could previously not join us. Thanks to all the colleagues that made this happen today. This is a great opportunity for the inclusion of persons with disabilities as a global agenda that concerns all of us. I am pleased to see colleagues from across offices are able to be with us today. The international day of persons with disabilities was proclaimed in 1992. Today, 28 years later, the objectives of raising awareness on the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life remains very relevant to the work of the UN. This includes ensuring persons with disabilities have equal access to employment and are included in the workplace on an equal basis with others. For us, employment and inclusion for persons with disabilities is central to the creation of a diverse workforce. We know persons with disabilities in the workplace is not only the right thing to do, it is of the smart thing to do. The diversity strengthens our workforce. Diversity is a valuable asset as we foster innovation and creativity through which we can improve our performance and help deliver on our demanding mandates. We also need to ensure our work environment is such that it supports colleagues with disabilities, where everyone can feel empowered to perform to their full potential. 2020 has been a challenging year in so many ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the way that we work. As we continue to telecommute and we worry about the health and safety about ourselves and loved ones, many of the challenges presented by COVID-19 are felt even by persons with disabilities. 2020 has also been the first full year of the implementation of the United Nations disability inclusion strategy. Together with the rest of the UN system, - - remains committed to the goals of the strategy and achieving transformative change for persons with disabilities. Since we met last year on the same

occasion, we've advanced our work on becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities and increased awareness on all personnel on this important subject. Additionally, we continue efforts to identify new outreach challenges and to strengthen our messaging on diversity and inclusion. We are also developing an online training course on disability inclusion, which we expect to launch early next year. Despite this progress, much more needs to be done. In the current context of COVID-19, we must be mindful not to create new barriers for persons with disabilities and reverse the progress already made. It is with this in mind we have convened today's roundtable discussion with disability inclusion experts and advocates. Our panel will share insights and best practices to help us walk the talk on disability inclusion. I'm very pleased to introduce them to you. As our moderator, we have James Sinocchi, is the head of - - at J.P. Morgan Chase and is an expert at setting strategies for driving and inclusive culture for employing qualified people with disabilities. Thank you Jim. We have a wealth of expertise on our panel and a great diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. Our panelists are Doctor Susan Bruyere, Mr. Vladimir Cook, Executive Director international disability alliance. Miss Shirin Kiani. and Reverend Kendrick camp, professional speaker and facilitator, founder of black liberation theology of disability. - - Is also with us today and will deliver closing remarks at the end of the event. I'm confident today's discussion will help us on our journey to become a fully disability inclusive organization and I look forward to listening to wealth of experience we have in this virtual meeting group. I think all of you for being with us today and I wish you a wonderful day for persons with disabilities. Let me now turn over to our moderator and thank you Jim for being with us today. Over to you.

SPEAKER:

Thank you very much for those kind remarks. I feel like a UN member, as I've been here not only last year but I think the last three years. It's nice to know I can always come back home. So thank you very much. I'd like to welcome our HR leaders and managers from across the UN and thank you for joining us today. Before we go into some more detail, I'd like - - for those that don't know me, tell you a little about myself. Then we can get started. At our firm at the bank, we have a program that says JPMorgan Chase - - we tell each other about our backgrounds so everyone can understand were not just who you see at work but we have lives and families and activities that make us unique. The same is true with people with disabilities. So I'm called generically, a person with a disability whose quadriplegic. That means I'm paralyzed in all four limbs. If you see the chart on the screen now, that middle part shows body surfing I did in Puerto Rico were ended up breaking my neck coming close to the shoreline. I miss gauged how shallow the water was and I did a flip turn and eventually broke my net. I didn't know what happened to me. That ended up being a lifelong journey in a wheelchair for the last 30 years. On the left is my wife who is able-bodied. And Maggie and I have been married 32 years. Some of the stories that go around with people with disabilities is that we probably can't integrate into able-bodied life because of our injuries. I met Maggie while we were working at IBM after my accident. She's able-bodied and a beautiful woman. She married me 32 years ago, sitting in a wheelchair. We fell in love and as they say in movies and music, love conquers all. We have two children on the right, Danielle my daughter who is an attorney. And my son Jimmy, James, working for the Defense Department for a number of years and now works as an analyst for them. And I have two granddaughters. My son is getting married next summer. So we have a wedding coming up and I've been at Chase for four years. So I have a life and the family and most people with disabilities

have similar things in common with able-bodied people. So that's what we are trying to do here. We are trying to normalize people with disabilities as just not people who are blind, deaf or mobility impaired, but people that have things in common with our able-bodied colleagues. We were, we travel, we cry, laugh, we dance and sing. We just had something happen to us that we have to overcome. So if you go to the next slide, I want to talk to you about how we are framing today's conversation. What you are looking at is a chart that I use both at IBM and now Chase. At IBM, I had the first three days. Attitude, accessibility and accommodations. When I got to Chase, I added a simulation because that rounds up what we are trying to do. This is a simple chart and it works very well but it has a lot of punch in terms of making these changes. Under the word attitude, you can see the definition of that. Create a firmwide corporate environment with the right business strategy and attitude to recruit, hire, retain and advance the careers of people with disabilities. Under accessibility, we talk about accessible standards that make sure technology and your buildings accessible to people with disabilities. Whether they are blind, deaf or mobility impaired or other mental illness, etc. The reason why these easy words are there is not to make disability complicated, as it is so often today. Accommodations is a key point in the business or organization that wants to hire an employ people with disabilities because they may need things altered in a footprint of real estate or technology or transportation to help them get to work and do their jobs. Finally, assimilation is a thought that says, how do you bring people into your culture and treat them like everybody else? Treat them equally well when it comes to employment, promotion and leadership opportunities. These work very well for us at J.P. Morgan Chase. We don't need medical definitions to figure out how to help people with disabilities. Next slide, I think there is only one more. When you look at how this works out in terms of my office of disability inclusion. The folks that will help manage disability inclusion at the UN have all of these things on the left and right of the little bubble in the middle in terms of the things you look at. Human resources, legal, education and training, real estate, the top executives should buy an at the UN. Health and medical. These are teams that and the working together to help form an inclusive environment for all people, including people with disabilities. Marketing, media, community outreach. We do a lot with nonprofits. Internal and external communications, recruiting. My work with the UN as a partner is why I come out and do this, to share what we've learned and hopefully learn more from you in terms of doing things better for people with disabilities. Next slide. I think there's one more. Given the four A's, this is a chart that simply says what are the things that fall under attitude, accommodations, accessibility and assimilation. For example, under attitude, we talk to the media a lot about what the firm is doing. I do speaking events as I'm doing here with my colleagues. We talk about what we do in my leadership at the bank once told me Jim, whatever you teach us here, share with the world. Because my bank said we want more organizations and people to become familiar with hiring people with disabilities as talent. I will use the term people with this abilities as a description. But their brains carry themselves into our world and they manage people, they come up with ideas. They transact business. So there's a lot to be said for people who have certain, how should I say it, limitations. But they transcend themselves when they come to work and to John's. These slides, we are happy to share them all. And I think that's it for the slides, right? So today, we are here because the Secretary-General launched the UN disability inclusion strategy in 2019. High-level strategies, direction and policy framework for the United Nations on disability inclusion. What we are trying to do now and I think this panel today is unique because I didn't want to lead a team of people with

expertise. In terms of talking about our experiences regarding disability inclusion. When we talk to - - and team, we basically said let's make this a working session in terms of what advice would we want to give with our consultants here today. What advice would we want to give to the UN to help them start their strategy? This session is about building a plan and strategy that the UN can adopt in terms of launching their disability strategy. So what we need now is a concrete plan on how the strategy and policy framework can be turned into action. Especially in terms of hiring more persons with disabilities and supporting and retaining them. Based on the information provided to me, there are 60 UN entities in 190 countries at the UN. The UN employees close to 40,000 people. You can have a tremendous role in modeling inclusivity in many of the contacts you work in. If you view yourself as a leader in this work. I'd like to introduce you to our four panelists. Suzanne, Sharon, Kendrick, Gabriel and Vladimir. Today, I think we are doing something uniquely unique. Instead of describing what each of us does, we'll give you our best advice to help you formulate your UN disability strategy to help you expand your way of thinking regarding disability inclusion. More than that, executing a strategy. So let's get right to it now. The first question is directed to all the panelists. There's still a lot of stigmas out there. So why should the UN hire more people with disabilities from your unique perspective? And what advice can you give to find high quality talent with disabilities? Shirin, You want to try that?

SPEAKER:

Sure. One key thing we have been trying to do last year at UNICEF is to show the connection between our workforce and our programming. And other offices around the world. Depending on the country, 10-25 percent of those children are children with disabilities. So we need a workforce that mirrors the children we are serving. Because a disability representative workforce will think and design programs from a first-hand experience. This is the same as LGBTQ youth and having LGBTQ staff. I think for the UN, that's really the argument. It will make our work better. From the private sector, people with disabilities help and of it, they improve morale, there's less absenteeism and turnover. in terms of finding the talent, I want to make reference to a great program by my colleagues at (unknown term) that they've been running for the last couple years to show it's possible to have a pipeline of candidates with disabilities. They've been focusing on just placing UN volunteers around the world in different offices. They've managed to place 71 with disabilities at 35 UN offices around the world. They have a targeted outreach, targeted on boarding, huge support to the UN offices. It is quite possible to do and we are learning that at UNICEF and trying to do that as well.

SPEAKER:

Thank you. Suzanne?

SPEAKER:

Sure. I'm drawn from what we've observed in the private sector. And I would say - - have hit many of the things we are observing. In terms of why, it has all to do with talents. It has to do with business imperative and UN being its own business, and that is serving people around the world and equalizing social justice and access to all of the goods and services that communities afford us. And that mission means including the 20 percent of people, globally, who are individuals with disabilities.

It is democratizing access to what it means to be a citizen. How to do it? It needs to be done in partnership with local organizations and they can be employment organizations that can help with identifying talent. It might be parent organizations. Local schools. But it means setting that agenda and then finding the partners you need in the local area as well as setting that strategy in the big picture as well.

SPEAKER:

That's so right. That's so important to think about going forward as well. We do have at Chase, we have a group of nonprofits we work with as well. It's just not us working in our little bubble. And we work with each group like the blind, deaf, mobility impaired, nonprofit organizations. To learn what they are facing out there and to give them a taste of what a corporation like Chase is looking for. Those partnerships are extremely important. The partnership that our bank has with the UN now is extremely important. I want to say in terms of partnerships, Martha, who we will hear from later, I invited her to meet my executives at the bank I think last year. She brought in her team of expert executives. We sat down with our HR to talk with them. It was a great conversation with the business and UN entity to melt the mines. We have similar things to do together so great point to bear. Kendrick, you want to take it next?

SPEAKER:

Can you hear me?

SPEAKER:

Yes.

SPEAKER:

I'm honored to be here. I know from my own personal life, I had two strokes at the young age of 20 and then 22. And really before that, I was - - in every sport I played. I was a different person after I had my strokes. And people looked at me differently too. I looked at myself differently too. So I think, I think you alluded to this, changing the narrative. You know, how we look at people who are living with disabilities. A lot of times we look at people living with disabilities as a crutch. And they need able-bodied people to help them. You know? So they really are put in a place that they need others to help them. But as the data shows, people living with disabilities come to work on time. They've got skills. You know, so, it's really a human right. For everybody. To work. So changing the narrative of how we look at people living with disabilities is a key point. Because it's a system. It's a system just like racism, sexism and ableism is a system. Really looking at the system and pushing to include everybody in the system. And that's all I want to say right now.

SPEAKER:

That's a good point and your point about being able-bodied at one time in your life as I was and you were, and then becoming disabled is a transition by itself. It had taken me five years to get over, I guess, although you never get over it. Losing your able-bodiedness. And that something a lot of people don't really think about in terms of, I wasn't born like this. This happened because of an athletic accident which I was lousy at, actually. It happened. I think you are spot on there and you

made good points. Gabriel, would you take the same question too?

SPEAKER:

Thank you. I fully agree with all the panelists. I would like to start with why. It's the right thing to do. Also as - - highlighted, - - (Inaudible). My advice is to share everywhere that you're looking for talented people with disabilities. Communicate with your collaborators and have everyone in the UN know it's a priority for you. You have a lot of collaborators there so you can definitely spread the word. Also, share with everyone that you are looking together with organizations and universities. And also, help universities to know that their students with disabilities may or may not require some assistance - - there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Because we are seeing a lot of students with disabilities after finishing college. They are unemployed. Imagine all the effort to finally get a degree but there is no job waiting for them. There are incredible organizations all over the world that can be of help. Finally, the size of the UN and all the location that the UN has offices to be as flexible as possible and be open to learn along the way.

SPEAKER:

Good points. The thing I want to offer to the UN and managers and leadership is that it doesn't happen overnight in terms of what Gabriel just said. It takes time to set up accommodations. It takes time to set up a recruiting team. So I asked everyone for their patients as they embark on this journey. The ADA has been around for 30 years. As good as that bill was, we still don't have it right yet. It unfortunately takes a long time so thank you for that. Vladimir, would you take that question too?

SPEAKER:

Yes, thank you very much. First I would say we need to recognize that we are still asking the question why. This is for me that is important to say. We are still in 2020, we have to ask why. (Inaudible) There are b conditions for creating a narrative within the country and there is demand and there is pretty much responsibility of the country to hire and to include persons with disabilities in the labor market. Therefore, if the UN wants to work in this country, it needs to comply with (unknown term). It is beyond it makes sense, it is beyond it's the right thing to do. It's a responsibility. - - So that's first for me. Secondly, many people spoke before me about studies that show disabled people are good workers. I will not repeat that. I will just agree with that wholeheartedly. Now how to recruit, how to employ people with disabilities. Again for me, just simply do it. Make a decision. From the moment you make the decision, there should be - - we should not be having these conversations anymore. Organizations should be on a practical level. I think that to make the next step I think it's important to recognize that there is a b bias, b discrimination. This is the last frontier of the work we are doing. Disabled people are being included in many different ways. But when it comes to employment and especially private sector, I have to say that we are far from where we should be. And - - just mentioned ADA, with the sole goal to increase employment opportunities. That was the primary objective. It failed. It went down actually. From the moment it was adopted until 20 something years later. It speaks that we need to deal with this b bias. And how to do that. We can do trainings and workshops internally. And it goes back to make a decision and just do it. Thank you.

SPEAKER:

That's a great point. I think that I sometimes get into heated debates, let me call it that. When I tell my community, I go look, we that have disabilities have to make our able-bodied colleagues comfortable with us. Someone says to me, Jim, that's not true. I don't care what they think of me. I don't have to make any more effort. You can say that. In the ideal world, that could be true. But the able-bodied people sometimes don't understand what our disability is. Is it something they can catch, are they going to be politically incorrect. I do my best to make sure that they're comfortable with me. If I can't make people feel comfortable with me, how can I do my work? How can I be included in an organization such as the United Nations? Are there some responsibility on people with disabilities as well as our able-bodied colleagues. So that's a two-way street. You just got that thought in my head in terms of the attitudinal things. And a manager at the UN should expect a person with a disability to carry him or herself the way anyone would in a work environment.

SPEAKER:

Jim, can I take the floor for a short secondly I forgot to say something. To really achieve this work, I think partnership with organizations for persons with disabilities is needed. We can develop these trainings. We can work and set up mechanisms and help with recruitment also. Outreach can be made through these organizations which exist in every country of the world. And in some countries, for more than 100 years. This is the best practical way. Sorry, I forgot to mention.

SPEAKER:

That's okay, I forget all the time. I'm over 60, so that happens. How can the UN and sure there are no barriers in the recruitment process? For example, there are six official languages at the UN. For job applications - - job applicants who are deaf, does the UN have the capacity to provide interpreters for candidates in their native language as one example as an accommodation?

SPEAKER:

As we mentioned early, the UN is a big system of many facets. It will depend on the UN agency. But essentially, yes. It is possible and is something we are trying to work towards and help each other out between different agencies. There are many intermediary steps for a deaf applicant to have a good recruitment experience. UNICEF has tried to address them to make sure it's not a messy, uncomfortable experience. Long before that job applicant whose death comes, we need to - - who is deaf comes, it needs to be well communicated to those on the front lines. What is the pathway. So we've done webinars with different regions around the world so the offices have an idea of who they can seek out for support and that reasonable accommodation is available. Our outreach teams have been helping revamp our career sites. We have video with top leadership talking about the value of colleagues with disabilities to UNICEF and why we need to hire more of them. We offer flexible work and other things so that's trying to externally communicate that this is happening so people will apply to us. Because often times, we don't get many applications. We haven't done outreach events with the deaf community but that would be an idea to get them into the UN system. And we need to announce explicitly that we provide reasonable accommodation, otherwise people won't know that they will be taken care of. UNICEF of that had made their office assessable. If they have a mobility issue and the need an elevator, we provide that. Our online recruitment systems had accessibility

issues for screen reader issues. We added an optional question when applying for the job on accommodations. We didn't have that before this year. Now at least HR can get a flag and know this is happening before the person comes and be more prepared. So it's a - - if it's a deaf applicant, they can be prepared. Do they have interpreters that can be - - for the interview. There are steps along the way and lots of partnership so the whole journey of the recruitment goes well.

SPEAKER:

That's great to know. How have you found the receptivity of your managers in this point? In terms of their understanding of what's needed as you set up that process you just talked about.

SPEAKER:

It really varies. We have so many different kinds of managers. We have managers with disabilities who are hiring more people with disabilities. We have manager stuck at the why and not seeing it as a human right issue. They want to make sure everything is clear along the way and they will be supported. As long as that support is given from headquarters, then they feel more comfortable with it. But there are hiccups along the way and every office around the world is different obviously.

SPEAKER:

Thank you. Suzanne, I'm going to jump to you and then go to Vladimir. How can we demystify to managers that hiring people with disabilities are not costly? And what should the UN do if they're serious about doing this to support persons with disabilities in the workplace? For example, tech accommodations and building accessibility.

SPEAKER:

Thank you for that question. It's a critical one. We know from our research at Cornell University that 60 percent of disclosures about having a disability and needing accommodations go to supervisors. Not to HR. Although I'm delighted we have HR colleagues here because you are really critical. It's where supervisors go to problem solve as well as individuals. We need to equip those supervisors. My colleagues have alluded to that. I know it's building its capacity to inform its supervisors in a robust way as early as the beginning of next year. Kudos to you because that is a critical first step. There are myths about the costs of accommodations. We know from data from the accommodation network which has been in place in the United States since 1983. 80 percent of accommodations cost under \$500. And most of them cost nothing. They are adjustments to schedule. Sometimes it's modifications to the path of travel. Certainly there are other things that can come up, but we also know from Census data that 95 percent of accommodations in the workplace come from people without disabilities. And we forget that. We forget that we are accommodating our workers all the time to keep them productive. It's usually flex time, adjustments in workstations. We don't consider them accommodations. In the way we do with people with disabilities. So we need to keep that broader picture in view. We also need to understand that training alone is not sufficient. It's certainly really important to get people to think about it so they feel equipped. So they understand the resources are in place in their unit and their department. Like - - just mentioned, they have backup if they have questions because most do not have familiarity. But exposure is the best thing to change attitudes. And attitudes are the thing we most need to deal with when we are talking about

supervisors. They may feel people aren't capable. They've not had experience to debunk that myth. One of the things we've found most powerful is internships. People with disabilities are six times more likely to have hired a person with a disability in the last year. That's because it gives supervisors low risk exposure to people with disabilities. It boosts their confidence and let them see how competent people are and how they can rise to the occasion to assist people to really thrive and more than just survive in the workplace and that changes attitudes immeasurably. It's a powerful anecdote to stigma and biases out there.

SPEAKER:

Thank you for mentioning attitude that way. That is so important on both sides of the sentence. On the managerial side and the person with disabilities side. I'm just glad you put that together that way. That's great. It's such a simple thing to miss. And if you miss it, you may have to check yourself to say, do I have a little bias or a little unconscious bias here? When you look at any job candidate, you don't want to make a bad pick whether they're able-bodied or not because of all the paperwork you have to do. I picked the wrong person. This person didn't work out for our culture. But you have to consider all those things in addition to people with disabilities. Great points. I want to go back to Vladimir on this because your comments did Doc tell - - duck tail. We know - - are out there but the question I always get, how do you find them? Once you've found them, how do you convince them you're serious about concluding and advancing them? One of the things we've done at our firm is we've done a great job at bringing people in. Now my next way is to say how do way them up the leadership ladder? Can you comment on that?

SPEAKER:

I think that again, a lot has been discussed by Shirin already. We are reaching out to organizations from different countries. And we are trying to recruit from that large pool. The second thing is that really very important is to provide reasonable accommodation. Accommodation during the application process but beyond that during the employment. Or at least to try to facilitate delivery of the reasonable accommodation locally. Sometimes there are many resources that companies can look at locally. But also sometimes the reasonable accommodation will cost money. What Suzanne said, study show the majority of people with disabilities who are working don't demand high cost accommodations. But that also means another thing. People who have more severe disabilities, they don't work. Sometimes reasonable accommodations cost money so we have to be ready for that. And not in a way to scare companies but something we need to accept as a matter of fact. I like what Suzanne said that we are always making accommodations but not calling them reasonable accommodations. Just something we do to help keep our workers happy. Also to sustain these policies in place throughout the time that somebody is working. And I want to go back into these annual trainings that is important. This can result in positive outcomes.

SPEAKER:

You are spot on with all of that. I just want to let the UN know and other folks know as they take back these learnings, when I was at IBM, we had a \$2 million budget for accommodations around the world. At the bank, we have a rich accommodations plan also for 250,000 people around the world. What happened in the last few years is the accommodations now, the masks we have to wear now

for COVID and the shields. We also do modifications in terms of - - at IBM when I was there, we didn't talk about ergonomic furniture. Now it's in play in the United States under OSHA where people are asking for that. The sit/stand desks. Most accommodations are not expensive. But when you have a population of 40,000 people as we do - - 250,000 people, accommodations can get pricey. However, you've got to balance that against legal lawsuits if you don't provide an accommodation or do something wrong. Again, as you stated and Suzanne stated, accommodations can cost less than \$100 in most cases. I'm not going to fudge on the money, it can get expensive, depending on how big your organization is. If you're a shop owner at a store and you have to put in a curb cut, that will cost a few hundred dollars. But accommodations can get pricey as well. It's smart to budget for that as well. Especially when you work around the world. So Kendrick, I want to go to you next. There's a lot of talk today in the diversity worlds, even at my bank, on the concept of intersectionality of disability inclusion with women, Blacks, Hispanics and everyone else. So it's an important topic from so many aspects. But people with disabilities still seem to be an afterthought. Do you see that in your work and what about people with disabilities face multiple barriers? Racial, sexual preferences and religion. How do you see intersectionality playing out today in the world and at the UN?

SPEAKER:

Yes, thanks for the question. I know my work the theology of disabilities, ideal was that all the time. Because just like Black lives matter movement, I have to include people living with disabilities. Sometimes we are just not mentioned. Our voice is not heard. So I make sure, me and my colleagues. The people I know to raise our voices. It's slow, but we've got to do it. Sometimes we can't rely on others to do that. That work. But it's important work. Making sure I'm including people with disabilities. Living with disabilities in the conversation. Just like Native Americans, a lot of times are not even mentioned. They're not even invited to the conversations. So I have to step back really and check myself and say - - and model what I'm talking about. I've got to model it all the time and have an open mind if I've done something wrong. You know? Just say it. I'm glad the United Nations is taking this on. Modeling inclusion. A lot of times it's easier to step away when it's hard.

SPEAKER:

Right. Kendrick, let me ask you this one too. You say it's hard but do people just forget or do you think it's more deliberate?

SPEAKER:

I think some people forget. But disability was always with us. I think people try to forget it. People living with disabilities, everybody knows people living with disabilities. A lot of times we don't fit the prototype per se. Some people try to shy away from that. Especially able-bodied people. Because our livelihood is involved with that too, right? Our friends, our family, our jobs. This prototype of normalcy. It's so ingrained in our system. Some disabilities are seen as outright. But some still have a big stigma. That made us to do for them - - that need us to do for them.

SPEAKER:

I think it's important for managers, this issue. This intersectionality, it's a nice term. What that basically means is that there's a number of people in diverse organizations. You can meet in the

middle and find out, at least in my view, you will find out you have more in common than not. But you have to think not in your own black group, Hispanic group, women group, you've got to think that there's a lot of connections being made with us as a human race and we tend to forget that for some reason.

SPEAKER:

We are doing good work though.

SPEAKER:

I would agree with that too. It's going too slow for me. (Laughs).

SPEAKER:

We need to do more work around this. I know my colleagues are doing great work but we have to keep pushing. We have to keep going forward.

SPEAKER:

Good point. Thank you. Gabriel, I want to get to you on recruiting as I move this along because I can talk about this forever. As a manager, how do you know what is appropriate or not appropriate when you recruit someone with a disability? How do you make managers feel comfortable assimilating with people with disabilities on their teams? Do you have to go an extra mile if someone with a disability is reporting to them or does the person with the disability go the extra mile to prove how good they are?

SPEAKER:

(Inaudible) Sometimes we find that once we talked with managers, (Inaudible). It's not enough to include diversity in the organization. It's necessary to manage that diversity so people feel part of their organization. This is when it becomes an asset of the organization. I also think people in general are afraid of the unknown. As you mentioned before, - - we live in a competitive world. We all are expected to go this extra mile and it applies to employees and managers and any diversity effort. Managing people is always a challenge. I don't know any manager that says managing people is the easiest part of my job. Should not define the decision of managers or anyone else. As mentioned before, there is a payback. A study in 2019 showed diverse teams outperform non-diverse teams. So if we were running this panel in the 19th century we would maybe be discussing about having women in the workplace. Unfortunately, we have to still fight. As we mentioned before, it's 2020. We need to normalize diversity. Again, it's 2020. We need to look for the best available talent considering 100 percent of the population. Not only the 85 percent that does not have a disability.

SPEAKER:

Those are good points and this will lead to the next question that I'm going to ask the entire panel to address. I met an employee when I was at the bank. She walked into my office and introduced herself and said hello. I was the new guy doing his ability inclusion. After a few months, we became more friendly and she told me she had a disability. I said well, how is that going? She goes, well it's

okay. I said, did you tell your manager? She goes, no. I said, why didn't you? She said I didn't want the manager to think I was less than a good employee. You couldn't tell she had a disability and she was brilliant. But she was struggling with doing some work because she couldn't ask for an accommodation that would make it easier for her because she didn't want the manager to think, he may not think I'm a good employee or she may not think I'm a good employee. Or I'd be put off for promotions. Your point is good for our UN managers who are listening. Your employees care about what they do and they don't want to feel less than an able-bodied employee in front of you. That went to the heart of the matter that says, they're more worried about what their manager will think about them, so they'd rather suffer through what they have to do. Rather than ask for the help. And we've got to create the environment as managers of people to say tell us what you need so you can do the best job possible. Not only for you but for the people in this company. That gets to the heart of what you just said and I hope the managers who are listening to us acknowledge that. The next question is for the entire panel about mental illness. Which is considered an invisible disability. CNN just reported that in Japan, more people died from suicide last month than from COVID-19 in all of 2020. When a manager suspects a mental health issue may be impacting their employees performance, what should they do? What are your thoughts given the fact that some cultures still don't like to talk about it? Gabriel, we will start with you since I've got you on screen.

SPEAKER:

Sure. It's one of the biggest issues in several organizations. It's always hard to ask. Sometimes it's a taboo topic. First of all, you need to create a trusting environment. Explained that the goal is to help them even if it doesn't guarantee the employee will take any action. In similar situations, we recommend maybe a third-party psychologist or a specialized organization to support the company and both the manager and employee. Trying to address the issue in a confidential manner usually helps to create this safe environment. In order to understand what are the needs of the person. Also I want to - - it's not only taboo in Japan. It's taboo to maybe feel weak or vulnerable. Particularly in competitive environments. Where you are supposed to be your best. Maybe saying, I am suffering. It's not what is culturally accepted. If we create these trusting environments, it will be easier to help.

SPEAKER:

Vladimir, you want to take that next?

SPEAKER:

I agree. This is the most difficult conversation that we can have. The discrimination with people with - - disciplines are very b. Not only in some cultures. I believe the majority if not all cultures. So it's really something that we have to recognize and again, I like what Gabriel said. Maybe I should be speaking always after Gabriel, this is a good idea. We need to create this welcoming environment because without conversations and questions asked. Without knowing someone has a disability, they cannot - - there cannot be any progress made. If you don't know really what you need to address. I know in the past we had situations which we just had to change office space for a person. Working to a different office. It changed everything. It changed performance. The satisfaction level and etc. Sometimes for a person with - - in the presence of many other people in the room (Inaudible). Without talking about this openly and without managers that really understand the

disability and want to make this paradigm shift. We are talking about a massive paradigm shift. This has to happen in order to achieve this. Again, I would say the best way is to work with organizations as a starting point. From there on, we can see what the next steps. There are more and more networks with psychological disabilities. There are many more that will be able to respond and support as well as to find good resources in this regard.

SPEAKER:

It's a tough cookie. Suzanne, can you take it on next?

SPEAKER:

Sure. I agree with everything that is said. I think overarchingly, one of the top things - - people get in trouble because disclosure. Moderating health is the best thing an organization can do. Talk about it before it becomes a problem for the individual and organization. Make the resources available. Talk about the fact this is just as important as going to the gym and eating well. And promote the resources available. Don't make employee assistance programs for the sick. Make it a part of good health and make those resources visible and readily available. And where there are champions and people where struggled with mental health, it is helpful for them to acknowledge that and let people know how important it is to get the help you need. It's possible to change the culture.

SPEAKER:

It's hard and we started our program about two years ago. We had testimonials worldwide from people from India, Japan, South America, etc., talking about this. We found it to be very helpful for the culture. Mental health is an unseen disability.

SPEAKER:

We have a duty to inquire as managers and HR people if we suspect someone has a disability. The UN mental health practitioners that put posters in every toilet for people to know how to approach colleagues. - - Another thing is HR has done a lot throughout COVID to focus on people's troubles versus the hours worked. We have colleagues with children with disabilities who have been very burnt out. Having mental health issues and stresses. I think there are HR policies to reduce stress and burden on people during COVID as well.

SPEAKER:

That's great for the managers to hear today. Kendrick, do you want to add to that?

SPEAKER:

I just want to - - like everybody else said, really putting systems in place. Because mental health, people are very vulnerable. You know, so, putting a system in place that's safe. Can you hear me?

SPEAKER:

Yeah. You are breaking up a little bit but go ahead.

SPEAKER:

My work around mental illness, it's very hard. Because people are scared sometimes. People don't know what to do. Leaders. Don't know what to do when people have mental illness. I think we've got to talk about it more and more. I want to listen to my colleagues. It's hard to put mental illness with disabilities. But it is. Living with a disability. We need to honor that. And really have conversations around that.

SPEAKER:

I want to do a time check. How are we on time?

SPEAKER:

We have about 15 minutes before we have to close at 10:30.

SPEAKER:

Okay, so we've all go about another five minutes.

SPEAKER:

And then we've all handed over.

SPEAKER:

Great. I don't want to take time from her. Thank you. - - When someone acquires a disability during employment, what can you do as a manager to support them? What does the UN need to think about in terms of accommodation, accessibility, etc. or the 4A's I posted if that something you guys will embrace. Managers think it's a tough add-on and we are just trying to tell them, we are just part of the process.

SPEAKER:

We have had a number of things acquired. Historically, managers think this person needs to go on disability and it's a done deal. I think more and more they're starting to realize the staff can work on a gradual return to work. Start with a few core tasks and build their tolerance back up. I think it's still kind of a new thing people are getting comfortable with but it is catching on more and more. It's good for us, it's good for the employee and a lot of colleagues can come back. Really talking with the employee about what they can do. A lot of colleagues say the manager made the decision on their behalf that they couldn't do this or that. I think there are assumptions that managers make. You just have to check in and have that cover station and not make an assumption.

SPEAKER:

That's a great point. The second question I have is because you are with the UN, how do you think the UN is poised, even with this advice to move forward in terms of - - what do you think of the buy-in in terms of doing this at the manager level? Are they nervous about it? Are they wondering, is it going to be more work than they thought. How are you guys thinking about integrating this?

SPEAKER:

We are integrating on a case-by-case basis. Not on a large scale. It depends manager to manager

but I think there is nervousness, is this going to work. Are they going to have an okay journey. How much will the rest of the team have to support. We have to clearly look at the job description, what are the essential tasks. Can you do some of these. And then show it to the manager. If they can't, then we have to think of another scenario. Seeing if a temporary consultant or someone else could be hired while the staff is in recovery. So they're not fully established and entrenched but there are cases we are working on where there is success. I think it just shows we are a more caring organization so we are trying to promote it that way. UNICEF is caring and we always talk about how we can demonstrate care to our employees, managers and other colleagues as well.

SPEAKER:

I want to ask one last question and thanked the panelists before I give it back to - - I work closely with my communications team and executives. Do you have a communication strategy on how to talk about this to the firm? Do you have plans in place in a way to talk to this. Is that being built into your plan as you think about diversity and inclusion as a policy? That was for you, Suzanne.

SPEAKER:

I think the big thing is it needs to be a multitier strategy. First of all, messaging from the top is absolutely critical. The strategic imperative that's been adopted in the last year really is the place to start. Messaging that says this is us. This is who we are now going forward. And consistently sending them by layering it throughout the organization with disability being part of all the equity considerations. Often we see people start with gender and race, ethnicity. Disability has been at the end of those imperatives. It needs to be layered in all of those things. A natural part of supervisory training and embedded in affirmative recruitment working with community organizations. It is certainly multilayered. I hear that already in the fabric of Fort our colleagues are saying in the UN. We couldn't be poised any better than we are right now. Disability is becoming more visible in so many circles that I think now is the time. And I think they should teach a comparative that the UN laid out positions them perfectly for this.

SPEAKER:

That's a good way to end the panel. A vote of confidence for the UN on our part so thank you very much panelists. I think it was informative for me. - - I want to give you more time and you can take it from here.

SPEAKER:

Thanks Jim. I will pass the floor to Martha Helena. Martha, over to you.

SPEAKER:

Thank you. Gracias Jim, for being another year with us. This has been a wonderful discussion. The valuable insights you have shared will help us in our efforts to diversify our workforce and to make the United Nations family disability inclusive. I'm confident that all our participants have found the conversation as useful and enjoyable as I have. Connecting remotely with so many participants online across stations and geographical regions. Across offices. Across UN system organization is a great opportunity to have you part of the conversation. And I want to express my deep gratitude to all

of you who are joining us today. But I would also like to ask each one of you, we need all of you to - - for disability inclusion. This is a joint agenda. It cannot be done by individual departments alone. Spread the word on the importance of disability inclusion. The value that employing and including persons with disabilities bring to the organization's and how including them will benefit all of us. Also, I encourage you to be there for any colleagues with disabilities. What they need and with support. Ringing together expert speakers from across industries and sectors on the international day of disabilities has now become a tradition for us in the office of human resources of the UN Secretariat. Jim, we are counting with you. In fact, we are booking you for 2021.

SPEAKER:

(Laughs) Thank you for that. Thank you very much. I hope I'm around.

SPEAKER:

We hope also. We will reach out to you.

SPEAKER:

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to work with you.

SPEAKER:

We need to drive this agenda every day of the year. Not just today. Following this discussion, my team will look into how we in the UN Secretariat and in the coordination with - - and further amplify an advance our efforts to attract and recruit persons with disabilities to the UN family and provide them with opportunities to develop and enhance their careers. When we invited Jim and our panelists to be with us today, we did not want this to be just another traditional roundtable discussion. Instead, we wanted to make sure this leads to action. It is important and we truly walk the talk on disability inclusion. In the office of human resources of the UN Secretariat we are available to guide you and provide tools to employ persons with disabilities, help support and engage colleagues with disabilities and promote an inclusive organization. I count on the support from all of you to advance this agenda. So once again, thank you Jim. Thank you Suzanne. Thank you Shirin, thank you Kendrick. Gracias Gabriel. We are truly grateful for all the work you do and that you're able to share with us. Thank you to each and every one of you joining this event today. I wish you all a wonderful international day of persons with disabilities. Hasta pronto.

SPEAKER:

Any final words from Jim? We have a couple minutes before we have to officially close where the platform will kick us out. Any final word from you or other panelists?

SPEAKER:

I will say, I love the panelists that helped us today. For me, it's about humanity. It's not about a job. I know that the UN mission. If we can help humanity become better in terms of how people are treated and given our technology and our education around this area. There's no reason why we can't normalize disability inclusion. We can get rid of the words, disability inclusion. It's just people who are people and trying to contribute the best they can. That's my hope for anything that we do here.

SPEAKER:

Thanks Jim. Any other final comments from our panelists?

SPEAKER:

Thank you. I just wanted to echo what Vladimir said earlier. I think it's the time to just do it. Just our recruiting people and we are done talking and making the business case and let's start doing it and going through the experience as the UN system. I like what he mentioned about that.

SPEAKER:

I'll just make a quick comment. And that is I think the leadership of the UN on this issues speaks volumes to the world. So I am doubly excited. When any organization takes it on concertedly. But you touched so many people and you stand for so much in terms of inclusion already. That you taking the leadership position on this will have an incredibly broad impact. Much broader than you even know at this point in time. I'm very eager to watch this, see how it evolves and understand better the impact this will have on a broader community. With all the places you reach now.

SPEAKER:

Thank you all. On behalf of HR and the organizing team. Thank you all and to the panel. We will keep working on this, pushing the agenda forward altogether. On the international day of persons with disabilities. Thank you and goodbye.