

# **Indian Para-athlete and Disability Rights Activist Ms. Suvarna Raj Wins Prestigious United Nations SDG Action Award in Rome, Italy**

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In a landmark achievement for India, **Suvarna Raj**, a celebrated para-athlete and a passionate disability rights activist, has won the **2024 United Nations SDG Action Award** at the prestigious ceremony held at the TH Roma Carpegna Palace,

Rome. Selected from a competitive pool of 5,500 applicants representing 190 countries, Suvarna has been honored as a **Changemaker Finalist** for her relentless work in championing accessibility, empowerment, and social inclusion for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in India.



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The United Nations SDG Action Awards recognize individuals and organizations worldwide who are driving transformative action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year, the awards witnessed the participation of distinguished individuals, UN leaders, government officials, and global change-makers. Suvarna's recognition as the first disabled woman from India to receive this award is a historic moment, underscoring the nation's progress towards inclusivity and empowerment.

The award ceremony was broadcast live, celebrating Suvarna Raj's work as a catalyst for change. As a **Changemaker Finalist**, Suvarna's achievements have not only highlighted the barriers faced by PwDs in India but also demonstrated the power of resilience, advocacy, and innovation in transforming lives and communities. Suvarna's contributions align closely with SDG Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), making her a symbol of hope and progress for the millions of persons with disabilities worldwide.

### **About Suvarna Raj**

Suvarna Raj is an international para-athlete, disability rights activist, and social worker who has been working tirelessly for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities in India. As a wheelchair user, Suvarna has faced

numerous obstacles in her own life, which have fueled her mission to create a more accessible society. She has conducted over 500 accessibility audits across public and private sectors under the Accessible India Campaign, improving facilities and accessibility in transportation, healthcare, and infrastructure.

In addition to her work in accessibility, Suvarna has been instrumental in influencing national policies and promoting inclusive practices. She is the Brand Ambassador for Accessible Elections 2024, as appointed by the Election Commission of India, and has actively campaigned for the rights of PwDs.

### **A Proud Moment for India**

Suvarna Raj's win is a proud moment for India and a testament to the progress being made toward creating an inclusive society for all. By receiving the United Nations SDG Action Award, Suvarna has brought international recognition to India's efforts toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This award is not only a personal triumph for Suvarna but a victory for every individual and organization working towards inclusivity, equality, and social justice in India.

### **Suvarna's Statement on Winning the Award**

Upon receiving the award, **Suvarna Raj** expressed her gratitude, *"I am deeply honored to receive this award and represent India on this global platform. This recognition is not just mine; it belongs to every person with a disability who has ever fought to be seen, heard, and included. Together, we can build a world where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can live with dignity, independence, and equal opportunity. I dedicate this award to my country and to all the changemakers working tirelessly to create a more inclusive world."*

### **The Road Ahead**

Suvarna Raj's journey is a powerful reminder of the need for persistent advocacy and systemic change. With this award, she is further motivated to continue her work in making India more accessible and inclusive. She hopes this recognition will inspire more people to join the movement for disability rights and contribute to a world where no one is left behind.

