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Statement by Mr. Danlami BASHARU

CHAIR COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

13th session of the Conference of States parties to the Convention on the Rights of
Persons with Disabilities

30 November 2020

New York

Secretary-General Guterres,

President of the Conference Espinosa,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Thank you to the Bureau of the Conference of States parties to the CRPD for its invitation to speak at the opening of the thirteenth session. I would like to highlight four aspects in my intervention.

First, the impact of COVID-19 on the rights of persons with disabilities

I welcome the overarching theme of “A decade of action and delivery for inclusive sustainable development” and acknowledge the positive measures adopted globally to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, I am extremely concerned that the pandemic has exacerbated all of the structural barriers, exclusion and discrimination that persons with disabilities regularly face. While I celebrate that there are now 182 parties to the Convention, the pandemic has made evident that there is still a long way to go in fully understanding the human rights model of disability enshrined in the Convention and therefore in fully implementing its provisions. I recall that the Convention is the standard for disability inclusive planning and recovery measures and the roadmap to fulfil the goals of the 2030 Agenda in a manner that is inclusive of 15% of the world’s population.

Turning to the work of the Committee throughout the pandemic and challenges experienced.

The Committee continued its mandate online, except constructive dialogues, and met virtually on three occasions. Comprehensive information about the session and pre-sessions is available in the Committee’s webpage. We continued valuable engagement with civil society representatives who brought to our attention the voices and concerns of persons with disabilities throughout this period. I commend all those State parties that have engaged in meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities to guide their response to the Committee. Virtual work of the Committee is an exceptional measure that comes with several challenges and the right technology must be found. Unfortunately, it has exacerbated the lack of accessibility, and the lack of provision of reasonable accommodation in UN meetings. The online platforms pose several challenges. One of which, is inaccessibility for persons with visual impairment, resulting in Committee members having no choice but to rely on the support of personal assistants whose work is not financially compensated by the UN. Although the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and General Assembly Resolution 68/268 refer to the provision of reasonable accommodation, currently, a sustainable framework for the provision of individual, disability-specific adjustments for members with disabilities is yet to be implemented within the UN. As part of the commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities, I call upon the UN and States parties to ensure that the principles and standards of the Convention guide the development of reasonable

accommodation policies to ensure their immediate non-discrimination duties in the context of disability. In this regard, it would be advisable to create a **reasonable accommodation fund** ready to be accessed through simplified administrative procedures for the effective participation of persons with disabilities, as required.

Next, I will refer to **progress in the draft general comment on the right to work and employment**.

The Committee is preparing a general comment on the right to work and employment for persons with disabilities, with support from the International Labour Organisation. Together, we will seek to ensure that all efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 8, target 8.5 are guided by the Convention. The Committee will work intersessionally with a view to drafting an outline to post on its website, inviting all relevant stakeholders to provide inputs, and potentially convening a Day of General Discussion in its next in-person session. Mr. Laszlo Lovaszy, coordinator for the Committee's task force on the draft general comment, will address you tomorrow in Panel one and may provide additional information.

Finally, in order to expedite action for implementing the CRPD, particularly to ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities are included in international fora such as this one, I call on States parties to consider the establishment of a **voluntary fund to improve accessibility** within the United Nations and beyond to give full effect to the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

Let me close by expressing my sincere hope that today's elections will contribute to upholding balanced gender representation, diversity and inclusion in the Committee. The Committee looks forward to the possibility of engaging with States parties in-person again and I also look forward to the next few days, to continue this dialogue, to advance the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities.
