



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Senior/High-Level Political and Diplomatic Advisory Consultancy

Support to the International Disability Alliance (IDA) in the negotiation of the legally binding instrument on the human rights of older persons

Commissioning entity	International Disability Alliance (IDA)
Consultancy title	Senior/High-Level Political and Diplomatic Advisor – UN Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on the Human Rights of Older Persons
Duty station	Home-based, with travel to Geneva and, if required, New York for IGWG sessions and related consultations
Duration	End of September 2026 – 31 December 2026
Level of effort	Up to 45 working days over the contract period, used flexibly and concentrated around key diplomatic moments, including the October 2026 IGWG session
Reports to	IDA Executive Director, in close coordination with IDA's technical and legal lead(s) on the older persons' process

1. Background

Description of the Organization: The International Disability Alliance (IDA) was established in 1999 and is a network of eight global and six regional organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). IDA advocates at the United Nations and other international fora for a more inclusive global environment for persons with disabilities and their organisations. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is the cornerstone of IDA's work. IDA supports OPDs worldwide to participate in international human rights and development processes and to use international accountability mechanisms.

In March 2026, the UN Human Rights Council established the open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) to elaborate a comprehensive, legally binding instrument on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. The IGWG held its first session in Geneva from 13–17 July 2026 and will hold its second session from 26–30 October 2026, also in Geneva. The process is expected to continue through subsequent sessions as negotiations advance.

Older persons with disabilities sit at the intersection of the emerging older persons' rights framework and the established CRPD framework. IDA and its members seek to ensure that the new instrument is fully consistent with the CRPD and does not weaken its rights-holder, autonomy-based approach, including standards relating to equal recognition before the law, liberty and security, independent living and inclusion in the community, and adequate standards of living and social protection.

IDA's technical and legal team is closely following the substantive and drafting dimensions of the process. IDA now seeks to complement this work with dedicated senior-level political and diplomatic support capable of building traction with States, the Chair's office, the Bureau, regional groupings and other influential stakeholders.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

IDA is seeking a senior, well-connected political and diplomatic advisor to accompany its leadership and technical team during this phase of the IGWG negotiation process. The consultancy is intended to bring high-level political judgement, diplomatic access, credibility and relationship-building capacity to IDA's engagement.

The primary value of the assignment lies in the consultant's personal standing, networks and ability to open doors, broker relationships and provide strategic political advice. The consultancy will help strengthen IDA's influence in the negotiations and safeguard consistency between the emerging instrument and the standards enshrined in the CRPD.

3. Objectives

- Lend political weight and credibility to IDA's engagement in the IGWG process.
- Open doors and broker relationships with key Permanent Missions, regional groupings, the Chair's office, the Bureau and other influential actors in Geneva and, where relevant, New York.
- Advise IDA's leadership and technical team on political strategy, positioning and diplomatic engagement based on an informed reading of the negotiation landscape.
- Strengthen connections between IDA and allied States, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society actors and the broader older persons' rights movement.
- Accompany and, where agreed, represent IDA in high-level bilateral and informal settings in which senior diplomatic engagement can add value.

4. Scope of Work

This is a flexible, relationship-driven engagement rather than a consultancy centred on a fixed programme of written deliverables. Under the overall guidance of IDA's Executive Director and in close coordination with IDA's technical and legal lead(s), the consultant will be expected to:

- Use their personal relationships, standing and diplomatic experience to secure access, traction and goodwill for IDA within the IGWG process.
- Provide timely political advice and diplomatic soundings, verbally or in writing, as developments require.

- Support the identification and prioritisation of key States, regional groups and decision-makers for IDA engagement.
- Facilitate introductions and help establish or strengthen relationships with senior counterparts who may otherwise be difficult to reach.
- Accompany IDA colleagues during the October 2026 IGWG session in Geneva and participate in bilateral and informal meetings where their presence adds diplomatic value.
- Support high-level engagement in New York or other relevant settings where agreed with IDA.
- Alert IDA promptly to emerging political risks, opportunities, shifts in positions or potential alliances.
- Provide strategic advice on coalition-building and on how IDA can most effectively advance CRPD-consistent positions throughout the negotiation process.

The precise mix and sequencing of activities will be agreed with IDA and adjusted during the consultancy in response to developments in the negotiations.

5. Expected Outputs

Given the nature of the assignment, outputs will be light-touch and flexible. The emphasis is on high-level engagement, access, influence and responsive political advice rather than extensive written reporting. Expected outputs may include:

- An initial strategic discussion and short approach note identifying priority political objectives, interlocutors and relationships to activate.
- Regular informal briefings with IDA's Executive Director and relevant technical/legal colleagues before and after key moments in the process.
- High-level introductions and facilitated engagement with priority States, Permanent Missions, regional groupings and other influential stakeholders.
- In-person accompaniment and diplomatic support during the October 2026 IGWG session in Geneva and related consultations.
- Short verbal or written updates, as needed, flagging political developments, risks, opportunities and recommended next steps.
- A brief end-of-assignment debrief with IDA leadership capturing key political developments, relationships established and strategic recommendations for the next phase.

6. Duration and Level of Effort

The consultancy will run from end of September 2026 to 31 December 2026 and will comprise up to 45 working days. Days will be allocated flexibly, with a higher concentration of effort around the second session of the IGWG (26–30 October 2026, Geneva) and other high-value diplomatic moments. The exact rhythm of work will be agreed with IDA at the outset and adjusted as the process evolves.

7. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report to IDA's Executive Director and will work in close and continuous coordination with IDA's technical and legal lead(s) on the ageing and older persons' rights process. All

representational and public-facing engagement undertaken on behalf of IDA will be coordinated with IDA leadership.

8. Skills and Qualifications

All candidates must agree to comply with IDA's Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and applicable organisational policies.

Requirements

- Senior-level experience and established personal networks among Permanent Representatives, senior diplomats and/or officials engaged in the Geneva and/or New York multilateral human rights system.
- A strong track record of political influence, coalition-building, negotiation or diplomatic brokering in multilateral settings.
- Previous service in a senior role such as ambassador, senior UN official, government minister/senior official, or another position of comparable diplomatic standing is highly desirable.
- Personal credibility and standing sufficient to engage effectively with senior political and diplomatic counterparts on IDA's behalf.
- Excellent political judgement, discretion and ability to operate effectively in fast-moving and informal diplomatic environments.
- Commitment to human rights and genuine alignment with the CRPD's rights-holder and autonomy-based approach. Familiarity with disability rights and/or the UN ageing and older persons' rights process is a strong asset.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills in English. Working knowledge of French and/or Spanish is an asset.
- Availability to travel to Geneva for the October 2026 IGWG session and, if agreed, for other high-level engagements.

Other considerations

- Daily access to reliable internet and a personal computer.
- Willingness to remain available through agreed instant communication channels such as WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams.
- Persons with disabilities are highly encouraged to apply.

9. Financial Proposal and Travel

Applicants are requested to submit a financial proposal indicating their proposed daily professional fee. The final number of days and contractual ceiling will be agreed with the selected consultant, up to a maximum of 45 working days.

Approved travel required for the assignment will be arranged or reimbursed separately in accordance with IDA's applicable travel policies and procedures. Any work beyond the agreed contractual ceiling will require prior written approval from IDA.

10. Confidentiality, Conduct and Conflict of Interest

Given the sensitivity of the diplomatic relationships and negotiation dynamics involved, the consultant will be expected to exercise a high level of discretion and confidentiality at all times. The consultant must act consistently with IDA's positions, values, Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. Any actual or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed as part of the application process and, if selected, throughout the engagement.

11. Application Process

Interested applicants are required to submit the following:

- Resume/CV detailing relevant senior political, diplomatic and multilateral experience.
- A brief cover letter (maximum two pages) explaining the applicant's suitability for the assignment, including relevant diplomatic experience, networks and familiarity with the IGWG, CRPD and/or older persons' rights processes.
- A financial proposal indicating the proposed daily professional fee.
- Contact details for two professional references.

Applications should be submitted to consultancy@ida-secretariat.org indicating in the email subject "*Senior/High-Level Political and Diplomatic Advisory Consultancy*" by **28 September 2026, 4:00 PM CET**. Applications will be treated confidentially. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

IDA is committed to diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity. Qualified persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.