

Statement by Werner Obermeyer, Executive Director Ad Interim, World Health Organization Office at the United Nations

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3, 2011, UNHQ

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a special honor to be sharing the podium with member states that have been in the forefront of the work done in the General Assembly on disabilities.

We have all been encouraged with the summit in September and welcomed the General Assembly resolution "keeping the promise: mainstreaming disability in the MDGs" which forms the theme for today's celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Now is the time to take concrete action, to ensure that people with disabilities, particularly women and children, are included in efforts to improve health, reduce poverty, and promote a more equal and more sustainable world. A multi-sectoral approach is required to remove barriers to the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Next year we will launch the World Report on disability, produced jointly by WHO and the World Bank. This Report will provide the best available evidence on the situation of persons with disabilities and good practices on barrier removal -contributing to positively changing the lives of millions of persons with disabilities worldwide.

But today we celebrate the release of the Community Based Rehabilitation Guidelines, an excellent example of cross-sectoral collaboration to address the needs and achieve the rights of persons with disabilities. More than 180 individuals and nearly 300 organizations, mostly from low income countries, have been involved. These Guidelines provides practical suggestions on how to develop or strengthen CBR programmes and ensure that people with disabilities and their family members are really able to access the benefits of the health, education, livelihood and social sectors.

On behalf of WHO and our partners ILO, UNESCO and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) I would like to present copies of these Guidelines to DESA, Representatives from Tanzania, The Philippines and Mexico and civil society. We trust that that this will generate real improvements in the lives of people with disabilities.

Thank you.