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Statement by
Mr. Monthian BUNTAN
Acting Chair
Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

12th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the
Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Opening remarks

“Ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities in a changing
world through the implementation of the CRPD”

New York, 11 June 2019



Secretary General,
Mister President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

It is a great honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as Mr. Danlami Basharu, Chair of the Committee could unfortunately not be with us, for reasons beyond his control. I thank the Bureau for reiterating its invitation to the Committee to participate in the opening of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The priority theme of this year's Conference is "ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a changing world through the implementation of the Convention". Yes, we live in a changing world and always have. However, despite a changing world, or perhaps I should say, precisely because of a changing world, the centrality of human rights in people's lives has never been more fundamental.

Moreover, the centrality of human rights for persons with disabilities, as rights holders, as equal participants in society, as human rights defenders, as women, men and children included in all spheres of life, are part of this changing world and, more importantly, changing the world. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, when implemented, ensures that persons with disabilities themselves are at the forefront of contributing to changing the world in the right direction.

I would like to highlight examples of concerted action, including by persons with disabilities, which have led to recent changes. First, ahead of the CRPD elections last year, the Committee issued an open letter of

concern to States parties to ensure that more women experts would join the Committee. Many organizations of persons with disabilities and coalitions also developed a consistent messaging campaign to raise awareness about the pressing need to achieve gender parity in the Committee. Although gender parity was not attained, I am pleased that six women have joined the Committee as a result of the 2018 elections. Equality between men and women is one of the principles of the Convention which applies to all provisions and which guides the Committee's work. Ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities through the implementation of the Convention specifically requires that all actors at all levels engage in the development, advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities.

Initiatives by many of my fellow participants in the Conference of States parties, including my peers on the panel this morning, as well as advocacy efforts undertaken in this same forum, have contributed to the growing recognition within the United Nations System that it needs to do more and better for persons with disabilities.

Secretary General, I commend your commitment to ensure accessibility and mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities through the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. Consciously adopting a systematic approach to the rights of persons with disability across all operations and programmes of the United Nations System and ensuring that, we, persons with disabilities can participate on an equal basis with others is sure to change the world by leading by example.

Persons with disabilities still face significant barriers to participate in society. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, however, has a huge potential to contribute to changing attitudes about disabilities, changing environments, changing lives, in short, changing the world. Today, there are one hundred and seventy-eight countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention.

In September last year, the Committee adopted its general comment Number seven entitled "Participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention." The message of the general comment is clear: the effective and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, is at the heart of the Convention. The active and informed participation of everyone in decisions that affect their lives and rights is consistent with the human rights-based approach in public decision-making processes, and ensures good governance and social accountability.

Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I must once again raise the issue of financial resources. I am very concerned that despite repeated calls made upon the Secretary General and the previous Bureau of the Conference of States Parties by my predecessors in this same space, the issue of financial resources to fund the travel of a representative of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Conference of States parties has not been resolved. After having funded the travel of the Chair and sometimes the Vice-Chair for many years in an ad-hoc manner, for the first time, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was unable to cover this travel. This year, the Korean Human Rights Commission generously contributed to the travel of Mr. Basharu, Chair of the Committee. However, as you all appreciate, this is an unsustainable solution and I reiterate my call for serious consideration to the United Nations, in particular to the Secretariat of the Conference of the States Parties at UN DESA, to include the travel

of the Chair of the Committee to the Conference of States parties to the Convention in its budget.

I must also raise the concern that I share together with the other Chairpersons of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies about cash flow difficulties at the United Nations announced to us in April 2019. In practice, this would mean the cancellation of sessions for six of the ten treaty bodies due to financial reasons, resulting in numerous negative consequences including seriously undermining the system of protections which States themselves have put in place over decades. Together with the Chairpersons of the ten treaty bodies, we have addressed a letter to you, Secretary General, as we are deeply concerned about the practical consequences of cancelling these sessions, requesting that you, together with Member States, find ways of addressing this situation, as a matter of urgency.

Thank you very much.
