

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY

A policy adopted by the Ministry of External Affairs to give effect to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017.

I. PREAMBLE

The Ministry of External Affairs recognizes the value of a diverse work force, and an inclusive and enabling work environment. We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for people with disabilities, and to providing an environment and work culture which is inclusive of them. We seek to act proactively to facilitate their full participation in the work of the Ministry. We are also committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities can interact with the Ministry in an environment which is optimal for the needs.

II. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all those Indian citizens who are employees of the Ministry of External Affairs.

This policy will apply to all properties and buildings under the ownership and/or functional control of this Ministry, located both within and outside India.

III. DEFINITIONS

In this policy, unless the context otherwise requires –

(a) "barrier" means any factor including communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional, political, social, attitudinal or structural factors which hampers the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society;

(b) "care-giver" means any person including parents and other family Members who with or without payment provides care, support or assistance to a person with disability;

(c) "communication" includes means and formats of communication, languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, signs, large print, accessible multimedia, written, audio, video, visual displays, sign language, plain-language, human-reader, augmentative and alternative modes and accessible information and communication technology;

(d) "discrimination" in relation to disability, means any distinction, exclusion, restriction on the basis of disability which is the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise

on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field and includes all forms of discrimination and denial of reasonable accommodation;

(e) 'Ministry' refers to Ministry of External Affairs, including diplomatic Missions and Posts abroad; attached and subordinate offices, autonomous bodies including Indian Council for Cultural Relations and its field offices both within and outside India; Regional Passport Offices; Protector General of Emigrants' Offices;

(f) "person with disability" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others;

(g) "public building" means a Government or private building, used or accessed by the public at large, including a building used for educational or vocational purposes, workplace, commercial activities, public utilities, religious, cultural, leisure or recreational activities, medical or health services, law enforcement agencies, reformatories or judicial foras, railway stations or platforms, roadways bus stands or terminus, airports or waterways;

IV. POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of External Affairs is committed to providing the following for people with disabilities:

(a) This Ministry will ensure that the work environment is free from any discrimination against persons with disabilities, and that no opportunity is denied to persons with disabilities, only on the ground of the disability.

(b) The Ministry shall provide reservation in appointments, as per Government of India instructions issued from time to time.

(c) The Ministry shall supportively consider, to the extent possible, the request of persons with disabilities with respect to intra-transfer/posting, for optimally utilising their services.

(d) The Ministry shall give preference, to the extent possible, to the requests by persons with disabilities for allotment of appropriate residential accommodation.

(e) In substantive public dealing and public interfaces, the Ministry will endeavour to make public buildings, accessible to people with disabilities in the following manner:

- i) Provide barrier free access and assistive devices, including, but not limited to, ramp facilities, where feasible, at entrances; braille enabled signage; handrails and guardrails; accessible counters; and, accessible elevators and stairs.
 - ii) Ensure that there are adequate public facilities for the use of people with disabilities, including but not limited to, enabled washrooms, and availability of potable water on all floors.
 - iii) Designate dedicated parking spots near suitable access points for the exclusive use of people with disabilities.
 - iv) Ensure that caregivers (when people with disabilities have to be accompanied by caregivers) are provided with requisite access or facilities to enable them to assist the said person.
- (f) The Ministry shall, by giving appropriate directions, ensure that the above mentioned provisions of this clause are also applied in buildings and properties which are used for public dealings of the Ministry via outsourced agencies.
- (g) The Ministry will endeavour to ensure that all public documents, including websites, are in accessible formats.
- (h) The Ministry will endeavour to provide suitable facilities and amenities to persons with disabilities for the effective discharge of their functions, including, but not limited to, braille enabled computer systems, height adjustable desks, accessible plug sockets, tactile paving, desktop enabled biometric attendance system in offices of people with disabilities.
- (i) The Ministry will endeavour to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled to participate in government meetings in a convenient mode of communication.
- (j) The Ministry shall consider supportively requests from persons with disabilities for additional staffing assistance on a priority basis.
- (k) The Ministry shall ensure that the provisions for equal opportunity are enjoyed equally by women with disabilities.
- (l) The Ministry shall include awareness and sensitization training programmes for employees.
- (m) This Policy shall be given appropriate publicity by being displayed prominently on websites of the Ministry.

V. GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

The Ministry of External Affairs shall appoint a Gazetted Officer as the designated 'Grievance Redressal Officer'. The Officer shall be the nodal point for receiving and disposing of all grievances filed under this policy. The Grievance Redressal Officer

shall investigate the complaint and shall take up the matter with the establishment for corrective action. Further, every complaint shall be enquired within two weeks of its registration.

The Officer shall maintain a record of complaints.

Individuals filing grievance shall be given an adequate opportunity of being heard by the Grievance Redressal Officer. If necessary, the hearing should be in the presence of the authority mandated by the Ministry for implementation of relevant suggestion/request.

VI. EMPOWERED COMMITTEE

The Ministry shall notify the constitution of an empowered committee comprising chairperson, and such other members as may be necessary from time to time. The Ministry shall ensure due representation to various categories of beneficiaries, including but not limited to, people with disabilities i.e. SC, ST, economically backward sections, and women.

The empowered committee shall be chaired by AS (AD) and shall comprise JS(AD), JS(Establishment) and Director (Finance) as members. JS (Welfare) shall be the member-convener of the committee. Administrative and secretarial support shall be provided by US (Welfare).

The Chairman, acting through Convener, shall ensure that more than 90 days do not elapse between two meetings of the Committee.

The committee shall have the following functions:

- (a) To provide directions, general or specific, to the concerned administrative authorities for implementation of various measures for the welfare of persons with disabilities;
- (b) To record its general observations about adherence to and compliance of various provisions of this policy read with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the Rules thereunder;
- (c) To take stock of the efficacy of the grievance redressal machinery; and
- (d) To present a report, from time to time, to the Foreign Secretary on the above mentioned aspect.
