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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MS. LULU XINGWANA
MINISTER FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
DURING THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 7 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

At the outset, allow me to thank members of the Bureau and the Secretariat for the excellent work in organizing the meeting. We wish you, Mr. Chairman, every success and remain confident that the conference will benefit under your stewardship.

My delegation feels highly honored to be participating in this 4th Conference of States Parties aimed at the practical realization and enjoyment of the human rights of people with disabilities consistent with the provisions of the Convention and other relevant instruments. The commitments freely undertaken by States in various forums and relevant outcomes of all major UN conferences and summits must be implemented if we are to make the rights of persons with disabilities a reality.

The theme for this Conference of States Parties could not have been more timely and relevant, especially in this third and last five-year cycle towards 2015 for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

My delegation acknowledges that disability varies according to complex mix of factors, including age, sex, stage of life, exposure to environmental risks, socio-economic status, culture and available resource – all of which vary extensively across locations.

South Africa fully supports the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities throughout the UN system and the corresponding responsibility by regional organizations, as well as at the domestic level, inclusive of all the relevant multi-stakeholders. The role of the private sector and financial institutions in the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities at the domestic level cannot be overemphasized as it is extremely important as well.

All the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from full participation in social development should be eliminated. Disability mainstreaming should place a sharper focus and special attention on measures to address the vulnerabilities of specific

groups within the disability community, such as women and girls with disabilities, children and persons with mental disabilities, and persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. Advocacy programmes are also critical in promoting rights, dignity and self-worth among people with disabilities.

Greater awareness raising within communities and disability sensitivity programmes will assist in providing the necessary support to people with disabilities and delivering services in response to their needs. States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities need to ensure that capacity building programmes are put into place to address the training needs of people with disabilities, government officials and public institutions.

As a State Party to the Convention and its Optional Protocol, having signed and ratified the Convention in 2007, South Africa has, since the coming into effect of the Convention, made significant progress in the provisions of the Convention.

There is now increased self representation of persons with disabilities in Parliament, including a Deputy Minister, in the Provincial legislatures and local governments. We also have institutions such as the Human Rights Commission, Commission on Gender Equality, in the judiciary and National Youth Development Agency, where persons with disabilities are represented. Government departments are setting up benchmarks and disability policies and targets in mainstreaming service delivery to persons with disability.

As a developmental state South Africa is ensuring the provision of disability grants, free healthcare, assistive devices (sign language interpretations, captions and subtitles) to persons with disabilities especially those in the rural areas.

Furthermore South Africa's laws and policies have improved the livelihood of persons with disability through skills development and employment opportunities.

South Africa recommends that a universal framework for disability data collection which is related to policy goals of participation, inclusion and disability services be adopted by States Parties to the present Convention as this will create a better data design and also ensure that different sources of data relate well to each other.

Disability specific indicators can be able to assist in monitoring and evaluating progress made in delivering services to people with disabilities. It is therefore important to develop policies and legislation that is in line with the present convention and other disability instruments within the development approach. A monitoring mechanism which is placed correctly within government as in South Africa's case, i.e. the Department for Women, Children and People with Disabilities is able to closely monitor the effectiveness of implementation of disability policies.

Parallel to this mechanism State Parties may promulgate legislation that will promote equality and prevent unfair discrimination against people with disabilities.

Lastly, South Africa has recently hosted the World Federation of the Deaf Congress and is looking forward to hosting both the Disabled Peoples' International 8th World Assembly and the World Federation For Mental Health Congress to be held in October 2011.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to encourage all countries that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol to do so in order to allow the process of domesticating the Convention to be done effectively and efficiently.

Thank you.