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Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

This year's theme – “Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality”, is timely.

Today we launch the first United Nations flagship report on disability and development, which is focused on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities.

The report represents the first UN systemwide effort to examine disability and the Sustainable Development Goals at the global level. It has been a major undertaking, which has benefited from the contributions of over 200 experts from disabled people's organizations, UN agencies and International Financial Institutions, Member States, research institutions and civil society.

The objective of the report is to enhance current efforts to mainstream the needs, rights and perspectives of persons with disabilities into policies and programmes for achieving the SDGs.

In particular, the report provides an overview of overall progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It presents good practices and policy trends on disability, and outlines concrete evidenced-based policy actions.

A key message from the report is that although there has been progress in terms of the adoption or harmonization of existing laws and policies in line with the Convention, the actual

implementation of such measures has been too slow. Persistent inequality remains a painful reality for persons with disabilities, and discrimination is a major cause of their exclusion.

In many countries, persons with disabilities are still at a disadvantage in gaining access to and affording essential services, including: access to improved sanitation, energy access in the household, use of ICTs. This disadvantage extends to representation in decision-making and political participation. And unfortunately, though not unexpectedly, women with disabilities are in many respects worse off than their male counterparts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sustainable development that leaves no one behind can only be achieved if persons with disabilities are equally included as both agents and beneficiaries in the effort to achieve a sustainable future. This can only happen if we recognize and build on the potential of persons with disabilities as contributors to society.

The 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the CRPD provide a powerful framework to guide local communities, countries and the international community to achieve the empowerment of persons with disabilities and a disability-inclusive development.

Let us redouble our efforts and work together to close the gap between commitments and action to ensure that no one is left behind.

Thank you.
